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by

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**Archiving the Revolution: Claiming History in Cuban Literature and
Film**

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Film**

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Dedication

To my family, for all their unconditional love and immeasurable support.

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Archiving the Revolution: Claiming History in Cuban Literature and Film

Enrique Jose Gonzalez-Conty, Ph.D.
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Supervisor: Cesar A. Salgado

This dissertation examines how both literature and film were responsible for the construction of the Cuban Revolutionary Archive. On one hand, the immediate foundation of the Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC) three months after the triumph of Fidel Castro's 26 of July guerrilla movement in 1959, showed the urgency to establish a cinematic apparatus that would support the Cuban Revolution itself, that is, the need to project what had just happened to the outside world. On the other, literature also emerged as an important artifact of the Cuban Revolutionary Archive with the support of the literary prizes granted by Casa de las Américas— another key cultural institution founded in those first years. Most of the first films— such as *Historias de la Revolución* (1960)— and novels— such as *Maestra voluntaria* (1962)— produced then were either about the Cuban struggle or served to record the main events and accomplishments of the post-1959 revolutionary process. That is why I considered them as historical records instituted and manipulated by the Cuban government. I also analyze the films and novels published outside the island as a “counter-archive” that contests the official version.

My goal in writing this dissertation, then, was not only to trace how this Cuban Revolutionary Filmic and Literary Archive was constructed but also how it has evolved throughout the years. To do so I analyze primary works from the sixties— such as the film

P.M. (1960) and *Memories of Underdevelopment* (1968) and the novel *Bertillón 166* (1960)– to contrast them with works produced thirty to fifty years later that revisit those first years– such as the films *8-A* (1992), *City in Red* (2009) and *Memories of Overdevelopment* (2010). The aim is to decipher why these two mediums were used as artifacts of the archive, what was hidden or erased, how did the archive of the sixties differ from the one that emerged after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and during the “Special Period,” and what challenges arose with the passage of time and the decadence of the revolutionary process. By looking for answers to these questions, this dissertation aims to contribute to the recent revision by cultural scholars of Latin American Revolutions in their anniversaries.

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Introduction: Constructing and Contesting the Filmic Archive of the Cuban Revolution

To fully understand the way in which the Cuban film industry has managed topics in history and popular memory since 1959, the year after Fidel Castro's 26 of July movement successfully toppled the Batista government, special attention should be paid to the complex trans-mediatic nature of Cuban productions that combine innovations in narrative print fiction, news and documentary filmmaking, and the feature film tradition, both in the island as well as in works produced independently and in exile. By looking at several examples of post-1959 Cuban official, independent, and exile film productions—Rebeca Chávez's *Ciudad en rojo*, a 2009 state-supported film adaptation of José Soler Puig's 1960 novel about the anti-Batista insurgency in Santiago, *Bertillón 166*; Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's 1968 celebrated adaptation of Edmundo Desnoes' 1965 novel *Memorias del subdesarrollo*; Miguel Coyula's 2010 independent adaptation of Desnoes' 2007 post-9/11 novel *Memorias del desarrollo*; and Orlando Jiménez Leal's experiments in documentary film from his banned 1961 short *P.M.* to his 1992 feature-length docudrama *8-A*—I aim to show in this dissertation how, for more than fifty years, the Cuban state has used film to manage and control Cuban history and popular memory, and how, throughout this time, both literature and film have played an important role in narrating historical events in and for the revolution. I also seek to explore the different ways in which both independent and exile writers and filmmakers have contested the official historical narrative— from within through the use of new digital technologies that permit a greater freedom from centralized state budgets and influence; from exile through the critical re-montaging of footage and visual motifs appropriated from the official filmic archive of the Cuban Revolution.

This dissertation thus examines the symbiotic relationship between literature and film particular to the Cuban revolutionary context as both of these art forms evolved during these years in a closely intertwined fashion. The Cuban Revolution recognized the importance of literature and film to build up an official discourse of the revolution, and established, from early on, an infrastructural and institutional apparatus to support their interface. In this way, the orchestration of literature and film together played a key role in narrating the revolution; in this research project, we will limit our focus mostly to cases in which narrative literature was taken to the big screen. Looking at film adaptations from the 1960s to the 2000s will reveal how Cuban cinema has relied on this literary/filmic edification to sustain itself as an industry.

This research project thus examines the systematic construction of what I call the Filmic Archive of the Cuban Revolution and the role of literature in this construction. By archive I mean not only the actual spaces where works of literature and film are stored, but also the systematic assignation, production, selection, and recollection of textual and celluloid materials that support an official historical narrative. The connections between literature, film, and social revolution in the construction of filmic archives have been complex and compelling in the modern age. The building of a revolutionary archive made out of literature and film is not something exclusive to the Cuban case; it began with other revolutions at the beginning of the twentieth century. To understand the Cuban scenario then, we need to examine the relationship between revolution and these art forms in a broader historical context, paying close attention to other cases in which literature and cinema have played a coordinated political and ideological role given how this transmediatic relationship has characterized the foundation of several revolutionary archives. Why has the intertwining of literature, film, and archives been so important for revolutionary movements during the last century? How important is the coordination

between word and filmic image for managing public memory within and for these movements? As we will see, revolutionary governments of the modern age have legitimized their authority by having both literature and film construct a discourse that cements the monumental character of the revolutionary struggle in their national histories.

ANTECEDENTS: LITERATURE, FILM, AND ARCHIVES IN THE MEXICAN AND RUSSIAN REVOLUTIONS

As cinema evolved during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it also became a powerful tool for revolutions bred at the beginning of the twentieth century. From Mexico to Russia, and later on in the Caribbean, the media revolution that brought about the invention of film joined the social and political transformations of the time. Early on, the new invention of the *cinématographe*— as film scholars Erik Barnouw and Bill Nichols have noted—¹ documented different transformative events explicit in the title of some of the first films: *La sortie des Usines* (*Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory*) and *L'arrivée d'un train en gare* (*Arrival of a Train*), shot in 1895 by the Lumière brothers. During that time, most films captured scenes from “everyday life,” that is— to use Barnouw’s term— films of “actualities,” and this enterprise soon went beyond Paris borders when the Lumière brothers sent personnel to shoot and project films all over the world. In fact, according to Barnouw: “within two years Lumière operators were roaming on every continent except Antarctica” (11). In their journey— along with other inventors in other countries like the United States such as Thomas Edison and Albert E. Smith— they soon encountered a popular subject: war. The coverage of the Boer War, the Russo-Japanese War, and the Spanish-American War proves this. In the Latin American

¹ See Erik Barnouw, *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film* (New York: Oxford UP, 1993), Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2001).

context, revolutionary wars also became a popular subject only a few years after the invention of cinema. According to Barnouw, this footage of “actualities” established the foundation for future documentary filmmaking, a film genre predominant during revolutionary movements, as we will see below.

In Mexico, the 1910 revolution sparked a special interest among filmmakers, particularly in the United States. The proximity of the Mexican Revolution— a war that could be seen across the border— attracted cameramen to go and capture live footage of what was happening in this neighbor country. As the Mexican film historian Aurelio de los Reyes explains: “Between 1911 and 1920 over 80 American cameramen working either freelance or for various film companies covered the Mexican Revolution from the viewpoints of different groups. Thus, as of March, 1912, the newscasts *Pathe’s Weekly*, *Animated Weekly* and *Mutual Weekly*, among others, included weekly bulletins on the revolution not to mention films put on sale by the companies or by the freelance cameramen covering the activities in Mexico.”² Another historical event that demonstrated the close relationship between film and the Mexican Revolution was the signed contract between Francisco Villa and the Mutual Film Corporation in January 3, 1914, that gave this U.S. based production company the exclusive rights to film the caudillo while at war. Harry E. Aitken, President of Mutual, sent his associate Frank M. Thayer to Chihuahua to negotiate with Villa the terms and they agreed to give the caudillo 50% of the profits as well as to screen the footage of war at the liberated towns. Mutual also made sure to distribute the images all over the U.S. and Canada. The capture of Oinaga in January 10, 1914, as well as the battles at Torreon and Gómez Palacio were all shot by Mutual, and the lost film *The Life of General Villa* included a collection of

² Aurelio de los Reyes, “Francisco Villa: The Use and Abuse of Colonialist Cinema,” *Journal of Film Preservation* 63 (2001): 36.

reels from these locations. Although this film has been lost, today some reels have been rescued from this very unique filmic archive, including brief footage of Villa at war, as film scholar Zuzana M. Pick has noted.

The revolution also became one of the main themes in Mexican Cinema when it fully developed in the 1930s. Films like *La sombra de Pancho Villa* by Contreras Torres and *Enemigos* by Luciano “Chano” Urueta, as well as *El compadre Mendoza* by Mexican film pioneer Fernando de Fuentes, are all examples of films that depicted the revolution during that decade. Furthermore, film historian Jorge Ayala Blanco argues that it was in 1935 that the first super-production successfully portrayed the revolution with *Vámonos con Pancho Villa* by de Fuentes.³ Interestingly, this film was an adaptation of a novel by Rafael F. Muñoz, demonstrating the importance that the theme of revolution had in narrative literature, a fact also emblemized by the canonical importance of Mariano Azuela’s 1916 novel *Los de abajo*, which was adapted to film by Chano Urueta in 1939. In Mexico then, like in Cuba, literature and film together supported the foundation of a revolutionary filmic archive.

In her book *Constructing the Image of the Mexican Revolution: Cinema and the Archive* (2010), Zuzana M. Pick studies this archive as “the visual construction of the Mexican Revolution and the processes that shaped and contributed to the dissemination of these constructions on film since the 1930s in Mexico and internationally.”⁴ Pick analyzes the use of documentary film as a tool for Mexican historiography and studies how this filmic archive was organized to lionize certain early figures of the Mexican Revolution such as Francisco I. Madero, Pancho Villa, and Emiliano Zapata as well as

³ Jorge Ayala Blanco, *Aventura del cine mexicano*, 1st ed. (México: Ediciones Era, 1968) 16.

⁴ Zuzana M. Pick, *Constructing the Image of the Mexican Revolution: Cinema and the Archive* (Austin: U of Texas P, 2010) 1.

the later *caudillos* Pascual Orozco, Victoriano Huerta, Venustiano Carranza and Álvaro Obregón; Pick thus studies the ways in which visual technologies modeled the collective memory of the Mexican nation after 1910. Exploring archival artifacts spanning from Mexican footage filmed between 1910-1917 to U.S. productions with Villa and 1940s and 50s Mexican melodramas, Pick examines the convergence of the revolution with the emergence of cinema as a dominant force in the media world and the reception of these types of films both in Mexico and the United States. Films that mythologized the figure of Villa, such as *Viva Villa!* (1934) and *Let's Go with Pancho Villa* (1935), along with *Reed: Insurgent Mexico* (1971) by Paul Leduc and works by foreign directors such as Sergei Eisenstein's *¡Qué viva México!* (1931), serve here as a template to map how cinema engaged in the production of memories of the Mexican Revolution. As Pick explains, these memories were stored in the revolutionary archive of Mexico through photographs, postcards, and films, among other media. In this dissertation we will examine how parallel processes helped built a similar filmic archive in revolutionary Cuba.

The Russian Revolution in 1917 also served as a precedent to the Cuban Revolution. In Russia, cinema evolved alongside a political ideology: that of Marxism-Leninism. In order to spread this ideology around the country, the Bolsheviks relied on film as the perfect medium to reach the masses because it could be duplicated and transported and easily understood by a mostly illiterate population. As Richard Taylor explains: "The Bolsheviks needed a propaganda medium that was primarily and fundamentally visual in its appeal, one that would thus overcome differences of language and cultural development".⁵ Hence, film in revolutionary Russia was used for propagandistic purposes. Vladimir Lenin himself, one of the main leaders of the

⁵ Richard Taylor, *The Politics of the Soviet Cinema, 1917-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1979) 30.

insurrection, promoted the use of documentary film and newsreels to urgently capture the political changes of the time as well as of short agitation/propaganda films– known as *agitki*– that could energize the masses and propel them into action. As Taylor notes: “The new government aimed to mobilize the masses into active involvement with the Bolshevik cause and to train them into appropriately new patterns of political, economic and social thought” (27). Film would be the vehicle for this mobilization. From these endeavors under the leadership of Dziga Vertov, the newsreels *Kinonedelia* (Film Week) and *Kino-Pravda* (Film Truth) came to life as mobile cinemas– transported through *agit-trains* and boats– aimed to unite the nation by using film to link urban centers with the countryside. On these *agit-trains* and boats, filmed demonstrations and speeches by political leaders were taken from the cities to far away non-urban areas.

A national post-revolutionary film industry, however, took longer to consolidate in the Soviet Union. The transition was slow, since soon after 1917, cinemas and production companies were still in the hands of foreign capital with the exception of the Skobelev Committee under the Ministry of Education in charge of producing newsreels for the new government. Lenin, however, knew the power of cinema as he proclaimed: “of all the arts, for us, cinema is the most important,”⁶ which led him to nationalize foreign studios and production companies in 1919. But local film stock, equipment and trained personnel were scarce and unable to compete with foreign markets, delaying the development of a state film industry. To cope with some of these problems the new government created a State Film School in Moscow and later on had to look for other sources of funding such as the Soviet-German collaboration project known as the International Workers Aid– founded in Berlin in 1921 to end famine in Russia but repurposed from 1924 on to finance and sponsor Soviet films. In this process, it took the

⁶ Cited in Peter Cowie, *A Concise History of the Cinema* (London: A. Zwemmer, 1971) 137.

Russian Revolution almost a decade to consolidate its film industry after much trial and error with agencies such as Goskino, Sovkino, and Soyuzkino until it could produce masterpieces such as Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) and *October* (1927). Both films helped consolidate the Russian Revolution's filmic archive by monumentalizing key historical events of the Bolshevik struggle. Dziga Vertov, on the other hand, proposed a cinema of unvarnished and unacted "truth" in his newsreels series *Kino-Pravda* and *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), his *ars poetica* of documentary filmmaking. Many of his ideas would be later appropriated and adapted in Cuban post-1959 film productions.

In this sense, not only did the Cuban Revolution establish a filmic archive around select revolutionary protagonists like in Mexico— Fidel Castro, Raúl Castro, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, Camilo Cienfuegos, among others; it also adopted and supported a filmic state industrial complex for propaganda purposes, just as its Russian counter-part. As we will see below, in the late 1950s the Cuban rebels launched a crucial media campaign to support their cause that included underground radio stations and newspapers to maintain the rest of the population informed about their endeavors. This media campaign led to the official creation of a state film industry— still known today as the Cuban Film Institute or the Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográficos (ICAIC)— three months after the revolution came to power in January of 1959. This institute would be in charge of producing films and newsreels about the triumphal revolutionary process and would also be in close relationship with other cultural state institutions that promoted literature and the arts, such as Casa de las Américas. Thus ICAIC and Casa worked together to strengthen the bridge between literature and film by collaborating on the conceptualization and constitution of a filmic archive for the revolution that would also serve as a structure to manage and control popular memory. Through this process, Cuba

quickly saw a boom of film adaptations of narrative fiction depicting revolutionary scenarios, and thus became the cradle for the birth of a new mode of film production: the docudrama, a complex combination of documentary and fiction film to be discussed in detail below. Recent studies have paid close attention to this phenomenon in a broader context, specifically the compilation *Visual Synergies in Fiction and Documentary Film from Latin America* (2009),⁷ edited by Miriam Haddu and Joanna Page. Alongside these synergies, we could argue that the documentary obsession driving filmmakers and filmmaking during revolutionary processes always has an archival purpose or potential; that any film stock resulting from a revolution will be crucial for defining the legitimacy, legality, and popular memory of the state or institutions that emerge from it. In the first decades of the Cuban Revolution then, Dziga Vertov had his counterpart in Santiago Álvarez and Sergei Eisenstein in Tomás Gutiérrez Alea; *Kino-Pravda* “reincarnated” in the Noticiero Latinoamericano ICAIC (ICAIC’s Latin-American Newsreel) and the *agit-trains* in the *Cine Móvil* at ICAIC. This brief list proves that Soviet film formulas were quickly tried and applied in the Cuban context, although not all such attempts were successful. ICAIC co-productions with Russian directors, such as the film *Soy Cuba (I Am Cuba)*, 1964) by Mikhail Kalatosov, forgotten in the 1960s and recuperated in the 1990s, did not connect with a wide Cuban audience and thus were labeled as failures and decommissioned.

In all, the histories of these revolutions help us trace the conjunction of literature, film, revolution, and archive from the early 20th century onward. From the 1960s on, right at the time when the Cuban Revolution became a global issue, new critical theories

⁷ For the Cuban case studies in this compilation please refer to Alexandra Anderson’s “Cuban Documentary: Synergy and Its Discontents,” on pages 49-65, and Dylon Robbins’ “On the Margins of Reality: Fiction, Documentary, and Marginal Subjectivity in Three Early Cuban Revolutionary Films,” on pages 27-48. Both of these articles appear in *Visual Synergies in Fiction and Documentary Film from Latin America*, eds. Miriam Haddu and Joanna Page, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

about the archive, discourse, epistemology, and public and historical memory began emerging that have informed our analysis of post-1959 Cuban film productions. These theories provide much of the framework for our analysis and are worth reviewing before moving on to the details of how this dissertation is organized to meet its critical and analytical research goals.

THEORIES OF THE ARCHIVE

Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Roberto González Echevarría, and Diana Taylor, among others, have reflected on the archive as a historiographical, epistemological, and discursive Western institution and concept. In this dissertation, Michel Foucault's theorizing of historical archives and of their complex relation to power, hegemonic discourse, and popular memory has inspired the research that follows. In one of the few interviews in which Foucault addressed the issue of film, he talked about how this new media obstructs and manipulates popular memory. As a historian, he was interested in memory as a discursive, counter-official construct and in how communities preserved a popular memory through songs and other means. Foucault believed, however, that film and television contradict—and can even desecrate—popular memory by depositing images in people's minds: "people are shown [in film] not what they were, but what they must remember having been."⁸ In the case of Cuba, we will argue that such an attempt to control popular memory through media images has been operating for more than fifty years, since the foundation of the Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC) in 1959. Interestingly, as a historian of discursive realignments related to the "births" of the clinic, the prison, religious confession, and other Western forms of institutional subject formation, Foucault never fully explored the connections between

⁸ Michel Foucault, "Film and Popular Memory," trans. Martin Jordin, *Foucault Live*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (New York: Semiotext(e), 1989) 92.

discourse and film, the principal concern of this dissertation. Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge*,⁹ however, allowed me to conceptualize the Cuban filmic archive as the process in which specific pieces of film documentary footage are refashioned and monumentalized into canonical history through feature film or "docudramatic" productions; in other words, it showed me how Cuban filmic legacy should be analyzed and examined from the perspective of an archeologist, an examiner of self-enclosed, alien remnants and artifacts. Following that definition, I examine when primary texts and footage in this project become "monuments" to decipher how the Cuban Revolution's Filmic Archive operates and how it is confronted by independent and exile filmmakers. Foucault was not only interested in how Western institutions record, preserve, and reproduce hegemonic discourse; he also defined the archive as a "system of statements" (128) and as the "first law of what can be said" (129). This theory proves to be useful for studying Cuban film as a vehicle for anti-official contestation as Foucault believed that, due to its totalizing purpose, an archive could also contain or inspire counter-statements and counter-archives within or without itself.¹⁰ This dissertation looks closely at the governmental institutions that supported an official filmic archive in Cuba, as well as the counter-archives that evolved against it in exile or through independent means.¹¹

⁹ Michel Foucault, "The Historical *a priori* and the Archive," *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972) 126-31.

¹⁰ Interestingly, the idea of Foucault's counter-archive has been recently examined in: Paula Amad, *Counter-Archive: Film, the Everyday, and Albert Kahn's Archives de la Planète* (New York: Columbia UP, 2010).

¹¹ This idea owes much to César Salgado's work on archival theory in Caribbean literature. He has described the "archivos encontrados" in the work of Puerto Rican writer Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá that intentionally deviate from the Puerto Rican historical archive to underline the sutures of an institution built from a colonial relationship. Salgado argues that Rodríguez Juliá's novels create a counter-archive against the one sponsored by the metropolis. For further elaboration on this topic see: César A. Salgado, "Archivos encontrados: Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá o los diablejos de la historiografía criolla," *Cuadernos Americanos* 73 (1999): 153-203.

In the past, Foucault's theory of the archive has been applied to the Latin American context but to study literary discourse. In my case, however, I aim to use it as a tool to study film. The book *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative* by Roberto González Echevarría sought to find the "origins of the modern [Latin American] novel,"¹² more than twenty years ago, by looking at the relationship between literature and the law, as well as examining what he called "archival fictions." His study found that after 1950 a new trend of novels— such as Alejo Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos* (1953) and Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* (1967)— aimed to represent the archive containing the history of the region's discovery, conquest, and colonization as a master myth using the metacritical narrative techniques of modernist fiction. By doing so, writers from this region questioned the hegemonic anthropological discourse that typified Latin America as an a-historical region of primitive myth; they also destabilized or deconstructed master or hegemonic narratives that pretend to impose a legal or scientific "truth" on the region. In González Echevarría's analysis, the archive is initially constituted by the chronicles of the Indies that contemporary Latin American writers were eager to revisit. His definition of the Archive, with capital A, stands as the "repository of knowledge and power" to which the modern Latin American novelist returns to parody and plunder. His project, however, is distant from mine since González Echevarría is only interested in canonical works of contemporary literature qua literature while our research aims to examine literary productions inseparable from film. Our contribution to the field points in a different direction not much explored in Cuban Studies: the link between the archive and cinema.

¹² Roberto González Echevarría, *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990) xv.

The Algerian-born French philosopher, Jacques Derrida, also elaborated a theory of the archive in his *Archive Fever: A Freudian Approach*.¹³ Derrida here deconstructed the psychoanalytic discourse that praised the subconscious as an “archive” of truths. By analyzing documents and letters related to the foundation of a “Freudian archive” by historians of psychoanalysis, he ends up questioning the very possibility of a space that could serve as a repository of “original” or “natural” memory. This analysis leads him to argue that no “original” or “foundational” knowledge exists either in the subconscious or in archives and that there is no way of knowing where a copy of an original memory/inscription/document begins. For him, the archive is unavoidably constructed and deconstructed by traces, that is, everything is a trace of a trace and no originality or “documented truth” can be ascertained. He thus argues that any “archive fever” or “obsession” with documentation will reveal a “sickness” in the archive; that is, it will expose its fractures. Just as Foucault, Derrida’s archive fever discloses the potential counter-archives found within the archive itself. Through its fractures, the claim of an archive as a perfect repository of “truth” is questioned and made evident. Derrida’s theory thus will help us reflect on how counter-archives also operate in Cuban filmic history.

Diana Taylor’s *Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* is the most recent theoretical reflection about the archive within the humanities. Here Taylor connects and contrasts the archive to performance art and thus adds to the archival debate an ephemeral, counter-archival way of memorializing the past, which she calls the repertoire. In her analysis, Taylor coins this term as a counterpart to the supposedly static character of the archive, defining performance as way to “learn and

¹³ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1996).

transmit knowledge through embodied action.”¹⁴ In her case, examples of the archive include texts, documents, maps, letters, bones, buildings, videos, and films; i.e., fixed artifacts resistant to change. The repertoire adds to this equation unfixed gestures, orality, performance, movement, dance, singing, political rallies, among other things, “acts thought as ephemeral and nonreproducible knowledge.” Although these two concepts seem to exclude one another, Taylor proposes their relationship as mutually reinforcing, that is, she uses some examples that are both archives and repertoires operating at the same time. Some works of art or events that support her theory are Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco’s installations and stagings about the 1992 Centennial, the television performances of astrologer Walter Mercado, Princess Diana’s funeral, the works of Brazilian artist Denise Stoklos and Mexican playwright Emilio Carballido, and the September 11 tragedy in New York City, among other examples that argue for a broader definition of the archive that includes repertoire activities. This research builds upon these definitions to look at film as archive, as repertoire, and sometimes as both.

FILM CULTURE IN PRE-REVOLUTIONARY CUBA

Although film historians have traced the beginnings of Cuban cinema back to figures such as Enrique Díaz Quesada and Ramón Peón García, by World War I Hollywood interests had already taken over Cuban film theaters and displaced competing Cuban and European films.¹⁵ With the introduction of sound, Cuban cinema gained momentum in the musical film genre and production companies such as Películas

¹⁴ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke UP, 2003) xvi.

¹⁵ For more details on pre-1959 Cuban cinema see: Arturo Agramonte and Luciano Castillo, *Entre el vivir y el soñar: pioneros del cine cubano* (Camagüey: Editorial Ácana, 2008).

Cubanas S.A. (PECUSA) launched musicals such as Ramón Peón's *Sucedió en La Habana* and *El romance del palmar* in 1938. Just as Mexican *rancheras*, these movies adapted Hollywood's formulas for musicals to local scenarios and adopted the star system to captivate and entertain audiences. In response to these Hollywood clones, a production company sponsored by the Popular Socialist Party (PSP), Cuba Sono Films, produced documentaries about contemporary social struggles in the late 1930s. In the 1940s, non-Hollywood media interests from Latin America began to infiltrate the Cuban film market. As William Luis writes:

The following decade [1940s] was characterized by a strong Mexican influence, in which films from Mexico were distributed. Cuban directors attempted to copy Mexican and Argentinean films, but without success [. . .] In effect, Mexico and the United States, through Columbia's Mexican interests, controlled and influenced Cuban cinema.¹⁶

Attempts to establish a local Cuban film industry were unsuccessful or half-hearted. One of the few pre-1959 figures remembered by film historians is Manuel Alonso, director of *Siete muertes a plazo fijo* (*Seven Deaths on the Installment Plan*, 1949) and *Casta de robles* (*Lineage of Oak*, 1954). The latter is considered the best sound film of the pre-revolutionary period.

It is important to note that, while these developments were taking place in the Cuban market for film entertainment, an independent film culture was also being born. A group of cinephiles that included Germán Puig and Ricardo Vigón founded the Cine Club of Havana in the late 1940s to bring international films to Cuba and promote critical discussion. As Luis points out, the Cine Club was renamed Cinemateca de Cuba when up-and-coming filmmakers and critics such as Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, and Néstor Almendros joined in the 1950s. The University of Havana

¹⁶ William Luis, *Culture and Customs of Cuba* (Westport: Greenwood P, 2001) 81.

joined the efforts to study and promote film culture by opening its Department of Cinematography in 1949 and establishing an archive of early Cuban film in its Filmoteca. The Cine-Club Visión of Havana launched the career of several film personalities that after 1959 would find employment at the Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC), such as Nelson Rodríguez, Norma Torrado, and Luis Costales. Members of the 1950s left-leaning cultural society Nuestro Tiempo would also help found the ICAIC in 1959. Some of these members—Julio García Espinosa and Alfredo Guevara, among them—helped produce the groundbreaking 1955 neorealist film *El Mégano*, considered the work that opened the way for the new Cuban cinema championed by ICAIC.

ICAIC'S ARCHIVE IN POST-1959 CUBA

In post-revolutionary Cuba, from the beginning, films became a key part of the Cuban Revolution's archiving and memorializing protocols; both fiction and non-fiction films served to record the main events and accomplishments of the revolutionary process. The ICAIC thus transformed the role of cinema on the island, dissolving Hollywood's entertainment monopoly in Cuban theaters. The new government was aware of the powerful tool they had in their hands and began to establish an industry that would eventually nationalize all film productions in order to engineer an "authentic" revolutionary image for Cubans and for the rest of the world. As the critic Julianne Burton explains:

The leaders of the guerrilla struggle were quick to perceive the artistic and educational supremacy of the film medium. In early 1959, soon after Fidel became head of the new revolutionary government, he ranked cinema and television, in that order, as the most important forms of artistic expression.¹⁷

¹⁷ Julianne Burton, "Revolutionary Cuban Cinema," *Jump Cut* 19 (1978): 17.

The first step was to create the ICAIC as a space where Cuban film production would be fully orchestrated. The second was to acquire the necessary technology to produce a massive number of films as soon as possible. However, the transition was not immediate since Cuba did not have the infrastructure to support a state-sponsored national cinema from day one. As the institution in charge of film, ICAIC had to acquire equipment and personnel— cameras, lights, laboratory equipment, studio plans, etc., as well as trained technicians— to begin working on its own films. Alfredo Guevara, as first ICAIC director, explained this slow transition as follows:

During 1959, for example, 484 films were exhibited in Cuba, of which 266 were North American, 44 English, 24 French, 25 Italian, 2 Polish, 1 Brazilian, 1 Swedish, 8 Argentinean, 19 Spanish, 3 Japanese, 3 German, 79 Mexican, and 1 Soviet. The remaining 8 were Cuban, coproductions or films made in Cuba in previous years and premiered or exhibited during 1959. [. . .] As can be seen, the bulk of exhibition remained in Hollywood hands and film industries under its influence.¹⁸

Even after ICAIC's founding, Hollywood's dominance still persisted for a number of years. In 1959, capital remained in the hands of banks controlled by U.S. interests and funding for revolutionary films was scarce. The nationalization of U.S. properties in the 1960s changed matters. As Michael Chanan explains:

Fidel announced at the beginning of August [1960] the nationalization of key North American properties in Cuba: thirty-six sugar mills and their lands, the electric and telephone companies, and the refineries and other oil properties that had already been requisitioned. In September, Cuban branches of U.S. banks were nationalized, and the following month nationalization was extended to practically all other large or medium-sized industrial, commercial, and financial enterprises, railroads, port facilities, hotels and cinemas. Nationalization of the major film distribution companies followed in May 1961. Three remaining smaller distributors were nationalized at the beginning of 1965.¹⁹

¹⁸ Quote translated by Chanan in *Cuban Cinema*. Originally published in: Alfredo Guevara, "Una nueva etapa del cine en Cuba," *Cine cubano* 2 (1961): 3.

¹⁹ Michael Chanan, *Cuban Cinema* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2004) 128.

By 1965 all financial institutions related to the film market had been nationalized and all areas related to film centralized under the ICAIC, turning the Institute into a state monopoly.²⁰

Yet the revolutionary government's "love" for media began in fact during the revolutionary struggle itself. The rebel leaders were quite clear that one of the main battles against Fulgencio Batista's dictatorship was fought at the mass media level. To debunk and contest the propaganda of Batista's government, they organized their own media networks. One of them was *Radio Rebelde*,²¹ a short-wave radio station used by the Rebel Army in the Sierra to broadcast recent news about their progress and accomplishments. As Peter Marshall explains: "Castro and his comrades recognized the prime importance of the mass media in shaping the people's ideas and values."²² The rebels also managed to publish their own newspapers, such as *Revolución*, *Sierra Maestra*, and *Combate*, to disseminate their message. These newspapers would later be incorporated as part of the revolutionary regime, along with *Radio Rebelde*. The rebels also managed to project their message beyond the limits of the island by using *The New York Times*²³ as part of their media campaign. More importantly in regards to film, they

²⁰ Before 1959, the scenario of Cuban cinema was quite different. As King states: "There was very little commercial Cuban cinema: some eighty features were made between 1930 and 1958, mostly melodramas or musical comedies made at breakneck speed by adventures such as Ramón Peón." He compares this number to the 164 feature films and more than 2,000 shorts and newsreels made from 1959 to 1987 under ICAIC. See John King, "Cuba: Revolutionary Projections," *Magical Reels: A History of Cinema in Latin America*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2000) 145.

²¹ A personal account on Radio Rebelde may be found in Carlos Franqui, *Diario de la revolución cubana* (Barcelona: Ed. Torres, 1976).

²² Peter H. Marshall, *Cuba libre!: Breaking the Chains?* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1987) 204.

²³ Three articles by New York Times reporter Herbert L. Matthews were published in 1957, an action that helped boost the image of the Cuban Revolution abroad. The articles were: "Cuban Rebel Is Visited in Hideout," *The New York Times* 24 Feb. 1957; "Rebel Strength Gaining in Cuba, But Batista Has the Upper Hand," *The New York Times* 25 Feb. 1957; and "Old Order in Cuba is Threatened by Forces of an Internal Revolt," *The New York Times* 26 Feb. 1957. For a complete study on Matthews' participation within the

were able to establish *Cine Rebelde*²⁴ right after their victory as part of the Rebel Army's visual propaganda. Some of the first films produced by the Cuban Film Institute, for example, began as film projects at the *Cine Rebelde* headquarters. As mentioned earlier, members of the cultural society *Nuestro Tiempo* played instrumental roles founding the Cuban Film Institute. As Michael Chanan explains: "Nuestro Tiempo was one of two principal recruiting grounds for future members of ICAIC: Alfredo Guevara, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, Julio García Espinosa, José Massip and Santiago Álvarez were all active members."²⁵ Other members would join from the Cine Club Vision in Havana, such as the music composer Leo Brower and the cameraman Luis Costales. Over all, these personalities, among others, would become key figures in the evolution of the ICAIC, and would later contribute to its prestige. Guevara became one of the founding members as well as its first president. Gutiérrez Alea became Cuba's most famous director, García Espinosa its best theorist, Massip another great director, and Álvarez one of the boldest and most innovative documentarist in Cuban history.

The revolutionary government was interested, from the beginning, in a particular film genre: the documentary. The rebels' previous experience during the revolutionary struggle had proven that news-like media was a powerful vehicle of persuasion. Fidel Castro's picture in 1957 (Figure 1) next to reporter Herbert L. Matthews,²⁶ for example,

Cuban Revolution please refer to Anthony DePalma, *The Man Who Invented Fidel: Cuba, Castro, and Herbert L. Matthews of The New York Times*, 1st ed. (New York: Public Affairs, 2006).

²⁴ For a brief history of *Cine Rebelde* see: Julianne Burton, "Film and Revolution in Cuba: The First Twenty-Five Years," *New Latin American Cinema*, ed. Michael T. Martin (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1997) 123-42, and John King's "Cuban Cinema: A Reel Revolution?," *Cuba After Thirty Years: Rectification and the Revolution*, ed. Richard Gillespie (London: F. Cass, 1990) 140-60.

²⁵ Michael Chanan, *The Cuban Image: Cinema and Cultural Politics in Cuba* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985) 81.

²⁶ Picture taken from the H. L. Matthews Papers at the Rare Book Library at Columbia University.

confirmed to the whole world that the leader of the rebels was still alive, challenging Batista's official version that he was dead. Only one image and its distribution in a mass media newspaper, like *The New York Times*, were needed as evidence. The news media image served not only as proof of the progress and achievements of the Cuban Revolution; it also became an "enlightened" and "enlightening" visual object that had to be published, disseminated, distributed, stored, and revered. Thus most films from the first years of the revolution were documentaries and Cuba became a key place where the docudrama— the fusion of documentary with fiction films— flourished widely and with force.²⁷ These documentaries and docudramas used well-known news images at the core of their structure, thus constituting a Cuban Revolutionary Filmic Archive all by themselves. Other images, the ones considered "dangerous" to the new government, would be censored and removed from the archive, as we will see in the last chapters of the dissertation.



Figure 1: Herbert L. Matthews and Fidel Castro in February, 1957

²⁷ For a typology of the documentary that includes the docudrama see: Julianne Burton, "Toward a History of Social Documentary in Latin America," *The Social Documentary in Latin America* (Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1990) 3-8.

The documentary genre also provided a platform to explain the political changes that were happening on the island and the new laws that were being implemented. Documentary films were used to convey to the people what these laws meant, and why they were needed to move the revolution forward. For example, the new law on Agrarian Reform was one of the laws that had to be explained and the documentary formula seemed like the perfect tool to do so. Thus, *Esta tierra nuestra (This Is Our Land, 1959)*, a short documentary written by Julio García Espinosa and directed by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, was produced to address the subject. Another short documentary was *La vivienda (Housing, 1959)*, directed by Julio García Espinosa, which explained urban reform.

Non-fiction films were also seen as a training ground for young directors; they served as a foundation for their future work. Additionally, in June 6, 1960 the creation of the Noticiero Latinoamericano ICAIC opened another door to short documentary productions as it produced a weekly program with the breaking news of the world. For more than three decades and under the direction of one of the most important Cuban documentarist, Santiago Álvarez,²⁸ the Noticiero Latinoamericano ICAIC also became a kind of training laboratory for many young directors. Álvarez himself produced some of the most memorable documentaries of the 1960s such as: *Now (1965)*, *Hanoi, martes 13 (Hanoi, Tuesday the 13th, 1967)*, *LBJ (1968)*, and *79 primaveras (79 Springs, 1969)*, and taught film documentary techniques to his disciples. His aesthetic preference for aggressive, fast-pace montage influenced many followers, and his Noticiero became one of the main pillars of the Revolution's Filmic Archive. Over the years, Álvarez's newsreels have served as an image bank for a wide variety of Cuban films, both fiction and non-fiction.

²⁸ For an analysis on Santiago Álvarez's work see Edmundo Aray, *Santiago Álvarez, cronista del Tercer Mundo* (Caracas, Venezuela: Cinemateca Nacional, 1983).

THE PLACE OF DOCUDRAMA IN THE REVOLUTION'S FILMIC ARCHIVE

By the late 1960s, the obsession with the documentary genre evolved into the docudramas that gave Cuba a top place on the map of the international film circuit. The insertion of fictional segments into a documentary format and vice versa captivated audiences, especially in Europe, always eager to see more Cuban state productions. Part of the interest resulted from the cultural climate set by the New Wave films that gained prominence during that decade. French, Japanese, German, and Italian films, among others, were traveling all over the globe to meet new audiences and a new atmosphere was in the air. ICAIC films joined this network, thus starting what became known as the Cuban New Wave. Among these were masterworks such as *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (*Memories of Underdevelopment*, 1968), *La primera carga al machete* (*The First Charge of the Machete*, 1969), *Girón* (*Bay of Pigs*, 1972), *El otro Francisco* (*The Other Francisco*, 1974), and *De cierta manera* (*One Way or Another*, 1974). All of them exemplify the predominance of the docudrama in the Revolution's Filmic Archive. On the island, these years would be known as the Golden Years of Cuban cinema.²⁹

Julio García Espinosa described many of these early films as examples of "Imperfect Cinema" in his now canonical essay "For an Imperfect Cinema" (1969). Applying Marxist theory to the film medium in order to call for a filmmaking strategy diametrically opposed to Hollywood's highly stylized and expensive studio productions, he explains:

Imperfect cinema is no longer interested in quality or technique. It can be created equally well with a Mitchell or with an 8mm camera, in a studio or in a guerrilla camp in the middle of the jungle. Imperfect cinema is no longer interested in predetermined taste, and much less in "good taste." It is not quality which it seeks in an artist's work. The only thing it is interested in is how an artist responds to

²⁹ For a thorough analysis on the first two decades and a half of Cuban film productions see Burton, "Film and Revolution in Cuba: The First Twenty-Five Years," 123-42.

the following question: What are you doing in order to overcome the barrier of the “cultured” elite audience which up to now has conditioned the form of your work?³⁰

García Espinosa’s own film *Las aventuras de Juanquín* (*The Adventures of Juan Quin Quin*, 1967) is the archetype of Imperfect Cinema. Although his theory seems to exclusively focus on filmic form and production, it is important to notice that this 1967 film is an adaptation of the novel *Juan Quin Quin en pueblo Mocho* by Cuban writer Samuel Feijóo. This detail may seem trivial, but the fact is that most ICAIC productions that were adaptations or closely related in other ways to literature eventually became classics. Therefore, it is important to look closely at how the interfacing between literature and film has evolved throughout the history of ICAIC, most especially in the case of film adaptations. In this way we will trace patterns that can help explain how and why literature in particular has helped fashion film as archive at the ICAIC.

Many films followed the same trend: *Memorias del subdesarrollo*, for example, was based on Edmundo Desnoes’s homonymous novel; *Páginas del diario de José Martí* (*Pages from José Martí’s Diary*, 1971) directed by José Massip, used the poet’s War of Independence diaries as its matrix; *Una pelea cubana contra los demonios* (*A Cuban Fight Against Demons*, 1971) drew from Fernando Ortíz’s homonymous book; among others. During the eighties and the nineties, three Cuban film classics were also based on literary works of fiction: *Cecilia* (1982), *La bella de la Alhambra* (*The Beauty of the Alhambra*, 1989), and *Fresa y Chocolate* (*Strawberry and Chocolate*, 1994). The first was Humberto Solás’ free adaptation of the nineteenth-century canonical novel *Cecilia Valdés* (1839) by Cirilo Villaverde; the second, Enrique Pineda Barnet’s take on Miguel Barnet’s testimonial novel *Canción de Rachel* (1969); the third, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea’s

³⁰ Julio García Espinosa, “For an Imperfect Cinema,” trans. Julianne Burton, *New Latin American Cinema*, ed. Michael T. Martin, vol. 1 (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1997) 82.

and Juan Carlos Tabío's 1993 adaptation of Senel Paz's 1990 prize winning short story "El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo." In the twenty-first century other adaptations have been produced, such as *Lista de espera* (*Waiting List*, 2000) by Juan Carlos Tabío, based on Arturo Arango's short story, and the film that is the topic of analysis in my first chapter, Rebeca Chávez's *Ciudad en rojo* (*City in Red*, 2009), based on José Soler Puig's novel *Bertillón 166*. Chávez's work will help us decipher why film adaptations have been so successful and how much they owe this success to their literary source.

MEMORY WARS: DISSIDENT CUBAN CINEMA AT HOME AND ABROAD

The long list of films mentioned above conform a catalog for the official filmic archive of the Cuban Revolution alongside a literary one including the novels and short stories already mentioned. But abroad, other films and works of literature by the exiled community have contested this official version by portraying in celluloid a different history of Cuba. One frontal attack appeared in the 1980s with Orlando Jiménez Leal and Néstor Almendros' *Improper Conduct* (1983), *The Other Cuba* (1984), and *Nobody Listened* (1987)—two of these were also co-directed by Jorge Ulla. Funded by Italian and French television, these documentaries aimed to record and denounce several tragic episodes of human rights violation in post-1959 Cuba, such as the persecution of homosexuals in the 1960s concentration camps known as Unidades Militares de Ayuda a la Producción (Military Units to Aid Production or UMAPs), the massive Mariel exodus in 1980, and the dire condition of political dissenters in Cuban prisons since. A contrarian filmic discourse was thus constructed abroad that began a "film war" against the ICAIC over the memory of these traumatic events "untold" on the island.

Young filmmakers have also contested the official archive working independently thanks to advances in digital technologies. Filmmaker Miguel Coyula, whose work is

discussed in Chapter 3, exemplifies a new generation of directors currently producing their own films without support from the ICAIC, often only counting on private funding or their own means. Coyula's film *Memorias del desarrollo* (2010) demonstrates the road taken by film artists that, born many years after the rebels took control of the island, unabashedly present an unflinching, disenchanted vision of the revolution as failure. As we will see, this film is, on the one hand, a tribute to ICAIC film directors Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Santiago Álvarez, and, at the same time, a piercing critique of the way film has been administered and constructed in Cuba.

Orlando Jiménez Leal and Miguel Coyula are thus combatants in what historians and literary critics have called the Cuban “memory wars,” that is, the fight to reframe disputed past events in literary and political history according to a pro- or con-revolutionary perspective. The memory wars have been discussed extensively in historical and literary studies; one of the contributions of this research project is to bring this debate to the realm of Cuban film studies. Rafael Rojas, for example, whose work focuses primarily on Cuban intellectual history, demonstrates in his book *El arte de la espera: notas al margen de la política cubana*³¹ (1998) the way that Cubans in Miami and Havana are at war when it comes to remembering the past. On one hand, those in support of Fidel Castro's government who live on the island choose to remember the past as a two-century long saga of revolutionary wars with a happy ending. Still, by celebrating an epic vision of national history and fixating on past injustices such as nineteenth-century slavery and the US 1898 military intervention in the Cuban-Spanish War, they dissimulate or erase memories of traumatic events in post-1959 Cuba. On the other hand, those in Miami remember the Cuban Revolution as a tragedy set off by

³¹ Rafael Rojas, *El arte de la espera: notas al margen de la política cubana* (Madrid: Editorial Colibrí, 1998).

Castro's opportunism and greed for power, thus foregrounding those very events that Castro supporters conspire to hide or forget. Rojas describes this polarized atmosphere as that of a symbolic civil war in which memory serves as the main arsenal. In *Tumbas sin sosiego*³² Rojas pays close attention to the memory wars in Cuba and its diaspora, focusing on how a pantheon of Cuban intellectuals once blacklisted are now "rehabilitated" in the island, such as Virgilio Piñera, José Lezama Lima, Gastón Baquero, Lydia Cabrera, Jorge Mañach, Eugenio Florit, and Severo Sarduy. In this dissertation we will see similar disputes involved the work and legacy of key filmmakers such as Santiago Álvarez, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, Sara Gómez, and Orlando Jiménez Leal.

Juan Carlos Quintero Herencia has also discussed the "politics of remembering," focusing on one of the most important Cuban cultural institutes ever to operate under the revolution: Casa de las Américas. In *Fulguración del espacio: letras e imaginario institucional de la Revolución Cubana, 1960-71*,³³ Quintero Herencia discusses the role of the journal *Revista Casa de las Américas* in the construction of an Latin American literary and intellectual archive that persists until today. This journal exemplifies the power of an institution that, like the Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC), serves to consolidate cultural authority in and outside the island. In his book he analyzes the complex negotiations that helped establish this archive during the first years of the revolutionary government, linking the constitution of *Casa* to three key documents that helped define the cultural policies of the revolution: Fidel Castro's "Palabras a los intelectuales" ("A Word to Intellectuals," 1961), Che Guevara's "El Socialismo y el hombre en Cuba" (1965) and Roberto Fernández Retamar's *Calibán* (1971). According to Quintero

³² Rafael Rojas, *Tumbas sin sosiego: revolución, disidencia y exilio del intelectual cubano* (Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama, 2006).

³³ Juan Carlos Quintero-Herencia, *Fulguración del espacio: letras e imaginario institucional de la Revolución Cubana, 1960-1971* (Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo, 2002).

Herencia, these documents became milestones for delineating Casa's intellectual agenda; in this dissertation I will see how they performed in the same way at UNEAC and for its filmic archive as well.

The Cuban crisis brought on by the fall of the Soviet Bloc, known as the Special Period, also provoked further reflections on the theme of memory while bringing to the forefront the decomposition of the Cuban Revolution. With no financial support from the Soviet Union, Cuba fell into a deep economic crisis that struck all levels of society; the responsibility for the present decay of the island seemed to fall unavoidably on the immediate revolutionary past. The nationalistic discourse established from the 1960s on did not work to justify the Special Period and the government had to modify its strategy to avoid focusing on the tumbledown present. José Quiroga argues that this was the reason why the Cuban Revolution, in the 1990s, began to recognize and rectify past errors such as the repression of intellectual and cultural dissidents during the “Grey Years”— *quinquenio gris*— of the 1970s. Quiroga uses the term “palimpsest” to explore “collective memory and memorialization, and their effects on the perception of time in Cuba.” In *Cuban Palimpsests*,³⁴ Quiroga argues that during the Special Period sequential time was suspended and that, without a future to look forward to, official and non-official processes of memorialization unavoidably superimposed the past upon the present. Through the metaphor of the palimpsest— that of a text written on top of another one— Quiroga analyzes the layering or overlapping of multiple temporalities in recent Cuban cultural production to argue that, as historical time in the Special Period seemed to stand still or remain frozen, the memorialization of past times and epochs turned into a compulsion or a fetish. Fidel Castro's visit to Harlem in the 1960s, Ana Mendieta's sculptural work in Cuba, and the funerals of Che Guevara and Celia Cruz, among other

³⁴ Jose Quiroga, *Cuban Palimpsests* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2005).

events, serve as a template to show how Cuban palimpsests operate and how compulsive memorializing in Cuba has a transnational character. In this dissertation we will see how scenes from different moments in pre- and post-1959 history are over-imposed as memory palimpsests in some of the film productions analyzed.

Building on the idea of the Cuban memory as palimpsest, in *Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption, and Resistance, 1959-1971*³⁵ Lillian Guerra follows Quiroga's proposition to uncover the counter-narratives of the Cuban Revolution but instead of focusing on the 1990s, she examines the first decade of the revolutionary project (1959-71, specifically) to "excavate the grand narrative of the Revolution" and unearth a counter-archive enriched by memories of both Cubans in exile and on the island. These memories are not just found in the testimonies of witnesses that lived during those years but also in censored or forgotten documentary films, radio transcripts, magazines, journals, private letters, diplomatic documents, and official press releases. According to Guerra, all of these "documents" can be read as palimpsests that contain within themselves an unofficial, untold narrative about the first years of the revolution. This dissertation will continue to track similar counter-narratives in filmic works by Coyula and Jiménez Leal.

Today, perhaps, the most predominant metaphor to talk about Havana and issues of memory is that of the ruin. The recent compilation *Havana Beyond the Ruins: Cultural Mappings after 1989*,³⁶ edited by Anke Birkenmaier and Esther Whitfield, gathers work that looks at the city of Havana as a repository of ruins. The predominance of ruins on the island and the decay of the capital have sparked many discussions on issues of memory,

³⁵ Lillian Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption, and Resistance, 1959-1971* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2012).

³⁶ Anke Birkenmaier and Esther Whitfield, eds., *Havana Beyond the Ruins: Cultural Mappings after 1989* (Durham: Duke UP, 2011).

restoration, and conservation. This interdisciplinary collection addresses these debates by including pieces by architect Mario Coyula, historian Rafael Rojas, writer and essayist Antonio José Ponte, as well as an analysis of urban hip-hop by critic Sujatha Fernandes, among others. This dissertation project will only comment on how Havana's ruins are regarded in different filmic images and perspectives, as early as in Gutiérrez Alea's *Memorias del subdesarrollo* in 1968 and as late as in Coyula's sequel in 2010.

CHAPTER DIVISIONS

As a way to organize this dissertation, the selection of the primary texts was based on three different criteria: literature that was directly connected to the film medium, contemporary works that revisited the early years of the Cuban Revolution, and books and films representative of three different areas: Cuban Official Cinema, Independent Cinema in Cuba, and Cinema by Cuban Exiles. By looking closely at these works, this research aims to trace the evolution of Cuban literature and film throughout the years and pinpoint the evident decay of the revolutionary process that is the focus of many of the contemporary documentaries and feature-films outside the Cuban state industry today.

The project as a whole is composed of four chapters, an introduction and a conclusion. Two chapters are devoted to literature and film by the Cuban state; one is focused on the recent independent film movement that has been able to produce films outside the Cuban film industry; and one is devoted to films produced by the exile community. With this broad spectrum, I aim to elaborate on the ways that the Cuban Revolutionary Filmic Archive has been constructed both on the island and from abroad as, while important artists, writers, and filmmakers have decided to stay in Cuba, a good number of them have left the island searching for a future elsewhere. This constant migration has expanded the archive by generating foreign editions and films that,

although oppositional and contestatory, are conceived and realized as a knowing and informed response to the cultural productions sponsored and promoted by Cuban institutions. As we will see, while independent and exile productions will distance themselves ideologically from the official discourse of the revolutionary apparatus, they will readopt, recycle, or reframe many of the discourse's themes and idioms just as they reverse them.

Chapter 1 analyzes the institutionalization of Cuban Literature and Film by two important government cultural agencies: Casa de las Américas and the ICAIC. Casa de las Américas was created as a publishing house for Cuban literature as well as a hub for Latin American literature. Casa established its literary prizes for novels, poetry books, essays, and *testimonio*, among other categories, to print editions of recent work created by intellectuals all over Latin America. The Cuban Film Institute, on the other hand, became the place to establish a film industry in charge of developing a “new” Cuban revolutionary cinema. By looking closely at the novel *Bertillón 166* (1960) by José Soler Puig and Rebeca Chávez's film adaptation of it titled *City in Red* (2009), we will analyze the role of literature within the Cuban film industry and how literature and film are controlled and managed by the Cuban state. *Bertillón 166* will serve as an example of how the novel of the revolution was commissioned, produced, celebrated, and monumentalized, and *City in Red* will demonstrate how Cuban films operate nowadays within the ICAIC. Chávez's film not only exemplifies the ways that the official Cuban Revolutionary Filmic Archive constantly glorifies the Cuban Revolution and revisits its beginnings in Santiago de Cuba; it also shows how ICAIC's own archive of newsreels and documentaries serves as a source for future cultural productions.

Chapter 2 uses Edmundo Desnoes's *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (*Memories of Underdevelopment*, 1965) and Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's film adaptation of this novel in

1968 as a bridge to move from the pro-government representation of Cuban literature and film to works that pushed the boundaries and challenged the restrictions on cultural production within the Cuban cultural apparatus. In the same year that Heberto Padilla had a brush with the authorities because of his poetry book *Fuera del juego*, Desnoes and Gutiérrez Alea (both who were responsible for the screenplay of the film adaptation) were able to make use of ambiguity and ambivalence in their filmic language to formulate a lateral critique of the revolutionary process without being censored. The use of the fictional bourgeois character Sergio serves as an excuse to examine the evolution of the revolution with a critical eye.

Forty years later, Desnoes relaunched a similar critique from his new home in New York City with the publication of a sequel to his first *Memorias*, now called *Memorias del desarrollo* (*Memories of Development*, 2007). I examine this novel in Chapter 3 as well as the film adaptation by young independent Cuban filmmaker Miguel Coyula. *Memorias del desarrollo* (*Memories of Overdevelopment*, 2010) serves as a perfect example of a film produced outside the Cuban film industry as well as in the United States. This chapter examines Desnoes and Coyula's new take on the revolution from a perspective completely outside Cuban institutions, and demonstrates how new digital technologies are modifying and changing the stories portrayed in Cuban cinema today. Interestingly, as previously mentioned, Coyula pays tribute to Gutiérrez Alea's 1968 film both in content and in form, but he does not use ambiguity for his own film. His critique of the Cuban Revolution is brutal and unequivocal.

Chapter 4, the last chapter, goes back to the early years of the Cuban Revolution to examine the first film censored by ICAIC: *P.M.* (1961) directed by Sabá Cabrera Infante and Orlando Jiménez Leal. The prohibition of *P.M.* established the cultural policy that the revolution expected writers and artists to subscribe to during the first years of the

revolution summarized by Fidel Castro's dictum: "within the revolution everything, against the revolution nothing." The *P.M. affair* also made it clear that the Cuban revolutionary government was reflecting on the place of culture on the island and how it should promote the commitment to the socialist ideals proclaimed that same year. As seen in Fidel Castro's 1961 famous speech "Palabras a los intelectuales" ("A Word to Intellectuals"), the problem was not form but content. *P.M.* was banned, then, not for the way or style in which it was made but for the messages that it contained. It was called antirevolutionary because, instead of portraying the heroism of ordinary Cubans resisting U.S. aggression at the time of the Bay of Pigs invasion, it recorded Havana's nightlife with people dancing and drinking. This "other Cuba" paves the way in this chapter for the analysis of other productions in exile that contest the official version of the Cuban Revolutionary Filmic Archive. To that end, I examine the trajectory of one of the most important filmmakers in exile, Orlando Jiménez Leal, and his documentaries *Mauvaise Conduite (Improper Conduct, 1983)*— co-directed by Néstor Almendros— and *L'altra Cuba (The Other Cuba, 1984)*, as well as his only docudrama film *8-A (1992)*. By looking at Jiménez Leal's filmography, this chapter seeks to understand how directors in exile followed similar formal strategies as the "official" filmmakers on the island (such as the documentary mode and the docudrama), but applied them to a completely opposed content to contest the official historical narrative of the revolution built by ICAIC. *8-A* will close the circle of primary texts to be analyzed in order to decipher the ways in which Jiménez Leal used the docudrama mode of production to construct his own narrative. By doing so, our research will also take into consideration the importance of this other branch of the Cuban Filmic Archive, that of literature and films produced in exile.

In all, this research project aims to contribute to the recent revisions of Latin American revolutions as their anniversaries are commemorated. These revisions include the debates over the role of film in the Mexican Revolution, as seen in Zuzana Pick's book at the beginning of this introduction. It also seeks to continue the line of studies in Cuban cinema started by Ann Marie Stock regarding new street filmmaking in the island in her book *On Location in Cuba: Street Filmmaking during Times of Transition* (2009).³⁷

³⁷ Ann Marie Stock, *On Location in Cuba: Street Filmmaking During Times of Transition* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2009).

Chapter 1: The Institutionalization of Cuban Literature and Film

INTRODUCTION: FROM BIRTH TO THEIR FIFTY-YEAR ANNIVERSARY IN CASA DE LAS AMÉRICAS AND ICAIC

As seen in the introduction to this dissertation, the institutionalization of Cuban literature and film was a gradual process that began early but took time to consolidate. During the 1956-58 revolutionary war, the rebels knew from personal experience that media served as an excellent tool to inform and mobilize the masses, but after their triumph in 1959 they also knew that an actual media infrastructure was needed to cement an official discourse in support of the new revolutionary government. While at war, the rebels had established clandestine radio stations— such as *Radio Rebelde*— and underground newspapers— such as *Revolución* and *Sierra Maestra*— to inform the Cuban people of their accomplishments. After 1959, these media platforms continued to be part of the new government's propaganda techniques. Literature and film would thrive, however, under the umbrella of the revolutionary government's two new institutions created in March and April 1959, the Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC) and Casa de las Américas, respectively. These two institutions would serve as the foundations for Cuban revolutionary literature and film to flourish; although they functioned independently, the interconnections between them demonstrated the importance of literature in film. Not only were novelists affiliated to Casa de las Américas hired to write screenplays at ICAIC; film adaptations of novels and short stories became a crucial component of Cuban revolutionary cinema. Many of the films to be examined in this dissertation, including the one in this chapter, fall into this last category of film adaptations.

As previously mentioned, another crucial component of post-1959 Cuban cinema was that of documentary filmmaking. The creation of the *Noticiero Latinoamericano* ICAIC (ICAIC's Latin-American Newsreel) as a branch that would

document the daily news— covering events inside and outside of Cuba— demonstrated the way that the infrastructure privileged this genre of film production. This Noticiero ICAIC, with Santiago Álvarez as its director, functioned as a school for documentary filmmaking within the Cuban Film Institute and simultaneously established an archive of documentary footage. In this “documentary school” many young directors learned about film production before moving on to produce their first fiction films. Many of them also used footage from the Noticiero for their future films. This documentary predilection created the docudramas that placed Cuban cinema on the map with films such as the next chapter’s object of analysis, *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (1968). Through these docudramas Cuba was able to capture the attention— at least in film circles— of the rest of the world.

As explained above, although the institutionalization of literature and film was gradual, it is important to note that the structure cemented on those first years of the revolutionary government still persists today. Both Casa de las Américas and ICAIC continue to operate supporting cultural productions in Cuba: Casa with its annual literary prizes and the ICAIC as a host to the International Film Festival of the New Latin American Cinema every December. But Cuban cinema is experiencing a transition as we speak. For decades, the ICAIC successfully managed to establish a monopoly in all branches of film production; nowadays filmmakers using video and digital technologies— outside the state-sponsored film industry— are challenging this monopoly, as we will see in Chapter 3. ICAIC, however, continues to fight for its survival the closer it gets to be outdated. One important film that celebrated the importance of the institute a few years ago was screened at the 50th anniversary of the ICAIC in 2009. This film, to be examined below, showed the way that the institute aims to survive: by underlining its achievements, that is, by focusing on the past.

THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ICAIC

The year 2009 marked half a century of the Cuban Revolution and the ICAIC—among other institutions— and became a celebration with organized events throughout the year. As the current president of the Cuban Film Institute, Omar González, stated “Celebrating 50 years of the ICAIC implies to do justice to its history when recuperating our memory is mostly needed, to remember what has been done and how it was done.”³⁸ To do so, many events were scheduled to commemorate the celebration, such as an international colloquium on the role of ICAIC in Latin American Cinema, an exposition called “Filmografía” to honor the Cuban poster tradition at ICAIC,³⁹ and a cultural program to pay tribute to the musicians closely related to the spheres of Cuban cinema. A whole catalog of fiction films was also produced and brought to the big screen in this context: *Kangamba* (2008) directed by Rogelio París about the war in Angola in 1983; *El viajero inmóvil* (2008) by Tomás Piard based on José Lezama Lima’s novel *Paradiso*; *El cuerno de la abundancia* (The Abundance Horn, 2008) by Juan Carlos Tabío about an imaginary town in Central Cuba called Yaragüey; *Anunciación* (Annunciation, 2008) by Enrique Pérez Barnet about spiritualism in Cuba; and Rebeca Chávez’s *Ciudad en rojo* (City in Red, 2009), a film about the revolutionary struggle in Santiago de Cuba, among others.

Multiple documentaries were also shot during this year, more than double the number of fiction films. In 2004, a documentary series called *Cuba: Caminos de la*

³⁸ Cited in Joel del Río’s “El ICAIC festejará trabajando su aniversario 50.” 2008, <http://www.lajiribilla.cu/2008/n376_07/labutaca.html> Translation is mine.

³⁹ The film poster tradition at ICAIC was an important branch of the Institute as explained by King: “Film poster art was encouraged by ICAIC, in particular by Saul Yelín; these posters revealed a refreshing heterodoxy and inventiveness at a time when modern art was condemned in the socialist bloc, showing that ‘pop’ and other forms could be reworked and given new meanings.” See: King, “Cuban Cinema: A Reel Revolution?,” 146.

Revolución established—five years earlier—the framework to revisit the fifty years of the Revolution. It dealt with seven important subjects: Che Guevara, the years preceding 1959, the first critical years of the Revolution, the exiles and migrations, Cuban art, Cuba’s foreign relations, and president Fidel Castro. Later on, many documentaries also became part of the 50th anniversary celebration, such as *Che* by Tristán Bauer, *Volveré y seré millones* by Jorge Fuentes, *Destinos* by Guillermo Centeno, *Una niña, una escuela* by Alejandro Ramírez and another series dedicated to Cuban Music directed by Pavel Giroud (jazz), Rebeca Chávez (fílin), and Patricia Ramos (religious music). The Animation branch also produced a total of twenty-five titles.⁴⁰

Among the films, one is able to identify several well established directors such as Juan Carlos Tabío, Tomás Piard and Rebeca Chávez, but at this moment a younger generation also begins to appear: Ernesto Daranas, Tristán Bauer, and Alejandro Ramírez. The number of new filmmakers is limited, but the ICAIC seems to be opening up to new faces. Proof of this is the National Exhibit of New Filmmakers (*Muestra Nacional de Nuevos Realizadores*), where younger generations are able to present their works and submit them to competitions. There has also been an interest in hiring recent graduates from the International School of Film and Television at San Antonio de los Baños (EICTV). For the larger events, however, such as the one organized for March 24th, 2009, a renowned documentarist was chosen.

REBECA CHÁVEZ’S FILM *CITY IN RED*: A HALF CENTURY CELEBRATION OF THE ICAIC

To commemorate the actual day of the anniversary, the feature film *City in Red* directed by Rebeca Chávez was screened at the Karl Marx Theater in Havana. More than a thousand people were present, including President Raúl Castro and the leadership of the

⁴⁰ A whole list of films may be found in Del Río, “El ICAIC festejará trabajando su aniversario 50.”

Cuban Communist Party (PCC). During the event, Leo Brouwer, the renowned Cuban musician, was awarded the 2009 National Film Prize and Alfredo Guevara received the Order José Martí. Such a big event invites us to pay close attention to the film here premiered because it was not scheduled merely by coincidence.

First, it is important to notice that Chávez's film is one of the two feature productions that year that revisit the early years of the Revolution by portraying the struggle in Santiago de Cuba. Daniel Díaz Torres and Eduardo del Llano also revisited the sixties in their film *Lisanka* (2009), with a story related to the missile crisis. In a way, both films erase or neglect to acknowledge any trace of the special period⁴¹ as if there had been no evolution in the development of the ICAIC. They both prefer to jump back two or three decades or more to tell their stories. It is also revealing that the directors who chose to go back to the early days of the Revolution—both Chávez and Díaz Torres—are from an older generation. Younger directors are interested in other stories.

Second, in a sphere dominated by male directors, *City in Red* is only the second feature-length film directed by a woman in Cuba, and it appeared thirty years after Sara Gómez's *One Way or Another* (1977). For this film, Rebeca Chávez chose to adapt José Soler Puig's novel *Bertillón 166* based on the armed struggle against Batista in the eastern city of Santiago. Soler Puig's novel was first published in 1960 by Casa de las Américas after winning its first literary prize. Originally, Soler Puig had sold the rights to his novel *Bertillón 166* to the ICAIC but its cinematic adaptation was never shot. It would be fifty years before it arrived on the big screen. As we will argue further on, this novel

⁴¹ In October 1990, Fidel Castro declared that Cuba had entered a “special period in time of peace.” He was referring to the economic crisis that Cuba was facing after the fall of the Soviet bloc. It was one of the worst economic crises in the history of the Cuban Revolution that took place during the first half of the 1990s. For a critical analysis of the Special Period see the collection of essays: Ariana Hernandez-Reguant, ed., *Cuba in the Special Period: Culture and Ideology in the 1990s* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

planted the seeds of a revolutionary cultural ideology in literature. It was written in the final years of the Revolution and published just one year after its triumph, but its importance relies on the fact that it was taken as a product of the revolutionary process, as if it had been written, so to speak, with a pen in one hand and a sword in the other. Needless to say, its adaptation fifty years later resuscitates this revolutionary ideology through the film medium. Indirectly, it also pays tribute to Casa de las Américas, the sponsor of the prize. Subsequently, several questions come to mind: Why was this film chosen for this celebration? Why did Chávez decide to adapt the novel fifty years later? What relevance does it have to revisit this book? What are the differences between *Bertillón 166* and *City in Red*? How do they represent the institutionalization of literature and film in Cuba?

Within the structure of this dissertation, *City in Red* serves as an example of the type of films promoted and produced by ICAIC. It is an archetypical film because it typifies the sort of productions that the Cuban Film Institute has favored throughout its more than 50 years of existence. Primarily, *City in Red* will not only help us analyze how the ICAIC continues to operate, but it also allows us to probe into the relationship between film and literature, film adaptations, and their relationship with state institutions. How have film adaptations worked at ICAIC? What type of literature is brought to the screen? How do films and works of literature become emblems of Cuban institutions?

Before getting into the discussion of the film, it is important to consider Rebeca Chávez's biography and trajectory. She joined ICAIC as a film critic in 1974 and later moved on to work with Santiago Álvarez for the *Noticiero Latinoamericano* ICAIC (ICAIC's Latin-American Newsreel) as his Assistant Director. From there on, she established a reputation as a film director with a filmography of over twenty documentaries including several about female subjects such as *Nacha Guevara* (1978)

and *Rigoberta* (1985), two shorts about Che Guevara titled *Entre leyendas* (1988) and *Octubre del 67* (1988), the documentary feature *Silencio... se filma Fresa y Chocolate* (1994), and three out of the seven films in the *Cuba: Caminos de la Revolución* series (*Antes del 59*, *Entre el arte y la cultura*, and *Fidel: acción y pensamiento*). Recently, after the release of *City in Red*, Chávez has directed two documentaries: a short called *El día más largo* (2011), about a TV interview with Fidel in January 4, 1959, and a feature called *Luneta no.1* (2012), an essay-like reflection on the fifty years of the Revolution, with Alfredo Guevara, among others. In 1992, she joined the fiction genre and produced *La fidelidad* and *El triángulo*, the latter an adaptation of the short story “Por un par de gomas” by José Manuel Prieto. And more than fifteen years later, she would adapt a novel for her first fiction feature film: *City in Red*. This filmography reveals a director operating in a high position within the ICAIC, especially since she was commissioned three out of the seven films in the *Cuba: Caminos de la Revolución* series. The treatment and representation of history will be entrusted in her hands and lenses.

According to Chávez herself, the idea for the film came originally from her re-reading of *Bertillón 166*, when Editorial Oriente republished it in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of its first publication. She decided to turn it into a movie with the help of the young screenwriter, Xenia Rivery. While the adaptation was primarily Rivery’s, they both collaborated in the script. In fact, it won several prizes that helped with the production cost, among them the Cinergia Competition in Central América, the Carolina Foundation in Madrid, and the IBERMEDIA program. The ICAIC also supplied funds for the film along with the National Autonomic Center of Cinematography (CNAC) in

Venezuela. Over all, the ICAIC opened for Chávez its connections to foreign co-producers to make this film possible.⁴²

Although the ICAIC supported the film monetarily, it is important to look deeper into the meaning of adapting, fifty years later, the first novel that won a literary prize at Casa de las Américas. On the one hand, it seems clear that the film seeks to pay homage to the revolutionary city of Santiago and to the figure of José Soler Puig, who won the 1985 National Prize for Literature. But, on the other hand, the film returns to the “glorious” years of the Revolution to recreate and reconstruct in the memory of the Cuban people what those years were like. Here, Michel Foucault’s definition of the term “popular memory”⁴³ proves to be useful in understanding the mechanics of what is at stake. For Foucault, people have a way of recording history, of remembering the struggles that have happened, which is a tradition that goes back to 19th century oral history in popular songs. People used their memory as an archive to record important historical moments, even if they were not able to read or write. Later on, however, “a whole number of apparatuses have been set up [...] to obstruct the flow of this popular memory” (91). He argues that both television and cinema are ways of reprogramming popular memory, that is, “people are shown not what they were, but what they must remember having been” (92). And in terms of power relations this means that “if one controls people’s memory, one controls their dynamism. And one also controls their experience, their knowledge of previous struggles” (92). In our case, *City in Red*, then, is depositing in people’s memories what the revolutionary struggle was like in the late fifties and also creating an image for the younger generations born after this period of

⁴² All of the details about the production of *Ciudad en rojo* come from a personal interview with the director that I was able to conduct in Havana, Cuba, in 2011.

⁴³ In Foucault, “Film and Popular Memory.”

time. The film wants us to remember Santiago de Cuba as a starting point and the sacrifices that *santiagueros* had to make during the revolutionary struggle. And since the younger generations did not experience this event, the film provides a visual occasion to “live” or “relive” it. Here film, not text, impacts popular memory because of its visual character. Chávez herself admits in her interviews that she hopes that younger Cubans would watch the film: “Above all, I would like younger generations to watch it, those that did not live through those dramatic circumstances.” Hence, her film will try to recreate the past through images, that is “re-imagine” it. Later on, we will see precisely how Chávez’s images control and manipulate the popular memory of this struggle.

At a symbolic level, simply looking at the poster of *City in Red* reveals the direction the film will take. The image is rather minimalistic, but it hides many symbolic meanings. At first glance, it is composed on a black background with red letters for the title and a human heart covered by the Cuban flag (Figure 2). The red color alludes to the words *City in Red*, with a range of meanings: the blood spilled in Santiago de Cuba or the “bloody city,” as Chávez herself calls it,⁴⁴ and at the same time it serves as a reference to the communist flag. These themes are linked to the film’s narrative as the story being told is about bloody fights and the communists involved in the struggle. The image of the heart, however, is more symbolic. In a sense, it signals that the film will go to the “heart of the matter,” or to the core of the dilemma, using the metaphor to imply that Santiago de Cuba is the setting where the revolutionary struggle unraveled. It makes a statement: Santiago is the heart of Cuba, the heart of the Revolution, alive and crucial. Hence, the film is not only about the underground struggle against Batista, but it also becomes a way to monumentalize where everything started. Likewise, the “heart of the matter” has always been the attack on the Moncada barracks on July 26th, 1953, a date immortalized

⁴⁴ Excerpt from my interview to Rebeca Chávez.

by the name of the revolutionary movement itself: M-26-7. Therefore, going back to Santiago implies going back to Moncada and to the starting point of the Revolution. This never-ending journey back in time and in cyclical motion exemplifies how some Cuban films operate by fusing past and present. In *City in Red*'s case, the fight in Santiago de Cuba is seen as an eternal struggle; history is understood in a circle where everything always goes back to the beginning. Timothy Barnard has studied this phenomena in other films of the ICAIC and he explains: "Cuban cinema incorporated and further elaborated this synthetic aesthetic [a propensity to confound past and present], creating in many of its historical fictions films a cinematic past-present tense via the conflation of documentary and fictional modes of address."⁴⁵ In a moment, we will see in further detail how *City in Red* follows this trend.



Figure 2: Close-up from the Poster of Rebeca Chávez's Film *City in Red*

By looking at the framing of the film, one finds some details related to its construction that are rather revealing. Fundamentally, it is organized into four parts: a prologue in black and white, the film in color, an epilogue also in black and white, and the credits with black and white photographs. The first section or prologue portrays

⁴⁵ Timothy Barnard, "Death Is Not True: Form and History in Cuban Film," *New Latin American Cinema*, ed. Michael T. Martin, vol. 1 (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1997) 147.

documentary footage from the city of Santiago and its people. Images are taken from the documentaries *Nosotros, la música* (*We are the Music!*, 1964) and *Iré a Santiago* (*I will go to Santiago*, 1964) by the well-known directors Rogelio París and Sara Gómez, respectively. They depict the every-day life of *santiagueros* dancing, playing music, at the market, at bars, etc. The second part of the film is in color and portrays the main story taken from Soler Puig's novel. The third is also black and white, and goes back to the archive using the "Noticiero ICAIC no. 710" and "NotiCuba, Edición especial", the former directed by Santiago Álvarez and the latter by Eduardo Hernández. In this case, the images of the epilogue depict a historical protest in Santiago de Cuba carried out by the mothers whose children had been assassinated by Batista's men. They chanted "No more murders!" and gathered at the church of the main square carrying signs and wearing black dresses to protest. Last but not least, the credits sequence includes a song by X Alfonso, a singer songwriter from the younger generation, next to images of his music video. Without getting into the details yet, it is important to notice how the main story is framed by the black and white footage from the early days of the Revolution. Focusing solely on the structure, we can argue that *City in Red* is literally mounted on two archival pillars: the documentaries of the early sixties and the *noticieros*, both Noticiero ICAIC and NotiCuba. It is as if Chávez's film is "born" from the 1964 documentary films and at the same time brought to completion at the end by the newsreels. Structurally speaking, then, Rebeca Chávez's film pays tribute to the most important branches of the ICAIC. To pay tribute to them here is equated with bringing them back to our memory.

Nevertheless, one also has to pay close attention to Rebeca Chávez's citations and their meanings. At first sight, it seems as if she chose the archival materials based on their content, that is, those related to Santiago de Cuba. After digging deeper, however, one will find additional explanations for her selections. Chavez's film begins looking for a

“definition” of *santiagueros*, as it becomes evident with the first lines of the voiceover: “The people of Santiago. Just like any other in Cuba. The same blacks, the same whites, and the same *mestizos*. And even the same *bullas*. But they are different. Where is the difference? It is hard to know. But also hard to ignore.” While these lines are being read, the film portrays parts of the documentaries by París and Gómez as if implying that the images have the answer to this question. We see Afro-Cubans dancing and playing drums on a table (Figure 3A), in addition to depictions of the everyday life of *santiagueros* (Figure 3D), etc. The city, within the recontextualization of Chávez’s film, is racialized and portrayed within a stereotypical scope: Santiago de Cuba as the city of carnival. Sara Gómez, however, originally sought to pay tribute to the history of Afro-Cuban culture, a recurrent theme in her filmography, as the critic Chanan has noticed.⁴⁶ Yet, interestingly, both París and Gómez’s images are manipulated and resignified. They are taken out of context and used as part of the 1958 revolutionary struggle, that is, the setting of José Soler Puig’s *Bertillón 166*. But when one pays close attention to the dates in which their films were made, one notices that both of them were produced five years after the triumph of the Revolution in 1964. Additionally, Chávez juxtaposes this original footage with her own, portraying Batista’s repression in Santiago and the rebels (Figure 3B, 3C, 3E and 3F). In order to achieve this recontextualization taking the viewer back to 1958, Chávez chooses to film additionally, in black and white, Batista’s *esbirros* (bailiffs) and their crack down on the *santiagueros* (Figure 3B). Therefore Chávez’s footage adds the missing pieces to the puzzle and also redefines the ones that were shot fifty years before. By using the cross-cutting technique, she literally, juxtaposes past and present and deposits her own footage in the realm of popular memory. With this clips, she reminds us of the *esbirros*, and therefore of Batista’s repression. In this way, Chávez’s film is

⁴⁶ Michael Chanan, “Films: 1959-1989,” *Cuba*, ed. Alan West-Durán (Farmington Hills: Gale, 2011) 328.

exemplifying how the Cuban Film Institute controls, dominates and determines what should be remembered. We need to recall the repressive past in order to value the revolutionary present.

Nonetheless, we must pay close attention not only to the content of the cited images but also to those who shot them because, by choosing *Nosotros, la música* and *Iré a Santiago, Chavez* is paying tribute to the history of ICAIC.

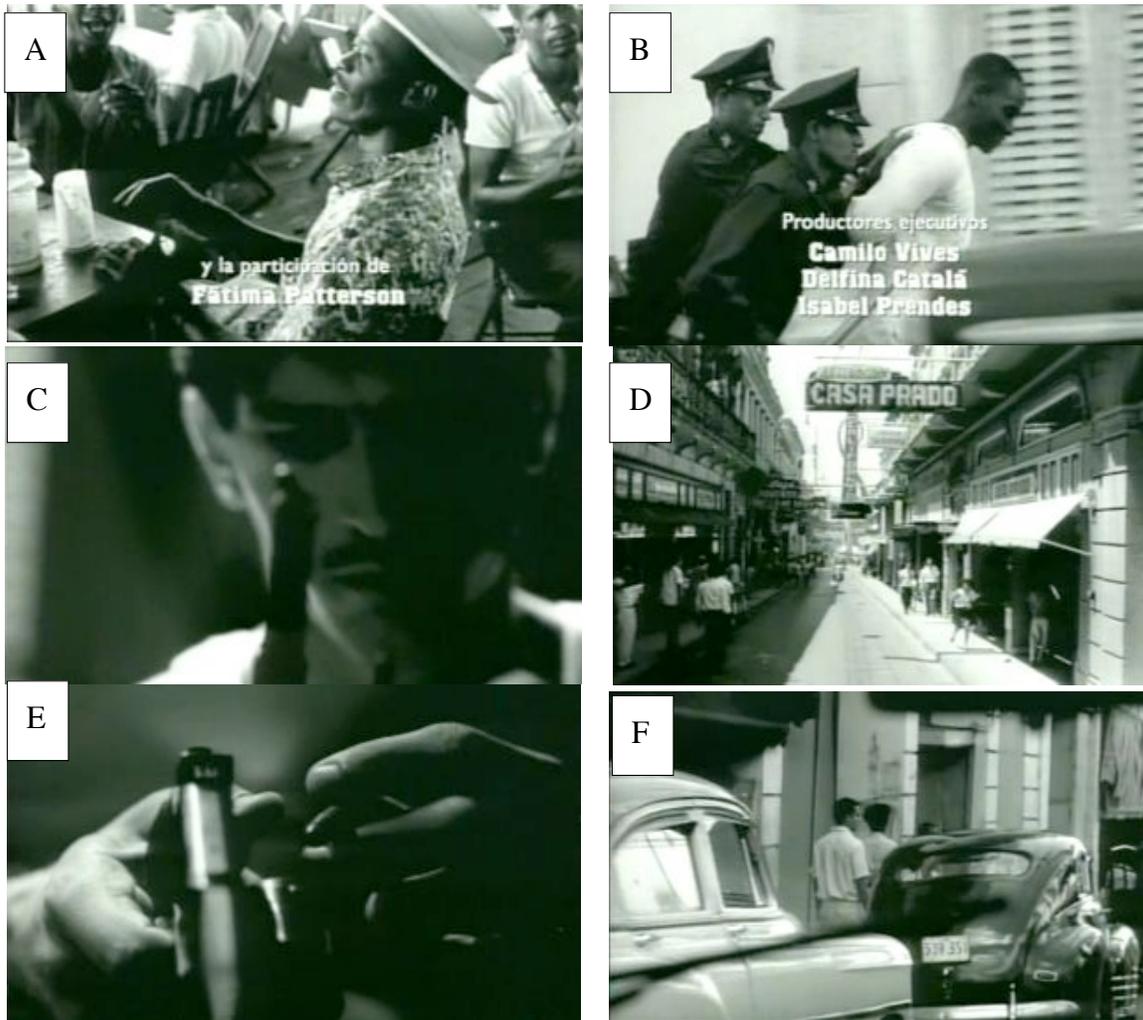


Figure 3: Cross-Cutting in Chronological Order at the Beginning of *City in Red*

Today, the documentary *Nosotros, la música* has become a Cuban classic, known for its beautiful depiction of Casino Dancing and for including the famous popular singers Carlos Embale and Celeste Mendoza. In it, Rogelio París tried to capture the essence of Cuban music and those genres related to the Afro-Cuban heritage such as rumba, *guaracha*, and the son, among others.⁴⁷ It is a true masterpiece, cited here in part to honor the Golden Years of the ICAIC. But doubly important, however, is the citation of Sara Gómez because of her significance in the history of Cuban cinema.

Gómez was the only female director to produce a feature film in the first fifty years of the Revolution. Her film was called *De cierta manera* (One Way or Another, 1974) and is also a Cuban classic. As indicated before, interestingly– and not by coincidence– Chávez is the second female director to produce another feature film after Gómez. Hence, it is particularly important to notice that out of the whole crew of renowned Cuban directors, she chose to remember and highlight her female colleague. In a way, she pays tribute to the Golden Years of the ICAIC but through the voice of a female director. Moreover, Sara Gómez was Afro-Cuban, which adds complexity to the equation because her interests revolved around the Afro-Cuban community. But interestingly Chávez’s citation blurs this side of Gómez and the problems she had forty years earlier for dealing frequently with Afro-Cubans themes.⁴⁸ Hence, popular memory should remember problems of the past but not problems of the revolutionary present.

Chávez’s third selection for citation honors another key figure of the ICAIC: the head of the News branch, Santiago Álvarez. As explained above, this director was

⁴⁷ Chanan, *Cuban Cinema* 334.

⁴⁸ For Sara Gómez career see Inés María Martiatu, “Con Sara Gómez, palabras para una expo,” *La Jiribilla* 339 (2007). And for the problems she ran into with the authorities see: Odette Casamayor-Cisneros, “Gómez, Guillén, Giral: Three Underappreciated Filmmakers,” *Cuba*, ed. Alan West-Durán (Framington Hills: Gale, 2011) 409-13.

Rebeca Chávez's mentor in the mid-seventies when she worked as his Assistant Director. Álvarez is also part of the "Golden Years" of Cuban cinema; before his feature films and documentaries, he gained recognition for being the mastermind behind the *Noticiero Latinoamericano* ICAIC. The *Noticiero* began in 1960 announcing national and international news and usually opened in theatres along with a feature or documentary film. Its main objective was to inform the audience as to what was happening in Cuba and the rest of the world, and it became a key piece of the "machine" that was the ICAIC. By including the "Noticiero ICAIC no. 710" directed by Álvarez, then, Chávez is honoring one of the key pillars of this institution, a name that had to be mentioned and remembered in the fifty-year anniversary. He is also remembered every year at the Festival Internacional de Documentales Santiago Álvarez in Memoriam (International Film Festival of Documentaries Santiago Álvarez in Memoriam), an event that shows how his figure has been officialized.

In the epilogue, Chávez also fuses past and present as seen in Figure 4. The first shot is of the *santiaguera* mothers (Figure 4A) followed by footage from the newsreels (Figure 4B, 4C, 4D) and of Batista's soldiers (Figure 4E, 4F). Figure 4A is Chávez's recreation of the actual protest, juxtaposed with the black and white images of the newsreels, which suggests a traveling back in time to 1958. In this case, Chavez needed to set the context of the protest and the only image that she adds captures the message on the banner: "Stop the killings of our children" (Figure 4A). Once more, the strategy is to fuse both frames so that the difference between them turns out to be unrecognizable.



Figure 4: Epilogue of *City in Red*

Furthermore, the credits section of the film also alludes to the important and close relationship that Cuban musicians had with the ICAIC; specifically, those from what would later be called the *Nueva Trova* movement such as Silvio Rodríguez, Pablo Milanés, Noel Nicola, and Sara González. All of them— along with others— formed the group called *Grupo de Experimentación Sonora del ICAIC* in 1969, under the direction of guitarist and composer Leo Brower. As Robin Moore explains in his book *Music and*

Revolution,⁴⁹ these young musicians had begun writing songs in the early sixties, but it was not until they were hired by the ICAIC that they acquired recognition and distribution. In this sense, the ICAIC was the first institution to give the *trovadores* institutional support in exchange for film scores. Many of the scores were instrumental pieces, although later on songs interpreted and sung by Rodríguez and Milanés would appear in other films. The best example of this is Manuel Octavio Gómez's *La primera carga al machete* (*The First Charge of the Machete*, 1969) with Pablo Milanés' songs and screen appearance. In Chávez's case, she features a more contemporary musician: the Cuban hip-hop and Afro-rock star X Alfonso. While listening to his song called "Ángeles," we see stills of its official video next to the credits. By choosing X Alfonso, then, Chávez pays tribute to the *trovadores*, placing them in the sphere of popular memory.

From the discussion above we can see that Chávez's film was ideal to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the ICAIC. But the film carries within it other discourses that were fundamental to justify the Cuban Revolution itself. For example, one of the main and overtly proclaimed goals of the Revolution was to abolish racial inequality. In the film, this topic is portrayed with one of the main characters, Waldino, the Afro-Cuban communist. In Soler Puig's novel, as we will see below, this is a secondary character operating peripherally to the rest. But in the film, Waldino becomes more of a protagonist— and the thread that links all the scenes together— who returns to Santiago de Cuba after ten years in Havana. The film suggests, as the novel did, that Waldino brought his political knowledge from the capital, turning him into a key element in the organization of the struggle against Batista. Symbolically, his figure also represents the

⁴⁹ Robin Moore, *Music and Revolution: Cultural Change in Socialist Cuba* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2006) 153-54.

ideal of racial equality. From the beginning, one of the arguments used to justify the Revolution itself was that of social integration: Afro-Cubans, *mulatos*, whites, etc., all should be equal in the new society. Here, the figure of Waldino reifies that ideal and supports the argument that racial integration began during the rebellion itself. Even further, it literally suggests that it was one of the driving forces of the uprising. The film also takes it to the extreme by having one of Batista's esbirros say at the beginning of the story that "los negros no se meten en política," ["blacks are not involved in politics"]. The message is clear: during the Batista years, there was open racism. This racism is further exemplified at the end of the story when a white soldier kills Waldino for no given reason; it is understood that it was just because of his skin color.

In the film, Waldino's association with the actual Cuban Communist Party (PCC) is inevitable because of his political beliefs. He is the only member of the Party in the film, a party that by at that time was named the Popular Socialist Party (PSP). Interestingly, the PSP had a troubled relationship with the rebels of the July 26th movement, as they did not support Fidel Castro's armed struggle at the beginning.⁵⁰ Therefore, in Waldino we see a character that represents this conflict and in his words we hear the voices of the communist militants. "There is nothing revolutionary about those dead bodies on the truck," he says to the head of the movement in Santiago de Cuba. We see him as he disagrees, but this disagreement represents that of the PSP with Castro in 1958.

Indirectly, however, Waldino's words on the screen bring us to the image of the present day PCC. He is a spokesman for the institution that has become the PCC, the only political party on the island. In 1960, when Soler Puig published the novel, the PSP was

⁵⁰ The PSP criticized the attack to the Moncada Barracks as a bourgeois attempt of the opposition, as published in "The Daily Worker" newspaper on August 10, 1953. Later on, they were also skeptical of the 26 of July movement.

not the ruling party. Currently, however, it is. Therefore, some of Waldino's words in the film are inevitably read today as quotes of the PCC. Today these words have a special echo, especially given the power the PCC has gained since the novel was written.

The film also establishes a diametrical opposition of the racial discourse between the blacks of the Batista period and the avant-garde, politically committed blacks of the rebels. On the one hand, Afro-Cubans under Batista are represented on the screen as jubilant; people that live their lives mostly dancing, drinking, and playing music. In a scene at the end of the film, for example, Raquel— one of the characters that represents the urban underground— arrives at a Cuban house to seek shelter from the police. Outside the house we see people playing drums and dancing to the rhythm. Their representation is not only stereotypical of Santiago de Cuba—the city of carnival—but also establishes a distinction between the Afro-Cubans in Santiago and those in Havana. In eastern part of the island, Afro-Cubans seem to lack political commitment. Waldino, on the other hand, serves as a role model who is committed to ending social injustice and taking down the dictatorship. This statement is revealing, especially if one compares that portrait to a similar one of Afro-Cubans in the film *PM* by Sabá Cabrera Infante and Orlando Jiménez Leal or the *Pello el Afrocán* early scene in Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's *Memorias del subdesarrollo*. In *PM*, the same sensual portrait of Afro-Cuban people will provoke a fatal blow of censorship from the state apparatus, as we will see in the subsequent chapters.

Chávez's film also perpetuates another revolutionary discourse that goes back to the struggle in the 1950s, that of justified violence. As the official synopsis of the movie expresses:

City in Red proposes a reflection on violence from those who do not have a vocation for violence, to those who are forced into it. When violence is imposed,

to recuperate peace, sometimes there is no other option but to respond with violence, a violence that one may consider legitimate.⁵¹

This statement supports the legitimate use of violence against the dictatorship in response to the massive killings of Cubans by Batista's men. But it also tries to justify any use of violence by revolutionary forces. *City in Red* argues that violence is always justified if it is in the name of justice. Rafael Rojas has examined this "Justicia Rebelde" [Justice of the rebels] as a state of exception.⁵²

City in Red also argues in favor of images as vehicles of truth. Particularly, in one of the initial scenes, Carlos Espinosa and Raquel are looking at the newspaper *Diario de Cuba* and the camera zooms in on images of dead bodies (Figure 5). The film uses the article to convey the message that those images are proof of what was happening in Santiago de Cuba and that if one does research in the archives one will find that "truth." The newspaper is an archive itself, like the movie is meant to be in the future.



Figure 5: Assassinations in the *Diario de Cuba* Newspaper

⁵¹ Original in Spanish as: "Ciudad en rojo propone una reflexión sobre la violencia en aquellas personas que no tienen una vocación para ella, para aquellos que se ven obligados a ella. Cuando la violencia se impone, para recuperar la paz, algunas veces no hay otra opción que responder con violencia, una violencia que podría considerarse legítima."

⁵² See Rafael Rojas, *Justicia rebelde*, 9 June 2008, <http://www.cubanet.org/CNews/y08/junio08/09_inter_1.html>

Another key detail that invokes reimagining the past is the last scene of the film, which replaces the ending of the novel. In *Bertillón 166*, which we must not forget was written in the late fifties, the final scene is cruel and tragic: a newspaper displays a list of the deceased, including nearly all the characters in the novel. They have all been killed by the tyrannous government and under the words *Bertillón 166*, revealing to the audience that they had been killed by gunfire. *Bertillón 166* was the code given to those killed by gunfire during the dictatorship to avoid mentioning the political motives of their deaths. *City in Red*, however, moves away from that sphere and ends on a happy note indicating a positive outcome that the audience should recall, that is, the triumph of the rebels. Perhaps one of the reasons for fusing the past and the present is to signal that the future will always be known and will always be the same. Thus, the rebels will win the fight, without a doubt. Chávez however makes this denouement abundantly evident by presenting the execution of one of Batista's captains at a barbershop. Furthermore, Chávez takes advantage of this moment to clarify the agenda of the film, which is to portray the people of Santiago as heroes, and the city as the epicenter of the Revolution. Instead of ending the film with a list of martyrs, it ends with heroic figures that will fight until victory. Raquel's last look at the camera (Figure 6) with a smile on her face invites the audience to remember what they already know. The Cuban military present at the Karl Marx Theatre would also smile because they know who is going to win.



Figure 6: Raquel's Last Look at the Camera

THE CUBAN REVOLUTIONARY ARCHIVE BUILT BY CASA DE LAS AMÉRICAS

With literature, the Cuban government followed a similar track of privileging the printed word by creating the cultural center *Casa de las Américas*.⁵³ This entity established literary prizes which would dictate the parameters of the “new” literature to follow. By design, the first novels that won the prizes portrayed the revolutionary struggle in a positive light, as *Casa's* main purpose was to create a literary archive for the revolution. Interestingly, Rebeca Chávez's *City in Red* participates and extends this institutionalization of literature, and we must revisit *Bertillón 166* and José Soler Puig to better understand this archival construction.

JOSÉ SOLER PUIG: THE “IDEAL” REVOLUTIONARY WRITER

José Magín Soler Puig was born in the eastern city of Santiago de Cuba on November 10th, 1916. He received his primary education at the Dolores Jesuit School and later pursued a career in accounting at La Salle College [Colegio La Salle]. He would eventually abandon this career and spend the first four decades of his life working in over forty jobs to sustain his family. Some of these jobs included working as a bakery

⁵³ Dopico Black has analyzed the promotion and censorship of revolutionary work by the Cuban State in: Georgina Dopico Black, “The Limits of Expression: Intellectual Freedom in Postrevolutionary Cuba,” *Cuban Studies* 19 (1989): 107-42. For a response and expansion of her argument refer to: Antonio Benítez Rojo, “Comments on Georgina Dopico-Black's “The Limits of Expression: Intellectual Freedom in Postrevolutionary Cuba,”” *Cuban Studies* 20 (1990): 171-74.

salesclerk, chauffeur, peddler, army soldier, sugar cane cutter on a field in Camaguey, real estate broker, oil industry technician at Pinar del Río, and many others. Later on, he would admit in his interviews to having switched jobs, rather than for money, to become exposed to many different professions that would aid him in constructing his fictional characters.⁵⁴ One prime example of this appears in what critics deem his best novel: *El pan dormido* (1975), in which his early working experience at a bakery served as the inspiration for his creative endeavor.⁵⁵ His first published novel, *Bertillón 166* (1960), also used another technique, that of interviewing real people in order to draw out fictional worlds from their stories. For this novel, Soler Puig interviewed *santiagueros* from all sides of the conflict- *batistianos*, rebels, and civilians- as we will see later on in further detail.

Aside from this broad range of experience, Soler Puig's political involvement in the revolutionary struggle began in 1957 when he joined the 26th of July Movement while working at Guantánamo. At 41, he was too old to fight at the Sierra Maestra, so instead he engaged in underground activities to aid the revolutionaries, hiding weapons and ammunition for the rebels. This experience, as well as the interviews mentioned above, was the basis of *Bertillón 166*. But more importantly, the triumph of the Revolution brought a career change to Soler Puig, from itinerant worker to state-supported writer. To pursue this career, Soler Puig moved to Havana in 1959 and worked as a screenwriter for the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television (ICRT) and, briefly, for the Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC). He also wrote as a journalist and war correspondent during the Bay of Pigs invasion; this event that was a devastating experience to his family

⁵⁴ Luis Sexto, "José Soler Puig. Los secretos del oficio," *Bohemia* 80.45 (1988).

⁵⁵ For further studies on *El pan dormido* read Ricardo Repilado, "Algunos caminos para llegar a 'El pan dormido'," *Santiago* 20 (1975).

because his brother Rafael, among those who fought against the Revolution, was captured and executed. Nonetheless, Soler Puig would overcome this traumatic episode in his life and lead a successful literary career, becoming president of the Cuban Writers and Artists Union (UNEAC) in Santiago de Cuba in 1978. He also received the Distinction Award in that same city as well as the Order “Félix Varela” in 1982, Cuba’s highest honor for cultural merit. In 1986 he shared the Cuban National Prize in Literature with José Antonio Portuondo and the poet Eliseo Diego.

Soler Puig’s first literary attempts began long before the 1960s. He started writing short stories when he was 17 years old, inspired by the short fiction that Ecuadorean writer Gerardo Gallegos published regularly in the Cuban magazine *Carteles* in the 1930s. Soler Puig admitted that his first short story was but a “carbon copy” of Gallegos’ “El pequeño salvaje,” and that the experience prompted him to continue aspiring to make a living as a short story writer.⁵⁶ In 1939, he became a published writer when a friend sent one of Soler’s short stories titled “Noche infernal” to the magazine *Cúspide*, in Melena del Sur, Mayabeque province. This publication gave Soler Puig enough confidence to send his work to other magazines. Although *Cúspide* had a short life span, having a story published there was in itself a great accomplishment since, in spite of being published far from Havana, *Cúspide* had established itself as a paramount magazine in Cuban literary circles by featuring the work of local and international writers such as Fernando Ortiz, Medardo Vitier, Alfonsina Storni, Juan Ramón Jiménez, and Miguel de Unamuno. Young Cuban writers such as José Lezama Lima, Fina García

⁵⁶ Soler Puig admits his admiration for Gerardo Gallegos in many interviews, such as: Madelyn Cámara, “Nadie nace escritor,” *El caimán barbudo* 16.173 (1982): 6-7, 28.

Marruz, and Dora Alonso– like Soler Puig– would also publish in *Cúspide* early on in their literary careers.⁵⁷

For near two decades, after that first publication, Soler Puig was only able to publish a few short stories such as “Dos mujeres” (1956) in *Carteles*, “Dos viejos” (1956) in the magazine *Antorcha* in Guatánamo, and “Cábala” (1958) and “El ciego” (1958) in *Revista Galería*. Other short stories would not see the light because they would confront direct censorship by the Batista dictatorship in the 1950s, as was the case of “Dos ventanas.” The Cuban revolutionary government would later publish this work as an integral part of Soler Puig’s literary corpus. But even more crucial than the publication of these short stories by the Cuban government was the promotion of Soler Puig’s novels from 1960 on. Before 1959, Soler Puig had written two unpublished novels that are now lost. But it was not until 1960 that his work became fully recognized when Casa de las Américas⁵⁸ awarded its first literary prize to his novel *Bertillón 166*, a prize that guaranteed its publication and distribution. This was Soler Puig’s first published novel just one year after the rebels took control of the island. From that moment on, Soler Puig would continue to write mainly in this literary genre and produce eight more works: *En el año de enero* (1963), *El derrumbe* (1964), *El pan dormido* (1975), *El caserón* (1976), *Un mundo de cosas* (1982), *El nudo* (1983), *Anima sola* (1986), and *Una mujer* (1988). He would also become known for writing plays such as “La chimenea,” “El macho y el guanajo,” “La sal,” and “El derrumbe.”⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Alicia Elizundia Ramírez and Joaquín Borges Triana, *Cúspide: evocación de un ayer con presente* (La Habana: UNEAC, 1990).

⁵⁸ For more information about this literary prize please refer to the book by Inés Casañas and Jorge Fonet, eds. *Premio Casa de las Américas: Memoria, 1960-1999* (La Habana: Casa de las Américas, 1999).

⁵⁹ Aida Bahr, *José Soler Puig: El narrador* (Santiago de Cuba: Ediciones Santiago, 2006).

By subscribing and underpinning this prolific literary production, the Cuban government was able to proclaim Soler Puig as the “ideal” revolutionary writer. On one hand, his emergence as a literary icon coincided with the birth of the Revolution itself; he was seen as a product of the revolutionary struggle. Soler Puig represented the ideal of the revolutionary writer armed with both the pen and a gun. Soler Puig could also be considered as an emblematic revolutionary writer because he was from Santiago de Cuba, the “heroic” city where on July 26, 1953, Fidel Castro and his men started the insurrection against Batista with their surprise attack on the Moncada Barracks. This ideal revolutionary city would have to give birth, naturally, to ideal revolutionary writers. Not only was he from Santiago, but also his employment history legitimized him as a writer-worker (*escritor-obrero*) with life experiences in over forty jobs. This writer-worker category implied that Soler Puig acquired his literary skills from personal experience rather than through social privilege, and in that sense he was closer to the interests and sensibility of the labor movement than to highly cultured bourgeois literary circles. Although he went to Catholic School, a privilege in itself, he admitted to be a self-taught author,⁶⁰ an “authentic” writer who learned his narrative and observation skills thanks to his participation in the Cuban revolutionary struggle. Had it not been for the Cuban Revolution, today Soler Puig would be long forgotten. But Soler Puig also fitted the formula of the ideal revolutionary writer because his first novel portrayed the revolutionary struggle *itself*, in the “ideal” city, with “ideal” protagonists, and with the “ideal” literary style.

⁶⁰ Soler Puig explains in his interviews that he learned to write by reading *Don Quijote de la Mancha* over and over and trying to imitate Cervantes. For the direct citation see Jorge Luis Hernández and Aida Bahr, *Conversar con José Soler Puig* (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 1991) and Ezequiel Pérez Martín, “Un puntual de la novelística cubana contemporánea,” *Bohemia* 75.29 (22 July 1983): 14-18.

Nonetheless, Soler Puig's career ascent was not as easy or straightforward as it seems. Informally, Soler Puig did receive some literary guidance and institutional assistance from José Antonio Portuondo,⁶¹ a distinguished professor at the University of Oriente, who would later become one of his mentors. In interviews Soler Puig recalls how he met with Portuondo at his house to discuss his short stories and to talk about literature.⁶² This was fifteen years later, from the date that Soler Puig started to write. During one of these meetings, Portuondo told Soler Puig to turn some of his short stories into a novel. This is how *Bertillón 166* came to be. In addition, Portuondo managed to enroll Soler Puig at the University of Oriente although he would not last more than a semester. The new student felt too old to start to seek an academic degree.

His literary formation would not stop with Portuondo's mentorship. The cultural center Casa de las Américas also provided a training ground for him. Besides being awarded its first literary prize they offered writing workshops for Cuban writers in which he participated. For example, in 1961, Casa de las Américas sponsored one with Mexican writer Juan José Arreola, with whom Soler Puig worked on his novel *El maestro*, although he eventually decided to destroy the manuscript. Although in these workshops Soler Puig learned more about the structure and mechanics of a story, it is also important to note that he won his award before taking part in any of them. The prize was clearly the key that opened the door to what would become the most exclusive of Cuban literary circles. That may be one of the reasons why after 1960, Soler Puig was able to publish more frequently in magazines such as *Taller Literario* and *Cultura 64*- both published in

⁶¹ José Antonio Portuondo was a professor, writer and essayist from Santiago de Cuba. He is considered the main intellectual of the eastern part of Cuba.

⁶² Hernández and Bahr, *Conversar con José Soler Puig*.

Santiago de Cuba-, and in important newspaper cultural supplements such as *Lunes de Revolución* and *El Caimán Barbudo*.⁶³

The prize also enabled him to pursue his career as a writer working on radio soap operas. As a whole he wrote over fifteen soap operas— some of them were adaptations of his novels— such as *Bertillón 166*, *En el año de enero*, *El derrumbe*, *Este tiempo y el otro*, *María Elena*, *Corazones enemigos*, *Historia de dos tiempos*, *La familia Perdomo*, and *El nudo*, among others. He also became a screenwriter at ICAIC, as mentioned previously, and wrote with Jorge Fraga and Julio García Espinosa the script for “Año nuevo”, one of three parts comprising the film *Cuba 58*. He also wrote the script for *Preludio 11*, a Cuban-German production and there was a film treatment by Gutiérrez Alea to adapt *Bertillón 166* that never was produced.

In all, he was very prolific until his death on August 2, 1996.

BERTILLÓN 166: THE FOUNDING NOVEL OF THE REVOLUTION

As mentioned previously, the Cuban revolutionary government used literature as another way to record history. Literature became another way to document the history of the Revolution, a new building block in the archive. As it happened in other socialist or communist countries before, little by little a specific type of literature was to be favored by the authorities; that of committed socialist realism. After a period in the sixties during which high modernist and experimental texts could still be published— José Lezama Lima’s *Paradiso* and Reinaldo Arenas’ *Celestino antes del alba*, among others, appeared at this time— this type of literature will reach its peak in the 1970s, with novels such as Miguel Cossío Woodward’s *Sacchario* (1970) and Manuel Cofiño López’s *La última*

⁶³ It is particularly important to note that on February 15, 1960, *Lunes de Revolución* published a selection of *Bertillón 166* with Alejo Carpentier’s decision to support Soler’s novel for the Casa de las Américas prize. We would like to argue that Carpentier’s sponsorship had much to do with Soler winning.

mujer y el próximo combate (1971), but the foundations for this enterprise or campaign were established early on during the first years of the previous decade. Proof of the favoritism for this realist turn are two novels that won the Casa de las Américas literary prize in the first three years of the Revolution: José Soler Puig's *Bertillón 166* (1960) and Daura Olema García's *Maestra Voluntaria* (1962). They both portrayed the Cuban revolutionary struggle in a realist style that became attractive to the government that had assumed power recently. *Bertillón 166*, on one hand, provided a textual space to document the July 26th Movement's achievements in Santiago de Cuba, while *Maestra Voluntaria*, on the other, added to the archive the experience of women in the 1960 literacy campaign. These two events are crucial in the history of the Cuban Revolution and will be recorded in the archive at length.

Moreover, paying close attention to the foundational bricks of *Bertillón 166* will reveal how the novel of the revolution came to be.⁶⁴ The story behind this novel, the prize that it was awarded and all, were not a result of a mere coincidence. Everything was part of a platform to establish the parameters for a new literary canon, a new type of literature that would go side by side, mainly ideologically, with the Cuban Revolution. To trace that orchestration, let's look closely at the history of *Bertillón 166*.

As mentioned previously, the idea for *Bertillón 166* began in a conversation that José Antonio Portuondo had with José Soler Puig. Portuondo had read many of Soler Puig's short stories before but he made special emphasis on the need for a novel about the insurrection, that is, a fictionalization of what was currently happening in the island. He called it "the novel of the insurrection" and asked Soler Puig to write it while suggesting the title, the main argument, the time frame, and even two characters to add in it. He told

⁶⁴ For a history of the novel of the Cuban Revolution see: Rogelio Rodríguez Coronel, *La novela de la revolución cubana* (La Habana: Letras Cubanas, 1986), Seymour Menton, *Prose Fiction of the Cuban Revolution* (Austin: U of Texas P, 1975).

Soler Puig that it should be called *Bertillón 166*, that the action had to take place over the period of one day, and that a Afro-Cuban communist had to be one of its main characters. The title *Bertillón 166* was taken from a secret code used in the newspaper *Diario de Cuba* during the Batista dictatorship to report and expose the number of rebels tortured and killed in Santiago de Cuba by the repressive government.⁶⁵ The daily obituaries included names of the deceased next to the cause of death and the forensic doctors wrote Bertillón 166 next to the names of those murdered by the dictatorship as a way to avoid censorship. The word Bertillón was taken from the French criminologist Alfonso Bertillón and the number 166 to classify the type of death as “by gunfire.” This history charged the title with a special symbolic value.

From then on, Soler Puig began to work on it organizing each scene. It only took him two month to write it because everything was already in his mind. This was in 1958 right before the rebels’ victory.⁶⁶ By then, Soler Puig wanted to publish it abroad with a pseudonym. But with the triumph of the Revolution things changed, and Portuondo asked him to send the manuscript to the Casa de las Américas literary prize. Among the judges at Casa de las Américas were Alejo Carpentier and Enrique Labrador Ruiz from Cuba, Miguel Otero Silva from Venezuela, and Carlos Fuentes from México. They all agreed to award *Bertillón 166* with the prize. We should underline the role that Carpentier had in this decision. Carpentier was already a renowned writer, having published some of his most famous works in the 1940s and 50s like *El reino de este mundo* (*The Kingdom of this World*, 1949) and *Los pasos perdidos* (*The Lost Steps*, 1953). His support for *Bertillón 166* paved the way for it to win, a decision that showed how content would be

⁶⁵ “De Bertillón 166 a Ciudad en rojo, medio siglo después,” 2009, Casa de las Américas, <<http://laventana.casa.cult.cu/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=4816>>, 16 June 2012.

⁶⁶ Yamilé Haber, “Epitafio: He sido feliz,” *¡Ahora!* 7 Sept. 1996: 8.

valued over form in the revolutionary literary archive. Carpentier himself admits that the novel had its flaws in its writing. In his vote he wrote:

Di mi voto a *Bertillón 166* porque, en ese libro, se revela un auténtico temperamento de novelista. Desde las primeras líneas del relato, el autor nos arroja, sin preámbulos ni disquisiciones, en pleno drama: drama que es el de la resistencia de la lucha contra la tiranía, en Santiago de Cuba. [...] No diré que su estilo sea siempre satisfactorio, en cuanto a la factura misma de la prosa. Pero el novelista, el narrador nato, queda siempre por encima de sus propios “modos de hacer”.⁶⁷

[I voted for *Bertillón 166* because the book reveals an authentic temperament of a novelist. From the first lines of the story, the author throws us, without ado or digressions, straight into the drama: a drama about the fight against tyranny in Santiago de Cuba. [...] I will not say that its style is always satisfactory, in terms of the quality of the prose. But the novelist, the born narrator, is always in control of his own “forms of creation.”]

His comment reveals the negotiations that were being held on the path that the new revolutionary literature had to take. The Revolution, from the government to the intellectual circles, had to redefine the role of literature and giving the prize to *Bertillón 166* demonstrated clearly where they were aiming, at least for this first period right after the triumph of the revolutionary forces. Content was more important than form, a rule that will be ratified a year later in Fidel Castro’s speech “Palabras a los intelectuales” (“A Word to Intellectuals”), in which he declared that counterrevolutionary content would not be tolerated, as we will see in Chapter 4.

Soler Puig also represented the author politically committed to the Revolution. This was another key element of the new revolutionary literature. The militancy was seen as an integral part of his or her work of art. Soler Puig, long before that decade, exemplified the author who devoted his life to the Revolution. He joined the July 26th Movement in 1957 and later on the Cuban Communist Party, two examples that

⁶⁷ Vote published in Alejo Carpentier, “Bertillón,” *Lunes de Revolución* 15 Feb. 1960: 18.

demonstrated how his role as a writer was validated by his militancy. The Minister of Culture, Armando Hart, will underline this crucial militancy in the 1982 tribute to Soler Puig. In his own words: “José Soler Puig, militante de nuestro partido, es por ello un gran ejemplo a seguir en su vida y su obra.” [José Soler Puig, militant of our political party, is, for this, a great example to follow in his life and work.]⁶⁸ In this way, the Cuban Revolutionary Archive will open its doors to those writers whose life was devoted to the Revolution, merging author and work of art as one and the same, and exclude those that did not show a strong commitment to the new government or the Communist Party. This would establish the grounds to censor and erase from the Cuban Literary Archive those writers who wrote openly against the Revolution, such as Guillermo Cabrera Infante and Reinaldo Arenas, among others.

Interestingly enough, another incident in Casa de las Américas also reveals how literature was being redefined. Virgilio Piñera was among the judges for the poetry prize in 1960 and he voted against the winning poetry selection because it lacked poetic and aesthetic value. He disagreed with the other judges with their verdict that this type of literature– the politically committed one– should be encouraged and stimulated in the Cuban Revolution. This stimulus will govern what will or will not be included in the revolutionary archive.⁶⁹

Soler Puig’s later contributions to the revolutionary archive were more celebrated than *Bertillón 166*. More criticism has been written about his latter novels, like *El pan dormido* (1975), which is considered his masterpiece. This admiration is evident in the *Jornada narrativa a la memoria de José Soler Puig*, organized every year on November 2 in Santiago de Cuba by the UNEAC. Because of it new critical work is published

⁶⁸ Armando Hart Dávalos, “En el homenaje a José Soler Puig,” *Casa de las Américas* 23.133 (1982): 8-15.

⁶⁹ See Inés Casañas and Jorge Fonet, eds. *Premio Casa de las Américas: Memoria, 1960-1999* 27-30.

regularly about Soler Puig by Editorial Oriente, such as the book-length study *José Soler Puig: el narrador* (2006) written by Aida Bahr. In fact, Bahr herself is the one that has mentioned the problems with what has been said about Soler Puig by the critics. She explains that by labeling him as the “writer of the Revolution” much analysis has been lost because the analysis is biased by ideology. Bahr writes:

El epíteto, tan justa y frecuentemente dado a José Soler Puig, de "novelista de la Revolución", así como su interés por reflejar el contexto histórico, han contribuido en muchas ocasiones a prejuiciar el análisis de sus obras, a buscar en ellas un reflejo mimético de la realidad y una intencionalidad político-ideológica en todo cuanto escribió. Son muchos los críticos que han hecho referencia a su pasión experimental y a los complejos rejugos psicológicos que sirvieron de base a algunas de sus novelas, pero esto no disipa la imagen de Soler como cronista de su tiempo, y en el plano temático se pasan por alto muchas veces aspectos significativos, o se valoran en forma errónea a través de un prisma exclusivamente político.⁷⁰

[Both the epithet “novelist of the Revolution,” fairly and frequently attributed to José Soler Puig, as well as his interest in capturing the historical context, have contributed in many ways to a biased analysis of his work, in which there is a search for a mimetic reflection of reality and a political-ideological intentionality in all he wrote. Many scholars have pointed out his experimental passion and the complex psychological games that served as the basis of some of his novels, but this has not erased Soler’s image as a chronicler of his time, and frequently, important aspects are overlooked at the thematic level, or they are erroneously praised through an exclusively political prism.]

The analysis is predominately ideological and the Literary Archive is also governed by ideology.

As we have seen, the Cuban government used *City in Red* and *Bertillón 166* as cultural artifacts to condition in Cuban popular memory what needs to be remembered. *Bertillón 166* was institutionalized by conceding to it the literary prize at Casa de las Américas and *City in Red* by having its premier on the fiftieth anniversary of the Cuban

⁷⁰ Aida Bahr, “De ‘incesto’ y locura,” *Valoración crítica de José Soler Puig*, eds. Aida Bahr and Orestes Solís Yero (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 2006) 70.

Film Institute. It is intriguing, however, what will happen with films that pushed the boundaries of the restrictions within ICAIC, with the novels that pushed the boundaries within UNEAC, and with films produced independently or in exile. That is what we will examine in the next chapters.

Chapter 2: Challenging the Cuban Revolutionary Archive from Within

INTRODUCTION: EDMUNDO DESNOES AND TOMÁS GUTIÉRREZ ALEA

Another literary figure Cuban cinema has revisited in recent years is that of Edmundo Desnoes, the renowned Cuban writer of *Memorias del subdesarrollo*, first published by Ediciones Unión in 1965,⁷¹ and two years later adapted to a film directed by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea.⁷² Both Desnoes and Gutiérrez Alea worked on the script in 1967, creating a symbiotic relationship between literature and film that, although it had been previously put into practice, achieved perfection in this film. To this day, *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (*Memories of Underdevelopment*), which premiered in 1968, is considered one of best films in the history of Cuban cinema and achieved what other Cuban films had not accomplished: international recognition. Before examining the film, however, we need to pay close attention to the way that Desnoes and Gutiérrez Alea pushed the Cuban Filmic Canon to the limit through experimentation in both form and content. The first hints of this future experimentation reside in the figure of Desnoes himself and his relationship with the literary supplement *Lunes de Revolución*. Desnoes will also push the boundaries in literature to the limit.

⁷¹ Many scholars, such as Enrico Mario Santí, have paid close attention to Desnoes' 1975 edition of *Memorias del subdesarrollo*, which was published in México by Joaquín Mortiz, rather than the original text published in 1965. This novel was also published in Argentina by Editorial Galerna in 1968, and an English translation by Desnoes himself titled *Inconsolable Memories* appeared in New York in 1967. It is important to note here that there are major changes between editions. After the film was produced, Desnoes added new scenes from the script to his own novel. This chapter will take into consideration both the first edition and the following ones. For the first edition see: Edmundo Desnoes, *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (La Habana: Ediciones Unión, 1965).

⁷² *Memorias del subdesarrollo*, dir. Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, ICAIC, 1968. For a detailed transcription of the script and an English translation of the novel see: Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Edmundo Desnoes, *Memories of Underdevelopment*, Rutgers Films in Print (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1990).

EDMUNDO DESNOES'S EARLIER CAREER

Like the figures of José Soler Puig and Rebeca Chávez, examined in the previous chapter, Edmundo Desnoes and Tomás Gutiérrez Alea gained prominence after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959. The new government marked their trajectories, a detail that is crucial to the understanding of their cultural productions. Although both of them were already involved in pre-revolutionary cultural circles, as we will see below, their fame was brought up within the revolutionary structure.

On the one hand, as has been discussed thoroughly,⁷³ many renowned Cuban intellectual figures, such as Alejo Carpentier, José Lezama Lima, Virgilio Piñera, among others, established their reputation and published their major works before 1959: Carpentier published *El reino de este mundo* (*The Kingdom of this World*) in 1949 and *Los pasos perdidos* in 1953, Lezama Lima published, along with José Rodríguez Feo, the literary journal *Orígenes*⁷⁴ in the 1940s and 50s; as well as *La expresión americana* in 1957, and Virgilio Piñera published *La carne de René* in Argentina in 1952 and *Cuentos fríos* in 1956. On the other, however, the younger generations – including Desnoes and Gutiérrez Alea– began their literary and filmic careers before the revolution– in groups like *Orígenes* and *Nuestro Tiempo*– and cemented them later on within the recently established cultural institutions created by the new government. We have seen the role played by Casa de las Américas and ICAIC within the revolutionary apparatus, but to start with the figure of Edmundo Desnoes we need to examine two other important

⁷³ For a panoramic discussion on this topic see: John S. Brushwood's *The Spanish American Novel: A Twentieth-Century Survey* (1975), Gerald Martin's *Journeys through the Labyrinth: Latin American Fiction in the Twentieth Century* (1989), Raymond L. Williams's *The Twentieth-Century Spanish American Novel* (2003); Jean Franco's *An Introduction to Spanish-American Literature* (1994); Giuseppe Bellini's *Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana* (1985); and Naomi Lindstrom's *Twentieth-Century Spanish American Fiction* (1994).

⁷⁴ For further discussion on this journal see: Jorge Luis Arcos, *Orígenes: La pobreza irradiante* (La Habana: Letras Cubanas, 1994).

cultural circles established in the early 1960s: *Lunes de Revolución*, the literary supplement of the *Revolución* newspaper, and the National Union of Cuban Writers and Artists (UNEAC). These two state-sponsored institutions also played a crucial role in the cultural production of the island and more importantly, as we will see below, in the editorial world of the Cuban Revolutionary Archive.

Early in his literary career, Edmundo Desnoes had only published two poems in the— by then famous— literary magazine *Orígenes*: “Pecado es distracción es distraernos” and “A Juan Gris,”⁷⁵ and a collection of poetry and short stories in 1952 called *Todo está en el fuego*. Although this literary production may seem scarce, it reveals how Desnoes’s literary career began under the sponsorship of one of the most important intellectual figures in twentieth-century Cuba: José Lezama Lima. As the editor of *Orígenes*, Lezama Lima chose to publish Desnoes’s poems and opened the doors for his future career. Later on, however, his abrupt break up with this Cuban intellectual⁷⁶ forced a lull in his literary endeavors (1952-59). During these years, he moved abroad to teach English at the American School in Caracas, Venezuela, and also went to New York in 1956, where he worked as a translator and writer for the magazine *Visión* (1956-59).⁷⁷ Desnoes did not establish himself as a recognizable literary figure until 1959, when he returned home and collaborated with the newspaper *Revolución* and its Monday literary supplement *Lunes de Revolución*.

⁷⁵ Edmundo Desnoes, “Poemas,” *Orígenes* 7.27 (1951): 43-44.

⁷⁶ For a summary of the debate on the relationship between José Lezama Lima and Edmundo Desnoes see: Jorge Camacho, *Sexo, mentira y narración: El (des)engaño entre Lezama Lima y Edmundo Desnoes*, 2010, <http://www.habanaelegante.com/Spring_Summer_2010/Dicha_Camacho.html#nota8>

⁷⁷ For a detailed explanation of Desnoes’ early career at *Visión* and *Lunes de Revolución* refer to: César A. Salgado, “Detranslating Joyce for the Cuban Revolution: Edmundo Desnoes’ 1964 Edition of *Retrato del artista adolescente*.” *TransLatin Joyce: Global Transmissions in Ibero-American Literature*. Eds. Brian L. Price, César A. Salgado and John Pedro Schwartz (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). 121-54.

Critics have described *Lunes de Revolución* as one of the most important literary publications within Cuban literary history.⁷⁸ Under the direction of Guillermo Cabrera Infante and the guidance of Virgilio Piñera as an advisor, *Lunes* became a powerful cultural institution in charge of weekly publications related to cultural productions in and outside the island. To publish here meant to be authorized by the literary circles working under the support of the Cuban Revolution. Desnoes, however, not only wrote for *Revolución* and for *Lunes*, but also published his first two novels *No hay problema* (1961) and *El cataclismo* (1965) under *Ediciones R*, the editorial house created by the group heading the literary supplement. This publication record reveals that Desnoes's career as a fiction writer really took off after the revolutionary apparatus cemented its own institutions. Another institution that sponsored Desnoes's work was Casa de las Américas which published a short essay of his on the work of one of his close friends, the Cuban painter Wifredo Lam: *Lam: azul y negro* (1963).⁷⁹ Two other key cultural institutions also sponsored his fiction later on: the Union of Cuban Writers and Artists (UNEAC) and the Cuban Book Institute (Instituto Cubano del Libro). Now, the change in publishing houses was not incidental. All of Desnoes's publications carried a trace of the cultural policy changes that the revolution underwent during the 1960s as the government aimed to control literary cultural production. It was not by chance that Unión, UNEAC's publishing house, published his novel *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (1965) or that the Cuban Book Institute published his book of essays *Punto de vista* (1967). *Ediciones R* and *Lunes de revolución* would not survive the government's censorship of the arts. Later on, as the sovietization of the Cuban state became more evident, Desnoes even had to

⁷⁸ For a detailed history and index of *Lunes* see: William Luis, *Lunes de Revolución: literatura y cultura en los primeros años de la Revolución Cubana* (Madrid: Verbum, 2003).

⁷⁹ Edmundo Desnoes, *Lam: azul y negro*, Cuadernos de la Casa de las Américas (Habana: Editorial Nacional de Cuba, 1963).

look for foreign publishers in Mexico for his book *Para verte mejor, América Latina* (1972),⁸⁰ in collaboration with Italian photographer Paolo Gasparini.

As we will see in depth in Chapter 4, *Lunes de revolución* was the first and most important cultural platform on the island after 1959. According to its director, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, 250,000 copies of the supplement were distributed at its peak.⁸¹ Seven months prior to its shutdown, *Lunes* had clashed with the Cuban authorities for supporting a 16-minute *free cinema* short titled *P.M* by Cabrera Infante's brother, Sabá, and Orlando Jiménez Leal. This was the tipping point of a conflict between artists and the government that prompted Fidel Castro's famous speech "Palabras a los intelectuales" ("A Word to Intellectuals") in which he declared: "Within the revolution everything, against the revolution nothing."⁸² It was only a matter of time before *Lunes* would be closed. But as other critics have noted,⁸³ the shutdown was a response to the critical year in which the conflict emerged: 1961. Not only was this the polarized year in which Fidel Castro declared the socialist character of the revolution, but also when the Bay of Pigs invasion occurred. The attacks against the revolution were too recent and *Lunes* ended up paying the price. Many intellectuals associated with *Lunes* later left the island including the directors Guillermo Cabrera Infante, and Carlos Franqui of *Revolución*, among many others.

⁸⁰ See: Paolo Gasparini and Edmundo Desnoes, *Para verte mejor, América Latina*, 1st ed. (México: Siglo XXI Editores, 1972).

⁸¹ Guillermo Cabrera Infante, "Un mes lleno de *Lunes*," *Lunes de revolución: literatura y cultura en los primeros años de la Revolución Cubana*, ed. William Luis (Madrid: Verbum, 2003) 153.

⁸² Fidel Castro, "Palabras a los intelectuales," *Política cultural de la revolución cubana: documentos* (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1977) 17. The translation is mine.

⁸³ As Chanan explains: "The significance of the moment is crucial to what happened. The incident took place six weeks after the invasion of the Bay of Pigs [. . .] Perhaps *P.M.* was only a mildly offensive film, but in the euphoria that followed the defeat of the mercenaries the mood of the country was bound to make it seem worse." For a broader explanation see: Chanan, *Cuban Cinema* 133-34.

To replace *Lunes*, the Cuban revolutionary government established the National Union of Cuban Writers and Artists (UNEAC) at the First National Congress of Cuban Writers and Artists in August 1961.⁸⁴ Following the structure of similar unions established in other socialist countries, the UNEAC would be in charge of monitoring literature and the arts. As William Luis has noticed:

After the closing of *Lunes*, the Unión Nacional de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba (Union of Cuban Writers and Artists) was formed, which gathered and supervised writers and artists looking for avenues of expression. The UNEAC essentially appropriated from *Lunes* the role of promoter of literature and the arts, filling the literary and cultural void created by the disappearance of the magazine. Three new publications emerged from the UNEAC: *Unión*, *La Gaceta de Cuba*, and *Hola*, as well as the Editorial House UNEAC.⁸⁵

It was precisely with this new editorial house at UNEAC— called Unión— that Edmundo Desnoes published the first edition of his third novel *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (1965) under the contemporary literature series (*contemporáneos UNEAC*). Although Desnoes's first two novels were an attempt to write “the novel of the revolution,”⁸⁶ it was not until his third novel *Memorias del subdesarrollo* came out that he gained worldwide recognition, thanks, in part, to the film adaptation. Two years later, Desnoes translated his own novel, and published it in English with a different title: *Inconsolable Memories*. As Menton explains, The New American Library in New York published the English translation of *Memorias* and the book obtained “significant reviews in the *New York*

⁸⁴ For a compilation of the documents and articles related to the foundation of UNEAC see: Humberto Rodríguez Manso and Alex Pausides, eds., *Cuba, cultura y revolución: claves de una identidad* (La Habana: Colección Sur Editores, 2011). This compilation also includes a revision of the cultural policy established by Castro's “Palabras a los intelectuales,” forty years later.

⁸⁵ William Luis, “Exhuming *Lunes de Revolución*,” *The New Centennial Review* 2.2 (2002): 277.

⁸⁶ Desnoes admitted his intentions with his first two novels in an interview with William Luis: “I was completely overwhelmed by the Revolution [. . .] I felt the Revolution was so powerful that I had to describe it.” The excerpt appears in: William Luis, “America Revisited: An Interview with Edmundo Desnoes,” *Latin American Literary Review* 11.21 (1982): 10.

Times, the *Nation*, and the *New York Review of Books*".⁸⁷ The translation also included new scenes from the script of the film adaptation, which Desnoes wrote along with the director Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, such as the scene at Hemingway's museum, the Bay of Pigs coverage, and a longer section on the Missile Crisis. This symbiosis of novel and film proved to be a great success and exemplified the complex scenario in which literary and filmic production stood during the 1960s. Although Desnoes admits that the inclusion of documentary images— such as the ones about the Bay of Pigs invasion— was an idea of Gutiérrez Alea,⁸⁸ it cannot be argued that the film's success was only thanks to the director himself. As we will see below, Desnoes's novel— and pen— were also crucial in the construction of the film.

Desnoes's publication of *Memorias del subdesarrollo* under UNEAC is significant because it exemplifies that during the 1960s, there was still space for experimentation and controversial themes within the cultural institutions sponsored by the Cuban state. Evidence of this openness is available even as late as 1968 when an international jury at UNEAC awarded the poetry prize to Heberto Padilla's *Fuera del juego* and the José Antonio Ramos prize to Antón Arrufat's play that worked as an allegorical critique of Cuban bureaucracy, *Los siete contra Tebas*. Padilla's poems were openly critical of the revolution and Arrufat's play created a controversy that would mark

⁸⁷ Seymour Menton refers to these reviews in his *Prose Fiction of the Cuban Revolution*, on page 29. He cites the following articles: Eliot Fremont-Smith, "Books of The Times: Out of Cuba, a Cry of Pain, a Work of Art," *The New York Times* 12 June 1967: 43, Richard J. Walton, "Down and Out in Havana," *The Nation* 16 Oct. 1967: 378-79, David Gallagher, "The Literary Life in Cuba," *New York Review of Books* 23 May 1968: 37-41. For the reviews published in the United States after the release of the film adaptation see the appendix to the compilation published by Rutgers UP.

⁸⁸ While referring to the Bay of Pigs episode in *Memories* Desnoes explains: "The idea of including the Bay of Pigs invasion was the idea of the director, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea. He wanted to experiment with the technique of having an essay within the film. I was skeptical at the beginning of whether it would work. It's a long parenthesis within the film, which might have destroyed the continuity. It didn't. It was successful." Excerpt taken from: Luis, "America Revisited: An Interview with Edmundo Desnoes," 16.

a shift in cultural policy in the island. Desnoes's novel and Gutiérrez Alea's adaptation, enjoyed this artistic freedom of the previous years and showed that art within the literary and filmic circles was still permissive of auto-criticism and experimentation in content and form. Three years later, in 1971, the revolutionary government no longer tolerated this experimentation and criticism, and Padilla's imprisonment sent a clear message.⁸⁹ From then on, the Cuban state closely monitored artistic expression, and post-1976, the new Ministry of Culture, a branch of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC), took on its administration.

Desnoes's last publication during the 1960s was a book of essays titled *Punto de vista* (1967),⁹⁰ in which he developed his theories on underdevelopment and photography. This essay collection compiled two pieces published previously in *Lunes de Revolución*: "¡Dondequiera que se encuentren!" and "Martí en Fidel," one piece published in the Mexican magazine *¡Siempre!* called "El último verano," and two articles from the *Casa de las Américas* journal: "La imagen fotográfica del subdesarrollo" and "Aquí me pongo." Of all of these, the most important one was "The Photographic Image of Underdevelopment,"⁹¹ which Julia Lesage later translated with this title, for its resonance with both Desnoes's novel and its film adaptation. In it Desnoes deconstructs the media's constant representation of Latin America as underdeveloped through the use of images. This essay contains the seed for what would later be challenged in the film adaptation.

⁸⁹ For a detailed account on the Padilla affair see: Lourdes Casal, *El caso Padilla: literatura y revolución en Cuba* (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1971). Also refer to his memoirs in: Heberto Padilla, *La mala memoria* (Barcelona: Plaza & Janés Editores, 1989).

⁹⁰ Edmundo Desnoes, *Punto de vista* (La Habana: Instituto del Libro, 1967).

⁹¹ Edmundo Desnoes, "The Photographic Image of Underdevelopment," *Jump Cut* 33 (1988): 69-81.

The Cuban Book Institute, an institution where Desnoes worked in 1967, published this last book of essays. This detail may seem trivial but reveals how Desnoes managed to adapt to the new cultural institutions that were created in the post-revolutionary period. Ana Serra succinctly summarizes the continuous changes in publishing houses during that first decade:

In 1962, the Imprenta Nacional gave way to the Editora Nacional, which decentralized the production process of books, if not the decision on which books would be published. The Editora Nacional emphasized youth and children's literature. Additionally, Edición Revolucionaria was founded in 1965 and focused on textbooks, of which there had been a severe shortage since the beginning of the Revolution, introducing the cost-saving technique of publishing what were essentially photocopies of books. UNEAC, which founded a publishing house called Unión, and Casa de las Américas worked within the Editora Nacional as relatively independent publishers until the creation of the Instituto Cubano del Libro, in 1967, which recentralized all processes related to book production.⁹²

Now, Desnoes worked for the Cuban Book Institute and also at the National Publishing House (Editorial Nacional de Cuba) from 1961 to 1966 and at the editorial board of the *Casa de las Américas* journal from 1965 to 1970. Unlike some of his colleagues at *Lunes*, such as Guillermo Cabrera Infante and Severo Sarduy, Desnoes seemed to adapt well to the vigilant apparatus of the Cuban Revolution. That is part of the reason why he left Cuba later than most, in 1979, rather than during the 1960s.

Desnoes's collaborations with the Cuban government did not limit themselves to publishing original work, but also translations of renowned literary figures such as James Joyce. As critic César A. Salgado has noticed:

In 1964 Desnoes thus found himself working with Ambrosio Fornet on a publishing series on the top modern Anglo-European writers of the Twentieth Century—"Autores de Nuestro Tiempo"—as part of the "Biblioteca del Pueblo"

⁹² Ana Serra, *The "New Man" in Cuba: Culture and Identity in the Revolution* (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2007) 55.

initiative at the Editorial del Consejo Nacional de Cultura, then under Alejo Carpentier's direction.⁹³

Desnoes's translation of *A Portrait of the Artists as a Young Man* for this Publishing House joined the euphoria of the early years of the revolution and the absorption and translation of Anglo-European modernism into the "Cuban language." Such a position was not only fostered early on within the *Lunes de revolución* group, as Salgado explains, but also by other pre-revolutionary journals such as *Orígenes* and *Ciclón*.⁹⁴ The *Ciclón* circle already sympathized with "existentialism, psychoanalysis, theater of the absurd, Beat poetry," among other art movements, and Desnoes will also be attracted towards them. His translation of Joyce demonstrated that he had his aesthetical and philosophical preferences defined, also exemplified in his art criticism of cubist painter Pablo Picasso and his friend Wifredo Lam.⁹⁵ Desnoes was not only drawn by the aesthetical aspects of the avant-garde painters, but also one of his preferences was that of existentialism, as seen from his first novel on.

DESNOES'S FIRST NOVELS OF THE REVOLUTION

Although *No hay problema* and *El cataclismo* were similar in subject to José Soler Puig's *Bertillón 166*—Desnoes's first two novels portrayed the Cuban revolutionary struggle, the former in the 1950s, the latter in the early 1960s—, both novels contained hints that already suggested that Edmundo Desnoes was about to take a different path. On

⁹³ César A. Salgado, "Detranslating Joyce for the Cuban Revolution: Edmundo Desnoes' 1964 Edition of *Retrato del artista adolescente*," *TransLatin Joyce: Global Transmissions in Ibero-American Literature*, eds. Brian L. Price, César A. Salgado and John Pedro Schwartz (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) 132.

⁹⁴ The journal *Ciclón* came about from the rupture between the two editors of *Orígenes*: José Lezama Lima and José Rodríguez Feo. It established itself as a journal opposite to *Orígenes* publishing works by figures such as Virgilio Piñera, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Antón Arrufat, Severo Sarduy, Calvert Casey, José Álvarez Baragaño and Ambrosio Fornet.

⁹⁵ See: Desnoes' *Lam: azul y negro* and his article "Picasso: vivir es pintar" in *Lunes de Revolución* 6 Nov. 1961.

one hand, as the critic Seymour Menton has observed: “Desnoes’s *No hay problema* is a much more successful blending of the existentialist hero with the revolutionary theme.”⁹⁶ Sebastián, the protagonist of *No hay problema*— like Sergio the protagonist of *Memorias del subdesarrollo*— is an existentialist character in search for the meaning of life. He enjoys reading Pío Baroja’s *El árbol de la ciencia*, an existentialist book in itself, and is also a frustrated writer. Unlike Sergio, however, Sebastián finds the meaning of life in the revolution itself. He answers his existentialist question precisely near the end of the novel when he decides to return to Cuba to join the revolutionary struggle. Similar to Soler Puig’s characters in *Bertillón 166*, the meaning of life is the revolution itself.

This existentialist theme, however, was not exclusive of Desnoes, as Menton has noticed. Arguing that Jean-Paul Sartre’s influential visit to Cuba in 1960 and Juan Carlos Onetti’s influence on other Latin American writers were two important events that sparked an interest towards this philosophy, Menton identifies an existentialist trend in other Cuban novels such as *La búsqueda* (1961) by Jaime Sarusky’s, *El sol ese enemigo* (1962) by José Lorenzo Fuentes, *Pequeñas maniobras* (1963) by Virgilio Piñera, and *Después de la Z* (1964) by Mariano Rodríguez Herrera. In his opinion, all of them can be organized by the common denominator of having a pre-1959 existentialist hero. Salgado argues, however, as previously mentioned, that this philosophical trend was generating followers way before 1960.

El cataclismo, on the other hand, departs from this trend and delves more into an analysis of the bourgeois mentality that took place during two critical years of the revolution: 1960 and 1961. This shift towards the characters that did not represent revolutionary men and women bothered Cuban literary critics such as Mercedes Antón who stated while referring to *El cataclismo*: “no sólo la Revolución no es la protagonista

⁹⁶ Menton, *Prose Fiction of the Cuban Revolution* 17.

(como reza la contraportada), sino que el autor la ha soslayado.” [not only the Revolution is not the protagonist of the novel (as the inside front cover states), but also the author has avoided it.]⁹⁷ Antón continues to say that the novel was a failed attempt, judging it, from her biased perspective, as an “inaccurate representation” of the revolution. This uncomfortable feeling will also be present while reading *Memorias del subdesarrollo*.

In *El cataclismo*, Ricardo Castellanos, is no longer a frustrated writer but a doctor who supported the revolution. After the Urban Reform expropriates most of his properties, however, Castellanos withdraws his support of the revolutionary forces and decides to abandon the island, leaving his wife behind. Through the protagonist, Desnoes touches on the subject of exile, a theme that would permeate his earlier work and would appear once again in his third novel: *Memorias del subdesarrollo*. Despite these similarities, *El cataclismo* is Desnoes’s most propagandistic novel, taking its title from one of Fidel Castro’s speeches about the revolution that stated: “A Revolution is a social cataclysm: it is also the overflowing masses, a Revolution that floods everything, invades everything, and is also capable of sweeping away all obstacles, everything in its path. That is a Revolution.”⁹⁸ *Memorias del subdesarrollo* will pose a much more critical view of the revolution and it will be more ambiguous in its fictional portrayal.

His previous two novels, therefore, demonstrate that Desnoes had started moving away from the foundational *Bertillón 166* in terms of content. Rather than focusing on revolutionary protagonists, he would work on bourgeois characters. And in his third novel, *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (1965), he would follow this trend, structuring it around the figure of Sergio, a middle-class individual alienated from the Cuban Revolution. *Memorias*, then, replaces the martyrs of Soler Puig’s novel with a rather odd

⁹⁷ Mercedes Antón, “Memorias del subdesarrollo: El cataclismo,” *Unión* 5.1 (1966): 166.

⁹⁸ Fidel Castro’s speech translated in: Menton, *Prose Fiction of the Cuban Revolution* 28-29.

protagonist, someone that did not serve as a model to be emulated or admired. Sergio's harsh criticism of the revolution will also prove to be much more controversial and the way that the audience will sometimes sympathize with his views will create an ambiguous atmosphere that has been considered one of the main achievements of the novel.⁹⁹ The use of Sergio and his first person diary, then, placed the readers and literary critics in an uncomfortable place: in the eyes of the bourgeoisie. This discomfort forced Cuban critics to create a fixed reading of the novel in black and white, which moved away from other possible interpretations that sympathized with Sergio. One example of this ideological reading of the novel was Salvador Bueno's 1966 critique in which he comments:

El libro es desafiante. Su contenido resulta ácido, duro, violento. ¿Qué habrá querido conseguir el autor? Porque este protagonista que habla en primera persona no tiene forma alguna de salvación. [. . .] No le agradecemos al novelista que nos haya permitido conocer un sujeto tan despreciable moralmente.¹⁰⁰

[The book is challenging. Its content is acid, hard to swallow, violent. What was the author looking for? Because this protagonist that talks in first person has no salvation. [. . .] We do not express gratitude to the novelist for letting us know a subject so morally despicable].

In Bueno's words one can perceive that he is disturbed, uncomfortable with the novel, and he even labels Sergio later on as an anti-hero, leaving no space for a possible identification between the reader and the protagonist. The inside front cover of the 1965 edition also indirectly alluded to the way that *Memorias* was to be read within the revolutionary discourse when referring to *El cataclismo*: "Recientemente [Desnoes] publicó *El Cataclismo* que trata del desmoronamiento de la burguesía estúpida y

⁹⁹ In this regard see: Federico Álvarez, "Perspectiva y ambigüedad en las *Memorias del subdesarrollo*," *Casa de las Américas* 6.39 (1966): 148-50.

¹⁰⁰ Salvador Bueno, "De unas Memorias," *El Mundo* 29 Mar. 1966: 4.

parasitaria ante el avance de la Revolución.” [Recently [Desnoes] published *El Cataclismo* that tells the story of the collapse of the *stupid* and *parasitical* bourgeoisie in front of the progress of the Revolution.] The use of the adjectives stupid and parasitical to describe Desnoes’s second novel demonstrate how his third novel was to be read: Sergio as another parasite. Nonetheless, even though the official discourse tried to establish a fixed reading of the novel, Sergio’s words went beyond that reading.

Distancing itself from *Bertillon 166*, the context also changes. Instead of portraying the revolutionary struggle in Santiago de Cuba as Soler Puig did five years earlier, Desnoes sets his third novel around the climax of the Cuban Revolution: the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961 and the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. This shift in context demonstrates how in the 1960s the revolutionary war was no longer against dictator Fulgencio Batista, but with Cuba’s next-door neighbor, the United States. The Bay of Pigs invasion, sponsored by President John F. Kennedy and the CIA,¹⁰¹ demonstrated that the United States had its eyes on Cuba in order to stop the spread of communism into the Western Hemisphere. And the Missile Crisis placed Cuba face to face with the North-American empire, although the threat of war was aimed at the Soviet Union. The other enemy within this context was even closer to the island— that of the Cuban bourgeoisie— as the revolutionary government was searching for a “new man.” Cuba was looking to exorcise these monsters of the past and Desnoes’s novel will demonstrate how complex this process would be.

In terms of form, *Memorias* also distances itself from *Bertillón 166*. Written in the style of a diary, *Memorias* departed from Soler Puig’s omniscient third person narrator and pursued a more subjective first person account, through the eyes of its protagonist, on

¹⁰¹ See: Peter Kornbluh, *Bay of Pigs Declassified: The Secret CIA Report on the Invasion of Cuba* (New York: The New Press, 1998).

the transformations that the revolution brought to the island. The diary has no dates, although, as explained above, the novel is marked by two historical moments that set the context: the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961 and the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. The first edition of the novel in 1965 also included an appendix with four short stories written by Sergio himself: “Jack y el guaguero,” “Créalo o no lo crea,” “Yodor,” and “What can I do?” Enrico Mario Santí has argued elsewhere¹⁰² that the novel’s original purpose— that of writing the collection of short stories— seemed to be displaced by the reflection of the process of writing those short stories, that is, the diary. Santí also underlines the use of irony in which Desnoes serves as the “editor” of the short story collection with his name in the front cover. Sergio mentions throughout his diary that Desnoes may be able to help him publish his work, and indeed, he publishes it but as an appendix.

Interestingly, this structure of the novel will change in its subsequent editions after Desnoes worked with Tomás Gutiérrez Alea on the script for its film adaptation first released in 1968.¹⁰³ Desnoes added new scenes to his original 1965 version of *Memorias* and sometimes omitted the short stories at the end of the book. The 1967 English translation by Desnoes himself titled *Inconsolable Memories*, for example, does not include the short stories. The 1975 edition published in México, however, does include the short stories but omitting one. Hence, the novel was a work in progress for almost a decade.

¹⁰² Enrico Mario Santí, “Edmundo Desnoes: la sub-novela,” *Historia y ficción en la narrativa hispanoamericana*, ed. Roberto González Echevarría (Caracas: Monte Ávila Editores, 1985) 366.

¹⁰³ Hemingway’s scene in the film was also published separately in UNEAC’s 1967 anthology of contemporary Cuban literature “Literatura cubana 67” and in José Manuel Caballero Bonald, *Narrativa cubana de la revolución*, 3rd ed. (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1971). Caballero Bonald selected the Cuban writers to be included in his anthology with the help of José Rodríguez Feo choosing other important authors next to Desnoes such as Alejo Carpentier, Dora Alonso, José Lezama Lima, Virgilio Piñera, Onelio Jorge Cardoso, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Antonio Benítez Rojo, Lisandro Otero, Ambrosio Fornet, Antón Arrufat, Severo Sarduy, Jesús Díaz, and Reinaldo Arenas.

Critics have also analyzed form in *Memorias* in relation to the themes of memory and identity, as Ana Serra explains:

Memorias is written in the style of the confessional novel, in which the protagonist strives to get in touch with his “true” self by putting together the fragments of his present life and reconstructing his past through memory. As the structures of prerevolutionary Cuba crumble and his family and friends have left, Malabre attempts to recover a sense of order in the illusion of a unified self. However, the character only becomes more isolated and confused, and the imminent Missile Crisis provokes a sense of fear and hopelessness that make him feel paralyzed.¹⁰⁴

In his diary, then, according to Serra, Sergio writes to search for his own identity, an action that will be directly related to memory as his manuscript gathers what he remembers. More importantly, however, is the fact that this diary is completely the opposite of Che Guevara’s *Pasajes de una guerra revolucionaria (Episodes of the Revolutionary War)*.¹⁰⁵ Serra will argue that this comparison is key to understand the novel.

Sergio appears in the book as an alienated subject who decides to stay in Cuba alone after his family flees to Miami during one of the 1961 migrations. Sergio’s wife, Laura, leaves with his parents abandoning everything she had. Her character will serve as the way to represent Sergio’s memories on the novel, through her things: her clothe, her lipsticks, her makeup, etc. Technology will also help Sergio to remember her, through recordings of her voice and their conversations, as well as through photographs of their life together. It is important to note that Sergio will use this technology to aid himself in his writing, since he is “recording” the “memories” of underdevelopment. Román de la Campa has noticed these techniques when he argues that:

¹⁰⁴ Serra, *The "New Man" in Cuba: Culture and Identity in the Revolution* 56.

¹⁰⁵ For an English translation of Che’s diary see: Ernesto Guevara, *Episodes of the Revolutionary War*, 1st ed. (New York: International Publishers, 1968).

Laura, la esposa exiliada, es reconstituida mediante recuerdos, grabaciones y objetos que serán materia de lectura y escritura. Noemí, la criada, hacia quien Malabre anuncia interés sexual, permanece en suspenso hasta el final; entre tanto, se vuelve objeto de lecturas tentadoras. La voz narradora logra abandonar el taller-escondite de su casa sólo para buscar material de lecturas. Visita exhibiciones y museos, compra novelas que luego nos lee e intenta reseñar películas.¹⁰⁶

[Laura, the exiled wife, is reconstituted through memories, recordings and objects that will serve as subjects for readings and writings. Noemí, the maid, to whom Sergio Malabre is sexually attracted, remains in suspense until the end; meanwhile, she becomes the subject of tempting readings. The voice of the narrator is able to abandon the workshop-hidden place of his house only to look for materials to read. He visits exhibitions and museums, buys novels that he later on reads to us and tries to review films.]

Technology, then, will control the way that Sergio relives his memories of underdevelopment, and will play a crucial role in the construction of the different characters throughout the novel. Sergio's teenage girlfriend Hanna, for example, only appears through the protagonist's memories as he remembers his first love that ended when Hanna's family moved to New York City. But technology also serves as a tool for Sergio the writer. While referring to one of the short stories that he wrote, called "Yodor", Sergio admits using a tape recorder for most of the dialogue included in it. He says he just had to transcribe what he was listening to:

Yodor belongs to that period, maybe my best story too, although I hardly did anything; that's why. I'd bought myself a tape recorder and once in a while I picked up conversations without letting people on to it. All I did was leave just the answers and the explanations [. . .] It's a bit too long, like most conversations; I'll probably have to cut a third of it when I retype it.¹⁰⁷

Sergio uses this same device to record his conversations with his wife Laura, where he provokes her to see if he can get a good story out of it. Later on he will listen to Laura's

¹⁰⁶ Román De la Campa, "Memorias del subdesarrollo: Novela/Texto/Discurso," *Revista Iberoamericana* 56.152-53 (1990): 1042.

¹⁰⁷ Edmundo Desnoes, *Inconsolable Memories* (New York: New American Library, 1967) 99-100.

voice to set his memories free and continue writing because one of the main reasons that prompted Sergio to stay in Cuba was that of becoming a writer. He knew that the revolution was the perfect setting for a writer, with the continuous changes already taking place, and a writer only needed to describe his/hers surroundings to compose his or her own work.

The other technology that Sergio used to record his memories was that of language itself when he wrote in his diary all his personal experiences. For Sergio, language served as a container where one can deposit all memories: of Hanna, of Elena, of Laura, etc. Popular songs also invade his brain, like a tango by Carlos Gardel, adding music as another mnemonic device. Last but not least, photographs will also serve as a device to record memories in the novel. While looking through his chest of drawers, Sergio reviews envelopes full of photographs of his childhood and of his life with Laura. These photographs will serve as vehicles to revisit his past.

Now one scene in the novel problematizes the veracity of Sergio's memories and their link to imagination. When the protagonist fantasizes with Noemí, the maid, he imagines her baptism as an event sexually charged and erotic. Later on, however, Noemí brings the actual photographs of it and Sergio says: "It wasn't the way I had imagined it. Nothing is. The white robe didn't cling to her body."¹⁰⁸ Here the connection between image/imagination goes back to their same root *imago*, and alludes to the inseparable relationship between the two. Desnoes problematizes this relationship by portraying different layers of meaning to propose that memory and imagination are one and the same. For example, here Sergio imagines Noemí's baptism and at the same time records it in his diary. One event, then, serves as both imagination and recollection. The film

¹⁰⁸ Desnoes, *Inconsolable Memories* 136.

adaptation will take this relationship between image and memory even a step further as the story is told through images in celluloid.

Sergio's best friend in the novel, Pablo, is also about to leave the island and exemplifies the views of the Cuban bourgeois mentality. Sergio will criticize him as part of the upper classes that plan to leave. But Sergio's character is also ambiguous and sometimes his ideologies are hard to define. On one part, he is fed up with the Cuban bourgeoisie to which he pertained, but on the other he is also disgusted by the people from the lower classes such as those that migrated to Havana after the Urban Reform.¹⁰⁹

Referring to them, he says:

Since El Encanto, the big department store, burned down, the city hasn't been the same. Havana today looks like a town in the interior, Pinar del Río, Artemisa, or Matanzas. It no longer looks like the Paris of the Caribbean, as tourist and whores used to call it. Now it looks more like the capital of a banana republic in Central America, one of those dead, underdeveloped cities like Tegucigalpa or San Salvador or Managua. It's not just because they destroyed El Encanto and the stores have very little left to offer, hardly any consumer foods of quality. It's the rabble; the people you meet on the streets now are humble, poorly dressed, they buy anything—even if they don't need it. [. . .] All the women looks like maids and the men like laborers.¹¹⁰

These descriptions exemplify Sergio's overt classist view repeated in the novel when he refers to Elena. But the description of the lower-class individuals will be put in contrast with those of the bourgeoisie represented by Pablo. Sergio also criticizes the bourgeoisie

¹⁰⁹ "The Urban Reform Law (October 1960) prohibited private individuals from renting out housing. Subsequently all housing units were transferred to the ownership of the renters occupying them. The rent they had been paying was turned into time payments to the state toward permanent ownership of their housing. The former owners continued to receive a maximum of 600 pesos a month from the state for a stipulated number of years as compensation for the loss of their property" explains Michael Chanan on page 106 of the English translation of *Memories of Underdevelopment's* script published by Rutgers UP. For further information on Urban Reform in Cuba see: Maruja Acosta and Jorge Enrique Hardoy, *Urban Reform in Revolutionary Cuba* (New Haven: Antilles Research Program, 1973), and Tony Schuman, "Housing: We Don't Have the Right to Wait," *Cuba Review* 5 (1975): 3-22.

¹¹⁰ Desnoes, *Inconsolable Memories* 20.

prevalent on the island when he says: “I can’t think of the Cuban bourgeoisie without foaming at the mouth. I hate them with tenderness. Feel sorry for them” (29) and “I was glad; the revolution, even though it’s destroying me, is my revenge against the stupidity of the Cuban bourgeoisie” (41). This ambivalence and self-criticism adds complexity to the novel because Sergio sometimes sides with the ideals of the revolution and in others with those of the Cuban bourgeoisie. Hence, sometimes the reader within the revolutionary context sympathizes with the protagonist although in other occasions he is someone despicable. The origin of this ambivalence seems to reside in the fact that Sergio is characterized as an intellectual who has read about the ideas of socialism. Proof of this is the book that he gives his friend Pablo: “I gave him Wilson’s *To the Finland Station* so he would at least have an idea about the development of social ideas, about socialism, from the French Revolution to the Russian Revolution. I’m sure he didn’t even open the book when he got home” (31). This apparent “superiority” as an intellectual to the rest of the bourgeoisie enables Desnoes to play with ambiguity. Gutiérrez Alea, in the film, will also emphasize this ambiguous atmosphere.

Interestingly, another detail that adds complexity to both “old” *Memories* of the Cuban Revolution is the fact that they rely on fiction. *Bertillón 166* relied on fiction to portray with realism the early struggle against Batista, and as explained in the previous chapter, the protagonist was “the Cuban people.” *Memorias*, the novel, however, will focus on the figure of Sergio, a diametrically opposed protagonist to *Bertillón 166*. Ironically, then, the backbone of the story will rest on the life of a bourgeois character whose memories will be recorded in both the novel and the film. But these memories will be contested through the use of technology. Sergio’s memories will be linked to his imagination as seen with Noemí’s dream. In the film, his memories will also be challenged with documentary footage.

But the construction of memories in the novel is not only implicit in its content but also in its form, since it is written in the structure of a diary where Sergio's memories are recorded as the revolution goes on. The memory genre will create the illusion of recording "reality," although it will actually rely on fiction, as the actual memories are those of a fictitious character. In the film, memories will also be constructed through documentary images and other cinematic techniques, as we will see below.

What is important to notice is that this philosophical reflection about memory that was translated into fiction, came from Desnoes's admiration of *Hiroshima, mon amour*, a film that in 1959 revolutionized filmmaking and that dealt with the same subject. *Hiroshima* was directed by Alain Resnais and is considered one of the films that started the French New Wave. Desnoes's admiration is evidenced in his 1961 review of the film for *Lunes de revolución*, titled "Año dieciséis después de Hiroshima" ["Year Sixteen After Hiroshima"] in which he praises the film for its experimental narrative style and successful mixture of literature and film. Desnoes underlines the fact that Resnais collaborated with French writer Marguerite Duras on the screenplay. He writes:

El guión, en realidad, es una colaboración entre Resnais y Duras. El director le pidió a la novelista que escribiera todo lo que supiera de los protagonistas, que él escogería después los elementos cinematográficos. Duras escribió una biografía exhaustiva de los personajes y de todo ese material salió el guión definitivo. *Hiroshima* destruye el concepto de que la literatura y el cine son incompatibles. *Hiroshima* es literatura y cine. Incorpora la literatura al cine. Los diálogos son un comentario literario a las imágenes. Se complementan sin entrar en conflicto.¹¹¹

[The screenplay is really a collaboration between Resnais and Duras. The director asked the novelist to write everything that she knew about the protagonists, as he would later choose the cinematographic elements. Duras wrote an exhaustive biography of the characters and all this material led to the final script. *Hiroshima* banishes the idea that literature and film are incompatible. *Hiroshima* is literature and film. It incorporates literature to film. The dialogues are a literary

¹¹¹ Edmundo Desnoes, "Año dieciséis después de Hiroshima," *Lunes de Revolución* 2.97 (27 Feb. 1961): 25.

commentary to the images. They complement each other without creating a conflict.]

In *Memorias del subdesarrollo*, the film, a similar collaboration will take place between the director Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and the writer Desnoes himself. And more interestingly, the subsequent editions of Desnoes's novel will include new scenes written specifically for the film.¹¹² The film became a mirror of the novel and later on the novel became a mirror of the film.

Although this may seem like a coincidence between *Hiroshima* and *Memorias*, other hints reveal that the admiration for the film later on served as an inspiration for both Desnoes's 1965 novel and its film adaptation. On this same *Lunes de revolución* article, Desnoes emphasized the excellent ways in which Resnais' film portrayed the themes of love, death and war, and how humanity is threaten by nuclear destruction. Six year later he "translated" all of these themes into the Cuban context for his *Memorias* because the threat of nuclear destruction arrived at the city of Havana with the Cuban Missile Crisis. And other intertextual scenes refer to *Hiroshima* in Desnoes's novel, such as the protagonist's visit to the film theatre to watch precisely this film, or the titled to the English translation –published in 1967– called *Inconsolable Memories* taken from one of the dialogues in Resnais' film: "*J'ai désiré avoir une inconsolable mémoire*" [I wish I could have an inconsolable memory]. Even further, *Hiroshima* started to have its echoes in Cuba as early as in 1961, when Desnoes makes it explicit that he thought of a "translation" into the Cuban context: "Si la prueba se llevara a cabo en Cuba, si Cuba fuera nuestro horizonte, el resultado sería más positivo. En Francia la disección tiene por fuerza que ser pesimista."¹¹³ [If it were tried in Cuba, if Cuba were to be our horizon, the

¹¹² Santí analyzes the different editions of *Memorias del subdesarrollo*, the novel, in his essay "Edmundo Desnoes: la sub-novela."

¹¹³ Desnoes, "Año dieciséis después de Hiroshima," 25.

result would be positive. In France the dissection has no choice but to be pessimist.] The positive result to which Desnoes alludes is that of the future of the revolution and demonstrates the stance taken by him in regards to the new political leadership. In his article, Desnoes states that now that the revolutionary government has taken control of the island, Cuba will work its way towards “progress.” This positivistic view of the revolution will be contrasted with the views of Sergio, the protagonist of both the novel and the film, whom will question the “progress” of the revolution and will in fact argue that its has gone backwards.

Now Desnoes and Gutiérrez Alea will not only “translate” the main themes of *Hiroshima* into their own works, but also its form. In his critique of the film, Desnoes also admired the way in which Resnais’ film was constructed; how it presents time as psychological instead of chronological, and how past and present are blended together throughout the narrative. Desnoes explains:

El tiempo desaparece en *Hiroshima*. El tiempo deja de ser cronológico para ser psicológico. El presente y el pasado se mezclan constantemente en la pantalla. Este es uno de los aspectos más revolucionarios de la película. La película está cortada y fotografiada con este sentido de la ubicuidad. [. . .] La interrupción del tiempo para relatar sucesos pasados siempre choca. En *Hiroshima*, sin embargo, la cámara retrospectiva es el único método posible para expresar la complejidad del presente.¹¹⁴

[Time disappears in *Hiroshima*. Time stops being chronological in order to be psychological. The present and the past are constantly mixed together on the big screen. This is one of the most revolutionary aspects of the film. It is cut and photographed with this sense of ubiquity. [. . .] The interruption of time to tell the incidents of the past is always shocking. In *Hiroshima*, however, the retrospective camera is the only possible method to express the complexity of the present.]

The complexity of time representation will also be present in *Memorias del subdesarrollo*, precisely through form. As we will see in detail below, photographs and

¹¹⁴ Desnoes, “Año dieciséis después de Hiroshima,” 25.

short films as well as flashbacks will constantly interrupt Gutiérrez Alea's film main storyline. The film will be in a constant dialogue between the story of Sergio, the protagonist, and that of the images. Furthermore, as Enrico Mario Santí has noticed, Desnoes also puts into practice this fusion of present and the past when the protagonist of the novel erases the dates of the diary; a difference between the past and the present does not matter anymore. Under the film scope, however, Resnais will not be the only influence of the French New Wave in Cuba, Jean-Luc Godard's film techniques will also be "translated" into the Cuban context.

On the literary side, Santí has also noticed the intertextual reference of the title *Memorias del subdesarrollo* to Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Memorias del subsuelo* (1864). Santí argues that Desnoes's novel parodies the 19th century Russian one by changing the existential term "subsuelo" to one from economics "subdesarrollo." This "translation" of Dostoyevsky's novel into the Cuban context also demonstrates how Desnoes was trying to establish a dialogue between world literature and Cuba. It not only alludes to the close relationship that Cuban literature and Russian literature would have in the future, but also seeks to insert itself within the canon of the literary circles. This strategy refers back to Salgado's argument of Desnoes's preference for European literature and high modernism.

Underdevelopment is also a key term to understand the novel. As Rafael Rojas has argued elsewhere,¹¹⁵ this term invaded the Cuban public debate in the 1960s with the revolution's aim to use socialism as a way of working towards development. Rojas explains that the first person to apply the term underdevelopment to the Cuban context was Columbia University's professor Charles Wright Mills in his book, *Listen Yankee*.

¹¹⁵ Rafael Rojas, *El estante vacío: literatura y política en Cuba* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2009) 42-55.

The Revolution in Cuba, published in 1960.¹¹⁶ From then on, the term remained in the minds of intellectuals and writers such as Edmundo Desnoes that would later translate it into fiction with *Memorias del subdesarrollo*. Desnoes referred to his original intent with this term in one of his recent interviews:

El asunto desarrollo-subdesarrollo era visto desde un prisma exclusivamente económico y yo lo traté desde el aspecto psicológico, porque el fenómeno del subdesarrollo repercute en la conducta y las ideas y a mí me interesó investigarlo a nivel de la conciencia.¹¹⁷

[The issue of development-underdevelopment was seen from an exclusively economic framework and I tried to work with it from a psychological perspective, because the underdevelopment phenomenon affects one's behavior and ideas and I wanted to pay attention to it to the level of consciousness.]

Hence, Desnoes used the term underdevelopment in his novel to describe a way of thinking, that is, more than something material something abstract. This underdeveloped mentality will show up in Sergio's critiques of the Cuban people as he describes his surroundings. But the complexity arises when Sergio's own underdeveloped mentality is revealed when he refers to others as underdeveloped. That is, the novel plays with different layers of the term underdevelopment. In many ways, the discussion around it refers back to the Latin American debates on civilization and barbarism; development equals civilization, underdevelopment equals barbarism. And Desnoes introduces this dichotomy in an epigraph to his *Memorias* taken from Michel de Montaigne's classical essay "Of Cannibals" in which he writes: "These nations, then, seem to me barbarous in this sense, that they have been fashioned very little by the human mind, and are still very close to their original naturalness." Although Sergio will not use the adjective barbarous,

¹¹⁶ C. Wright Mills, *Listen, Yankee: The Revolution in Cuba* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1960).

¹¹⁷ Francisco G. Navarro, "Retorno a la amistad y la sangre (Entrevista después de 20 años en EEUU)," *Juventud Rebelde* 19 Jan. 2003.

the word underdeveloped will be directly linked to this notion and also to the ability to remember. In Sergio's view being able to remember is being civilized, and forgetting is not. That is why while referring to *Hiroshima, mon amour*, Sergio says: "I suspect civilization is just that: knowing how to relate things, not forgetting anything. That's why civilization is impossible here: Cubans easily forget the past: they live too much in the present."¹¹⁸ In the eyes of Sergio, Elena is an example of this sign of underdevelopment in the island, as she is unable to "accumulate experience and to develop," that is, she does not seem to remember how she broke into tears the first night that she slept with him.

The readers will notice, however, that Sergio will end up being the main underdeveloped character in the novel. Not only is he unable to change with the revolution taking place around him but he also fails to notice his colonized mentality. By praising everything that is European as better than those things that are Cuban, Sergio is, like his friend Pablo, a colonized subject. For as Franz Fanon succinctly defines it:

All colonized people –in other words, people in whom an inferiority complex has taken root, whose local cultural originality has been committed to the grave – position themselves in relation to the civilizing language: i.e., the metropolitan culture. The more the colonized has assimilated the cultural values of the metropolis, the more he will have escaped the bush.¹¹⁹

Sergio, then, is the one with the inferiority complex that praises New York and Paris as superior metropolis. And he even notices his underdeveloped mentality of trying to live like a European when he says: "I'm deluded and underdeveloped: and, what's even worse, I know it."¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Desnoes, *Inconsolable Memories* 37.

¹¹⁹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991) 2.

¹²⁰ Desnoes, *Inconsolable Memories* 52.

Another important theme that the novel presents is that of the position of the intellectual in the context of the social changes in the 1960s. This question will be analyzed further in the Chapter 4 as we examine the *P.M.* affair, but it is also important to underline it here. In the upheaval of the social movements that took place globally in the 1960s, such as the Civil Rights movement and the opposition to the Vietnam War as well as the student movements, Cuban intellectuals and writers were reflecting on where to locate their space/place *vis-à-vis* the Cuban Revolution. This reflection is the basis that inspired the round table scene in Desnoes's novel, where Alejo Carpentier and Edmundo Desnoes participate. But Sergio's criticism of Eddy, as he calls Desnoes, of being opportunistic touches on the philosophical problem of what should be the role of the writer within a revolutionary process. Should all writers be revolutionary? Should writers subordinate form for content or vice versa? Are Carpentier and Desnoes "real" revolutionaries? Is the pen mightier than the sword? These literary figures will be contrasted in later editions of the novel with the writer Ernest Hemingway whose role in the book is that of being a symbol of imperialism on the island. Hemingway's pen will propagate imperialism through his writing since, as Sergio says, he is the white master with his black servant only interested in Cuba as a tropical paradise. But this inquiry is also present with the reference to Desnoes's first novel, *No hay problema*, which Sergio mocks as being a failed attempt of a revolutionary piece. Sergio says: "Writing such stuff after psychoanalysis, concentration camps, and nuclear energy is really pathetic. He must have done it to get a place under the Socialist Sun."¹²¹ Sergio's criticism, thus, pinpoints the issue that now writers and artists face; that of their commitment to the revolution. Will they jeopardize their work in the name of the revolution?

¹²¹ Desnoes, *Inconsolable Memories* 77.

Filmmakers will also ask themselves a similar question: where is the place of film within the Cuban Revolution? Interestingly, however, both questions will go together as many films will be literary adaptations. In *Memorias*, for example, both Desnoes and Gutiérrez Alea worked on the script for the film, a collaboration that fused novel and film later on. As explained above, some scenes were written specifically for the film and later added to the 1967, 1968, and 1975 editions of novel. One of the filmmakers that will try to answer the question on the role of film directors within the revolution, then, will be Gutiérrez Alea's himself not only as a director but also as a theorist, since way before the triumph of the revolution, he was involved in various cultural groups that will later on become the seeds for the cultural institutions in charge of the film industry.

TOMÁS GUTIÉRREZ ALEA: FILMMAKER AND THEORIST

Although he studied law in the late 1940s, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea soon moved away from practicing this vocation and became interested in the arts. That is why he joined the cultural group *Nuestro Tiempo*¹²² that was founded in 1950 and that included as members many of the intellectual and artistic figures that would later serve as the key cultural personalities within the Cuban Revolution; among them Alfredo Guevara, Santiago Álvarez, Julio García Espinosa, and José Massip. Decades later, Gutiérrez Alea arguably became the greatest Cuban director side by side to other film icons such as García Espinosa himself and Humberto Solás. But even before *Nuestro Tiempo*, Gutiérrez Alea experimented with a few short films such as “La caperucita roja” and “El fakir”, both shot in 1947. And in 1951 he even moved to Rome to study film direction at the *Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia* where he got in close contact with Italian Neo-realism. He returned to Cuba two years later, and, in 1955, co-directed with Alfredo

¹²² For a history of the cultural organization *Nuestro Tiempo* see: Ricardo Luis Hernández Otero, *Sociedad Cultural Nuestro Tiempo: resistencia y acción* (La Habana: Letras Cubanas, 2002).

Guevara and García Espinosa the 16mm film titled *El mégano (The Charcoal Worker)*, considered the film that sparked off Cuban revolutionary cinema. This film depicted the suffering of charcoal workers in the Zapata swamp following, stylistically speaking, the cinematic style of Italian Neo-realism; mainly the use of non-professional actors and on location shooting. In it, one can already perceive the interest these filmmakers had in turning film into a critique of Cuban society. In the mid fifties, Gutiérrez Alea also kept gaining experience while working for an advertisement company in charge of producing short documentaries and newsreels in 35mm. The company produced a weekly 10 minute reel called “Cine-Revista” and allowed Gutiérrez Alea to develop his skills in direction. All of these experiences provided him with the necessary skills to become one of the main film figures of the revolution a few years later.

With the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, Gutiérrez Alea quickly moved to work at Cine Rebelde, one of the divisions of the Rebel Army’s Cultural Department. There, he directed one of the first documentaries of the victorious revolution called *Esta tierra nuestra (This Is Our Land, 1959)* about the agrarian reforms of 1959. A few months later, Gutiérrez Alea helped found the Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC) and was entrusted, by Alfredo Guevara, to search for equipment and to establish networks with European producers interested in co-productions with Cuba. One year later, he directed the revolution’s first feature film called *Historias de la revolución (Stories of the Revolution, 1960)* paying tribute to Italian Neo-realism, once again, and to Roberto Rossellini’s 1946 film *Paisà*. Rossellini captured the history of the Second World War in five episodes; *Historias* would capture the Cuban revolutionary war in three. More interestingly, this film already exemplified Gutiérrez Alea’s interest in collaborating with

Cuba's emerging writers; such as Humberto Arenal whom collaborated in the script for *Historias* and one of the scenes from his novel *El sol a plomo* ended up in the film.¹²³

Gutiérrez Alea also filmed a documentary called *Asamblea General* (*General Assembly*) in 1960 before moving on to his next feature. He also worked for the Noticiero Latinoamericano ICAIC, headed by Santiago Álvarez, and filmed a newsreel about the Bay of Pigs invasion called *Muerte al invasor* (*Death to the Invader*, 1961), which he later used in his *Memorias del subdesarrollo*. Coincidentally, he wanted to adapt José Soler Puig's novel *Bertillón 166* as his second feature, but this project never came to be. Instead, he directed another film adaptation called *Las doce sillas* (*Twelve Chairs*, 1962) based on a novel by two Soviet authors: Ilya Ilf and Eugene Petrov. And his third feature *Cumbite* (1964) was also an adaptation of the Haitian novel *Gouverneurs de la rosée* by Jacques Roumain. All of these adaptations demonstrate, as Paul A. Schroeder has argued,¹²⁴ how Gutiérrez Alea's career oscillated between different periods. On one hand, he started interested in the novel of the revolution and political engaged films, but later on he looked for "translations" of novels by foreign writers into the Cuban context. *Las doce sillas*, also exemplifies how Soviet culture was reaching the island, coinciding with the year that the first Soviet-Cuban film came out: *Soy Cuba* (*I am Cuba*, 1964) by Mikhail Kalatozov. This sovietization of the revolution became much stronger later on.

After *Cumbite*, Gutiérrez Alea returned back to the Cuban scenario and directed a satirical comedy titled *La muerte de un burócrata* (*Death of a Beurocrat*, 1966), and his masterpiece *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (*Memories of Underdevelopment*, 1968) based on the already mentioned novel of the revolution by Edmundo Desnoes. In his *Memorias*,

¹²³ José Antonio Évora and Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, *Tomás Gutiérrez Alea*, Signo e imagen. Cineastas latinoamericanos (Madrid: Cátedra, 1996) 24.

¹²⁴ Paul A. Schroeder, *Tomás Gutiérrez Alea: The Dialectics of a Filmmaker* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

as we will see further on, Gutiérrez Alea absorbs techniques from the New Wave movements that were developing all over the world. In the 1960s, film directors decided to abandon traditional narrative techniques that dominated cinema, and began experimenting with new ways of constructing films. In France, important film directors such as Jean-Luc Godard, François Truffaut, and Alain Resnais produced their first films as early as in 1959; films later identified as being part of the *Nouvelle Vague*. In Germany, the new generation of filmmakers included Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Werner Herzog, Margarethe von Trotta, and Wim Wenders, among others; and in Japan, figures such as Susumu Hani and Nagisa Oshima started to move away from classical Japanese cinema. The 1960s, then, established the perfect scenario for a New Latin American Cinema movement to be born, side by side with the accomplishments of the Cuban Revolution, the Latin American “boom” of writers, and the pushed for decolonization all over the continent. Gutiérrez Alea’s *Memorias del subdesarrollo* joined this trend, side by side to other Latin American New Waves that appeared in Brazil, Bolivia, Argentina and Chile. The Cuban director not only looked for inspiration in France and Germany, but also in Brazil, where Glauber Rocha became the key figure within the Brazilian New Wave called *Cinema Novo*. As Paul Schroeder Rodríguez explains in *Tomás Gutiérrez Alea: The Dialectics of a Filmmaker*:

In *Memories of Underdevelopment*, [. . .] Alea successfully synthesized the comic with the tragic and incorporated the formal lessons of Godard, the narrative expressiveness of Eisenstein, the intellectualism of Brecht, and the political commitment of Cinema Novo to create a masterpiece that is not derivative, but highly original and contentious.¹²⁵

Schroeder also points out, Gutiérrez Alea’s admiration for Sergei Eisenstein, the Russian filmmaker that mastered a theory of the montage, and for Bertolt Brecht, the German poet

¹²⁵ Schroeder, *Tomás Gutiérrez Alea: The Dialectics of a Filmmaker* xiv.

and playwright who revolutionized dramaturgy and followed the ideas of Marxism. Later on, in his theoretical essay called *Dialéctica del espectador (The Viewer's Dialectic)*,¹²⁶ Gutiérrez Alea explained in detail how he “translated” their ideas into his own work. All of these citations, as well as the social momentum in which it was produced, may justify why upon its release in 1968, *Memorias del subdesarrollo* brought Gutiérrez Alea international acclaim. Another Cuban film of 1968, *Lucía*, by director Humberto Solás also brought the world’s attention to the island.

For his next two projects, Gutiérrez Alea’s revisited Cuba’s colonial past and two historiographies written by important Cuban intellectuals such as Fernando Ortiz and Manuel Moreno Fraginals. For his film *Una pelea cubana contra los demonios (A Cuban Fight against Demons, 1971)*, he revisited Ortiz’s *Historia de una pelea cubana contra los demonios*¹²⁷ published in 1959; a research for this film that began earlier on in the 1960s, although he was not able to produce the film until years later. And for *La última cena (The Last Supper, 1976)*, the Cuban director used one episode from Moreno Fraginals’s important book *El ingenio: el complejo económico social cubano del azúcar*,¹²⁸ published more than a decade earlier. These two films demonstrated how Gutiérrez Alea changed scopes back to the Cuban setting and moved temporarily from a contemporary timeframe into Cuba’s past.

¹²⁶ Although this essay was in the works during the late 1970s, as Gutiérrez Alea admits in many interviews, it originally appeared as a book in: Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, *Dialéctica del espectador*, Cuadernos Unión (La Habana: UNEAC, 1982). For an English translation of it see: Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, *The Viewer's Dialectic*, trans. Julia Lesage, ed. Iraida Sánchez Oliva (Havana: Editorial José Martí, 1988).

¹²⁷ Fernando Ortiz, *Historia de una pelea cubana contra los demonios* (Santa Clara: Universidad Central de Las Villas, 1959).

¹²⁸ Manuel Moreno Fraginals, *El ingenio: el complejo económico social cubano del azúcar*, vol. 1 (La Habana: Comisión Nacional Cubana de la UNESCO, 1964).

He would later on return to the years of the Cuban Revolution, with films such as *Los sobrevivientes* (*The Survivors*, 1978), about a family that isolates itself in their mansion to avoid changing with the revolution; *Hasta cierto punto* (*Up to a Certain Point*, 1983), about the problem of *machismo* in Cuba; *Cartas del parque* (*Letters from the Park*, 1987), about two lovers in Matanzas; *Fresa y chocolate* (*Strawberry and Chocolate*, 1993), about the problem of homophobia in the island, and *Guantanamera* (1995), about the transportation of a corpse from the east side of the island to Havana. It is important to note that the last two films were co-directed by Juan Carlos Tabío, as Gutiérrez Alea's health was declining in the mid 1990s.

Yet Gutiérrez Alea not only put into practice his ideas about filmmaking but he was also one of the two main film theorists in Cuba, side by side with another filmmaker: Julio García Espinosa. The latter, as mentioned in the previous chapter, published in 1969 a very important theoretical piece in ICAIC's journal *Cine cubano* called "Por un cine imperfecto" ("For an Imperfect Cinema"),¹²⁹ suggesting the "imperfect" path that Cuban cinema had to take. Similarly, Gutiérrez Alea also contributed to the theoretical discussions at ICAIC with his theoretical essay on spectatorship titled "The Viewer's Dialectic" as cited above. In this book, Gutiérrez Alea tried to, in his own words, "discover in the relation which film establishes over and over again between the show and the spectator, the laws which govern this relation, and the possibilities within those laws for developing a socially productive cinema."¹³⁰ To construct his argument, he organizes his book into three parts: a history of film, how viewers perceive films, and a case study of *Memorias del subdesarrollo* as a model to follow. Theoretically speaking,

¹²⁹ The essay was published originally in: Julio García Espinosa, "Por un cine imperfecto," *Cine cubano* 66-67 (1969): 46-53. For an English version see Julianne Burton's translation in: Julio García Espinosa, "For an Imperfect Cinema," *Jump Cut* 20 (1979): 24-26.

¹³⁰ Gutiérrez Alea, *The Viewer's Dialectic* 19.

he will take on the ideas of Aristotle, Brecht, and Eisenstein to formulate how identification, catharsis, alienation, and distancing should be use in Cuban cinema. In the end, as Schroeder explains, he will be in between both the German playwright and the Russian filmmaker: “Alea gave equal weight to both identification and alienation in his own theory. To Alea these were not mutually exclusive processes, but different sides of the same process whereby the viewer attains a greater understanding of reality.”¹³¹ All of these theories were put into practice in his 1968 *Memorias del subdesarrollo*, as we will see below.

A NEW CUBAN CINEMA BUILT BY ICAIC IN THE 1960s

One of the first strategies to canonize post-revolutionary Cuban films was that of claiming them as “authentically” Cuban. After more than three decades of Hollywood’s imperial domination on the island, the Cuban revolutionary government, from 1959 on, expelled and rejected this subjugation and began to look towards itself. This meant that films sponsored by ICAIC would not only portray Cuban characters and their stories, but also promote the history of the Cuban Revolution abroad to contest the propaganda that demonized their triumph. It also aimed to convey the new achievements of the revolution to the Cuban people as the critic Reynaldo González explains: “Debe recordarse que el proceso revolucionario cubano fue, desde el principio, un acontecimiento mediático: ante las cámaras se anunciaban y explicaban las nuevas leyes, se comunicaban las medidas significativas y ocurrían los debates.” [It most be remembered that the Cuban revolutionary process was, from the beginning, a media event: the new laws were announced and explained in front of the cameras, important bills were communicated and

¹³¹ Schroeder, *Tomás Gutiérrez Alea: The Dialectics of a Filmmaker* 56.

there debates took place.]¹³² That is the reason why two of the first films produced under the revolutionary umbrella were about the laws on Agrarian and Urban Reforms: *Esta tierra nuestra* (*This Is Our Land*, 1959) by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and *La vivienda* (*Housing*, 1959) by Julio García Espinosa, respectively. This is also the reason of the predominance of documentary films within ICAIC.

Under the feature-film realm, the first films focused on the revolutionary struggle, such as *Historias de la revolución* (*Stories of the Revolution*, 1960) mentioned above, and some co-productions appeared— directed by international filmmakers like the German Kurt Maetzig, the Czech Vladimir Cech, and the Soviet Mikjail Kalatozov— that brought technical personnel as well as film equipment to the island. These collaborations were false starts and failures, as Michael Chanan has observed, because “the foreign visitors didn’t do their homework properly” and the product ended up being a “superficial and picturesque vision” of Havana.¹³³ The Soviet-Cuban co-production *Soy Cuba* (*I am Cuba*, 1964) directed by Kalatosov, also exemplified how Soviet-like films failed to gain recognition in the island and how during the first decade of the revolution Cuban cinema moved away from the Soviet tradition of socialist realism. Although *Soy Cuba* was extremely experimental in terms of form, its propagandistic content and the “Soviet” echoes while building the story drove away young directors that were looking for films that could be “authentically” Cuban. One of the films that rejected Kalatosov’s proposal was precisely *Memorias del subdesarrollo* by Gutiérrez Alea. This 1968 film, as we will see below, will follow a different track as Gutiérrez Alea tried to respond to the question many filmmakers had: how should we characterize our new Cuban cinema?

¹³² Reynaldo González, *Cine cubano: ese ojo que nos ve* (San Juan: Plaza Mayor, 2002) 146.

¹³³ Chanan, *Cuban Cinema* 166.

The first answer to that question was: we need to tell the story of the Cuban Revolution itself. Concrete examples are Gutiérrez Alea's *Historias de la revolución* and *Memorias del subdesarrollo*, among others, fixed on important historical events of the revolutionary struggle: the former portrays the fight of the rebels in the 1950s as well as the attack to the Presidential Palace in 1957; the latter the climatic events of the Cuban Revolution in 1961 and 1962. Stylistically speaking, *Historias de la revolución*, as we saw above, followed the trend of Italian Neo-Realism, a preference that alluded to the ideological criteria used for the first Cuban films. Neo-Realism was an *ars poetica* extremely attractive to the new revolutionary government precisely because they were looking to portray with a "realistic" scope their struggle. In the same way that Italian directors and scriptwriters regarded the aftermath of World War II as an ineluctable story for their scripts, Cuban filmmakers also felt the weight of history on their shoulders. The revolution had such a heavy impact on Cuban society that it presented the perfect setting for new stories to develop. And these stories will connect the 1959 revolution to previous struggles like the War for Independence in the 19th century, slavery, etc., creating, as historians have noticed,¹³⁴ an illusion of on single struggle that was interrupted several times but that was able to triumph in 1959. Historical films in the 1970s and 80s such as *El otro Francisco* (*The Other Francisco*, 1974) and *Cecilia* (1982), based on the novel *Cecilia Valdés* by Cirilo Villaverde, will contribute to this discourse. This emphasis on the revolution will also be underlined in Julio García Espinosa's theoretical essay *Por un cine imperfecto* in which he argues that:

¹³⁴ A summary of this "100 year war of independence" discourse appears in: Oscar Zanetti Lecuona, *Isla en la historia: la historiografía cubana del siglo XX* (La Habana: Ediciones Unión, 2005). For a more concise version on this debate see: Oscar Zanetti Lecuona, "Medio siglo de historiografía en Cuba: la impronta de la revolución," *Cuban Studies* 40 (2009): 74-103.

The third factor, the revolution –which is the most important of all –is perhaps present in our country as nowhere else. This is our only true chance. The revolution is what furnishes all other alternatives, what can supply an entirely new response, what enables us to do away once and for all with elitist concepts and practices in art. [. . .] For us, then, the revolution is the highest expression of culture.¹³⁵

The Cuban Revolution is, then, the perfect story to tell on the screen, and as we will see in the analysis of *Memories*, the revolution will be the “protagonist” of the film, side by side to its main character: Sergio. *Memorias* portrays, however, a much more complex and ambiguous representation of the revolution through a protagonist that is very critical of the new government. That, in part, is one of the reasons why *Memorias* deserves a closer look, because in 1968 it pushed to the extreme Fidel Castro’s limitation on cultural production summarized in his famous dictum “within the revolution everything, against the revolution nothing.” In some ways Gutiérrez Alea’s film will be within the revolution and replicate the official discourse in support of the revolutionary government, in others it will be against it through Sergio’s own words. This ambiguity enabled the director to create a film that leaves in the hands of the audience where the film should be positioned ideologically.

“OLD” MEMORIES OF THE REVOLUTION: *MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT* (1968)

Structurally speaking and in contrast to Desnoes’s novel, Gutiérrez Alea’s *Memories of Underdevelopment* is divided into different episodes separated by intertitles: *Havana 1961: Many People Are Leaving*; *Pablo*; *The Truth of the Group Is in the Murderer*; *Noemí*; *Elena*; *A Tropical Adventure*; and *October 22, 1962: Kennedy Speaks*. As we will see, each episode is composed of different scenes, sometimes repeated later on. Although in a sense the film as a whole follows a chronological order that goes from

¹³⁵ Julio García Espinosa, “For an Imperfect Cinema,” trans. Julianne Burton, *New Latin American Cinema*, 82.

mid 1961 to late 1962, these intertitles demonstrate that the outcome will be a much more complex collage with documentary footage and new scenes added to Desnoes's first edition of novel. On one hand, the episodes will be devoted to secondary characters such as Pablo, Noemí and Elena, and on the other, documentary insertions and historical events will also frame the film: such as the Bay of Pigs invasion, the Post-Bay of Pigs migration in 1961, the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, among others. This juxtaposition of documentary images and fiction will be further complicated through the use of non-continuity editing such as flashback, montage, cross-cutting, and jump-cuts, that demonstrate Gutiérrez Alea's interest in experimentation, taking it to the extreme. This approach will distance itself from Rebeca Chávez's *Ciudad en rojo* that relied more on a traditional narrative style with continuity editing easier to understand.

Paradoxically, while the film's protagonist is a middle-class bourgeois man, as in Desnoes's novel, one of the main purposes of this film is that of capturing the "essence" of Cuban people on the screen through the use of a hidden camera and *cinéma vérité* images. This strategy was deliberately used in many scenes in which the "people's" identity will be defined through the lenses of race, music, and dance, primarily. This redefinition of Cuban identity through music started from early on at the Cuban Film Institute with films such as *Cuba baila (Cuba Dances, 1960)* by Julio García Espinosa. *Memorias del subdesarrollo* will also follow this trend particularly in its opening scene, which shows Pello el Afrokán's orchestra playing Afro-Cuban music while people dance at what seems to be a carnival. This prelude to the film sets the record straight that this film will be about Cuba, and the revolutionary process becomes a synonym of Cuban popular culture and identity. As various critics have argued, the first segment of the film is trying to capture the essence of Cuban popular culture by parading its Afro-Cuban

heritage.¹³⁶ Afro-Cuban dances, rhythms, and songs are all portrayed as an emblem of the Cuban nation. But critics such as Dylan Robbins, who point out the contradictions in this opening scene, have problematized this claim arguing that it also encapsulates the idea of the masses as violent and as an “uncontrollable monster.”¹³⁷ On top of Pello’s orchestra we hear gunshots and we see that a man is killed, linking, inevitably, violence to race. In this way, the scene portrays a fear not only of the “masses” but also of Afro-Cuban culture. Furthermore, the depiction of the carnival also seems problematic for its somber characterization of the event and its overtly representation of sexualized subjects. Race is directly linked to pleasure, and as Eugenio Matibag and Ana Serra have argued while referring to other early 1959 works, it is also relegated to the realm of folklore.¹³⁸

Later on in the film, other representations of Afro-Cubans are also problematic and suggest that— by 1968— racial equality— as one of the main goals of the revolution— had not been reached. In the roundtable scene, for example, we see an Afro-Cuban subordinate subject serving water and refreshments to an all-white panel of intellectuals. White privilege has subjugated Afro-Cubans to the sphere of servitude. Now, in the opening sequence, one may argue— in Gutiérrez Alea’s defense— that the camera is capturing Sergio’s point of view. That is, Sergio the character— not the director— is the one relegating Afro-Cubans to the realm of folklore. But the documentary-like images of

¹³⁶ For one of the recent discussions on the issue of race in *Memorias* see: Darién J. Davis, *Beyond Slavery: The Multilayered Legacy of Africans in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007) 259-60. For another take on this issue but in relation to contemporary Cuban cinema see: Sujatha Fernandes, *Cuba Represent!: Cuban Arts, State Power, and the Making of New Revolutionary Cultures* (Durham: Duke UP, 2006).

¹³⁷ For a detailed examination of the opening scene with Pello el Afrokán see: Robbins, “On the Margins of Reality: Fiction, Documentary, and Marginal Subjectivity in Three Early Cuban Revolutionary Films,” 33.

¹³⁸ Eugenio Matibag, *Afro-Cuban Religious Experience: Cultural Reflections in Narrative* (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 1996), Ana Serra, “Conspicuous Absences. Representations of Race in Post-1959 Cuban Film,” *Confluencia* 20.1 (2004): 134-46.

the carnival in a *cinéma vérité* style seem to contradict that argument, as Robbins has noticed. The hidden camera used to capture the images of the carnival seek to provide and “objective” view of the surroundings rather than a subjective one, or, as documentary theorist Bill Nichols describes it, while referring to *cinéma vérité* films, “to observe what happens in front of the camera without overt intervention.”¹³⁹ This “observational mode” of documentary production, as Nichols labels it, reminds us of the way that the film *P.M.*, which we will examine in Chapter 4, was produced. The directors Sabá Cabrera Infante and Orlando Jiménez Leal sought to “objectively observe” Havana’s nightlife. Similarly, *Memorias* also pursued to capture this “observation.” Now, *P.M.* got into trouble with the revolutionary government and *Memorias del subdesarrollo* did not. So the question that arises is: why? One possible answer to this question is the fact that Gutiérrez Alea framed his portrayal within the perspective of his bourgeois protagonist. The images were now seen through the eyes of Sergio.

Proof of this POV perspective is the last shot of the opening scene where we see the image of an Afro-Cuban woman looking straight at the camera, at us, the spectators (Figure 7A). Later on, when the scene is repeated with the figure of Sergio among the crowd, we will discover that she was actually looking at the protagonist, as the camera resembles his eyes. Gutiérrez Alea uses this POV technique throughout the film as many of the secondary characters, particularly the female ones, look at Sergio. The director was trying to engage the audience in the process of identification. Now, it is important to notice that these POV shots were not selected at random. Gutiérrez Alea wants us to identify with a specific type of Sergio: the white privileged one (Figure 7A), the womanizer (Figure 7B), the monster (Figure 7C), and the delinquent (Figure 7D). To that end, we not only make eye contact with the Afro-Cuban woman, but also with Elena

¹³⁹ Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2001) 172.

(7B), Laura (7C), and even the official that takes his testimony at the police headquarters (7D). Although these shots are predominant throughout the film, other POV shots will place us closer to a more sympathetic Sergio, easier to identify with, such as the younger one that fell in love with Hanna. But the film also aims to brake the fourth wall and to reverse the role of the audience, instead of us looking at the characters on the screen, they look at us. Paradoxically, then, while the POV shots seek identification, they also create a distancing effect. The gaze of the characters moves us from an outsider third person perspective to a first person participatory role and this switch makes us be self-aware of our own place as spectators. This strategy will be repeated throughout the film with other Cuban characters that look at a hidden camera.



Figure 7: POV Shots from Sergio's Perspective

POV shots are also used in the film to create a collision, to use Sergei Eisenstein's term, between Sergio's subjective perspective and an "objective" representation of the

Cuban Revolution that Gutiérrez Alea aims to convey through the use of documentary images. Although Eisenstein refers to images when he defines his montage as “an idea that arises from the collision of independent shots,”¹⁴⁰ Gutiérrez Alea creates the tension of montage between Sergio’s voiceover and the images that we see. Both sound and image are collapsed simultaneously, like in the scene previously discussed in the novel about *El Encanto*. To Sergio’s description of Havana as a “Third World city”—rather than the Paris of the Caribbean— and of Cuban people as rabble, the director of *Memorias* juxtaposed images of the streets of Havana captured with a hidden camera. As Gutiérrez Alea explained in his book *The Viewer’s Dialectic*, this juxtaposition sought to contradict the protagonist’s perspective. Within this *cinéma vérité* images, then, we see POV shots of people that do not know they are being filmed (Figure 8). These documentary images challenge the audience to think: is Sergio’s perspective true? The spectator will be left to decide.

Interestingly, these *cinéma vérité* images also try to capture a Cuban “essence” on camera as another addition to the Cuban Revolutionary Archive. Although *Memorias* follows the figure of a bourgeois character, Gutiérrez Alea seemed concerned with representing the Cuban reality at all its levels. To the questions of what should be represented and which stories we need to portray, Gutiérrez Alea also responded with the Cuban people. But if we pay a closer look, the images are quite complex, as the director seems to be proposing that in them we could find the bare bone success or failure of the social change experienced by the revolution. Similar to the portraits shown on Italian neorealist films of people after the Second World War, here we get a glimpse of the personalities that lived in Cuba during the 1956-68 revolutionary war. In both cases, the

¹⁴⁰ For further examples on Eisenstein’s theory of the montage see: Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, trans. Jay Leyda (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977). This definition of the montage is on page 49 in his essay “A Dialectic Approach to Film Form.”

overall questions were: What has happened to us after such a huge conflict? How have we changed after the war? Has it been worth it? They are all images of hope and question at the same time, hope that humanity can recover, and question as in what the human being has turned out to be. Rather than portraying images of triumphalism, in the way that Cuban photographers such as Alberto Korda operated,¹⁴¹ Gutiérrez Alea leaves it to the audience to decide whether the Cuban Revolution has changed its people or not. The non-diegetic sound, however, will suggest how the images are to be read.



Figure 8: *Cinéma Vérité* Images of the Cuban People in Havana

Accompanying the El Encanto scene are Sergio's voiceover and two songs on the background: the *danzón* "Angoa" by the Orquesta Aragón and a baroque melody played on a harpsichord. While Sergio describes Havana pejoratively as the "Tegucigalpa" of the Caribbean, the popular song "Angoa" plays in the background and creates an atmosphere

¹⁴¹ For an iconic example of a photograph of the Cuban Revolution see Korda's "Guerrillero Heroico," an image that depicted *El Ché* and traveled all over the world.

of a tropical paradise. The popular *danzón* transforms his surroundings into an Eden for tourism, adding a mocking commentary to Sergio's description of Havana as Paris. Then, when Sergio begins to describe the people on the streets, that song changes into a baroque melody in minor key while he says that women look like maids and men like lower-class workers. These people that he describes are those shown in Figure 8 but the non-diegetic baroque music on top of the portraits adds sentimentality to them appealing to the emotions of the audience and asking them to identify with those on the screen. This sentimentality differs from Gutiérrez Alea's depiction of Sergio as a monster/inhuman. When the credits sequence is shown for a second time later on into the film, music will also add other meanings to the images. Instead of listening to the song "¿Dónde está Teresa?" by Pello el Afrócan, this time we hear an atonal melody that resembles Sergio's alienation among the crowd. The protagonist does not fit in culturally and economically speaking. This difference in class will also be emphasized with the contrast of popular and classical music throughout the film. On one hand Elena sings melodies from *bolero-filin* music. On the other, Sergio prefers the classical genre.

But going back to the *El Encanto* scene, other *cinéma vérité* images also exemplify the ongoing changes that Havana undertook during the first years of the revolutionary government. The display windows on the streets, for example, now carry images of Fidel and José Martí and are highly politicized with slogans (Figure 9). Fidel next to Martí (Figure 9A) alludes to the continuous struggle for Cuba's independence that started in the nineteenth century and ended in 1959. Fidel is Martí's heir. In others the arrangement of the objects in the shot or the *mise-en-scène* is more complex, even alluding to the imminent sacralization of the heroes of the revolution. An image of Fidel in Figure 9B, for instance, appears next to the figures of Jesus and a Virgin, as if the maximum leader of the rebel army has become a God. A naked doll in that same shot

close to Fidel also refers back to the *machista* discourse that dominated the revolution: even though women joined the army, the established discourse was that the victory was possible thanks to masculine force. Interestingly, this sacralization of the revolutionary figures and this *machismo* will also be critiqued with more intensity in Miguel Coyula's *Memorias del desarrollo* (2010), but in a different context: fifty years after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution. Other parallelism will also be established between the first *Memorias* and its sequel as we study it in Chapter 3.



Figure 9: *Cinéma Vérité* Images of Havana

In terms of form, the *cinéma vérité* technique is not the only one used by Gutiérrez Alea. As Schroeder has pointed out, the film is considered a combination of multiple styles and modes of filmmaking, that is, a collage:

Formally the film is a collage of film material broadly divided into the categories of fiction and narrative. Each category is in turn a mixture of modes. In the fiction segments, the film draws from several currents, [. . .] specifically Italian neorealism and French New wave. [. . .] In *Memories*, the use of black-and-white film stock, of hidden cameras to record street scenes, and of real audio all remit us to films such as *La strada*. [. . .] From the French New Wave, *Memories* seems closest to the films of Godard (at least in terms of formal experimentation with montage and handheld camera) and Resnais, whose *Hiroshima, mon amour* (1959) continuously shifted between objective and subjective modes of narration.¹⁴²

¹⁴² Schroeder, *Tomás Gutiérrez Alea: The Dialectics of a Filmmaker* 24.

Although the connections to Italian Neo-Realism and the French New Wave have been previously examined, it is also important to notice how the documentary genre also framed Gutiérrez Alea's *Memorias del subdesarrollo*. As mentioned above, ICAIC sponsored many documentary films, including *Esta tierra nuestra* (1959) by Gutiérrez Alea himself, as well as newsreels under the leadership of Santiago Álvarez. This effervescence of documentary filmmaking prompted Cuban cinema to refer back to it even in fiction films. This meant that Gutiérrez Alea did not only look for inspiration from filmmakers outside the island but also from his colleagues like Álvarez himself. But the documentaries included in *Memorias del subdesarrollo* will vary in style as Schroeder continues to explain:

The documentary portions of the film are also diverse in origin and style. [. . .] Virtually all kinds of newsreels, TV reports, radio broadcasts, newspaper clippings, and even a sociological treatise. All of this material is interwoven with Sergio's fiction so that the results is, as Eisenstein put it, a montage of ideas, an intellectual montage [. . .] The accumulation of many such collision throughout the film is what gives it the feeling of a collage. . . .¹⁴³

Primarily the newsreels at ICAIC sought to contest the negative and demagogic views of the revolution. In *Memorias*, the documentary insertions will follow the same trend: i. e. debunking the myth of the Bay of Pigs invasion. At ICAIC, then, the documentary genre served as the perfect tool for this enterprise as it could be used as a vehicle of "truth." This was the seed that sparked the fusion of fiction with documentary images in films, later on. In Gutiérrez Alea's case, the use of inter-titles commonly used in documentaries sets the context in the first years of the 1960s. *Memorias* will also use documentary images from Gutiérrez Alea's coverage of the Bay of Pigs invasion titled *Muerte al invasor* (*Death to the Invader*, 1961) and, as we will see, from other archives around the world.

¹⁴³ Schroeder, *Tomás Gutiérrez Alea: The Dialectics of a Filmmaker* 25.

The film's combination of a documentary footage with the fiction can be observed from the beginning. Gutiérrez Alea felt the need to literally "document" the years of the revolution and in one of the first scenes, the one at the airport, he starts mixing documentary like shots from the massive migration of Cubans to the United States in 1961 with a staged scene involving the professional actors Sergio Corrieri (Sergio), Beatriz Ponchora (Laura), among others. Not only the public at the airport is composed of non-actors, but also an inter-title makes the documentary technique more evident by stating: "La Habana 1961, Numerosas personas abandonan el país" (Havana 1961, Numerous people leave the country, Figure 10A). This date was not chosen at random, it is an important moment to be included in the Cuban Revolutionary Archive. In this sense, Gutiérrez Alea's movie documents the massive post-Bay of Pigs migration as in an historical documentary. Another important moment in Cuban history that must be archived appears at the end of the film, this time announcing the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 (Figure 10B). This second inter-title reads "October 22, 1962 Kennedy speaks" marking another crucial moment in the history of the Cuban Revolution as a nuclear war was about to start.

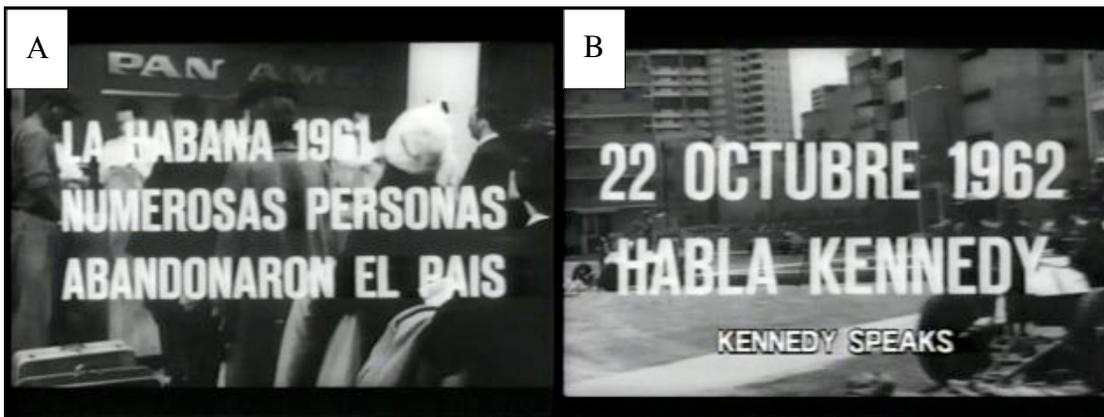


Figure 10: Inter-titles in *Memories of Underdevelopment*

Later on, the film portrays many shots of the city of Havana that also add to this documentary air. Sergio, the main character, goes out to his balcony and looks to see if the city has changed after the revolution. He looks through a telescope at specific locations, all very popular for sightseeing. The first shot documents a panoramic view of the Cuban harbor from a distance (Figure 11A). The second one reveals the “Bronze Titan,” an equestrian statue of general Antonio Maceo who fought in the 19th century War of Independence (Figure 11B). Then, the camera pans to the Maine monument with an absent eagle on top (Figure 11C), a demolished symbol of the United States. And lastly, the camera unveils one of the cathedrals in Havana (Figure 11D). Every single shot of these monuments draws a map of the city, just as a documentary would. In this way, the camera tries to catch, along with Sergio, the spatial changes after the revolution. For a moment, it is as if the film heads out to be a documentary along the question: What happened to Cuba after the revolution?

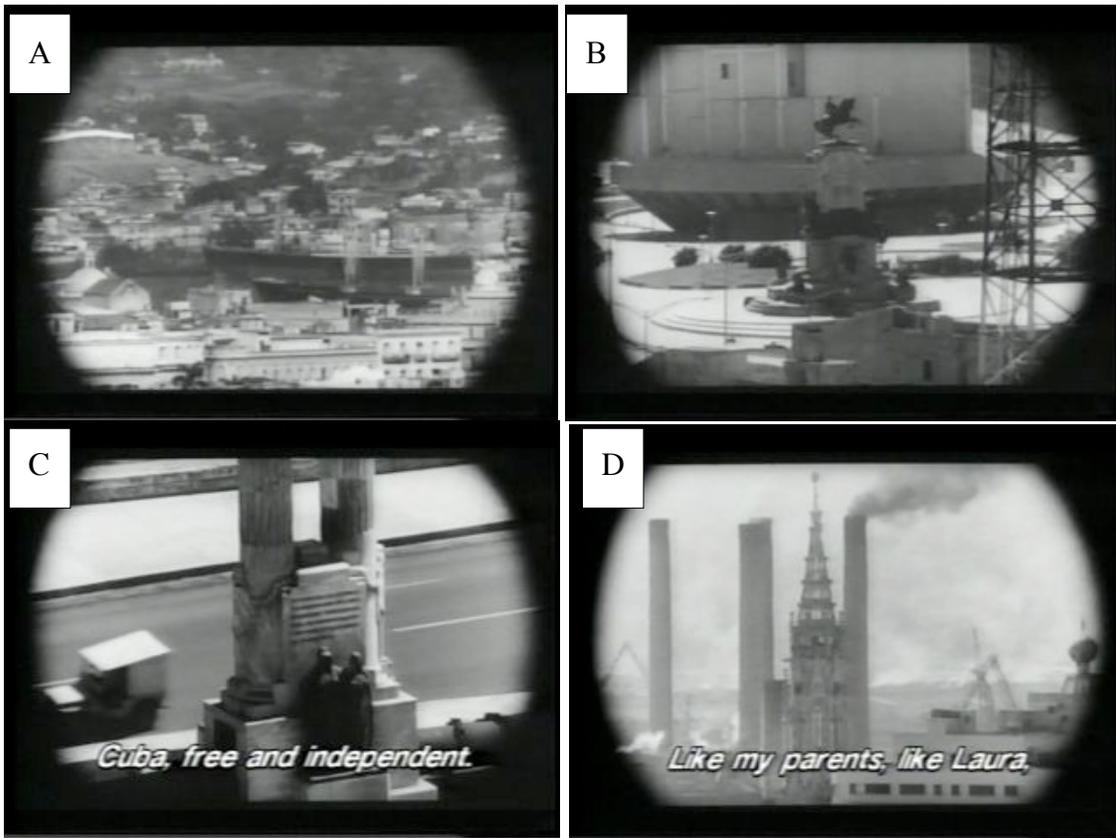


Figure 11: Shots of Havana

Another “inserted scene” is a documentary about hunger. Sergio says: “He [Pablo] says the only thing a Cuban can’t stand is hunger. But what about all the starvation we’ve had since the Spaniard came? In Latin America, four children die every minute due to illnesses caused by malnutrition. After ten years there will be 20 million children dead. This is the same number of death caused by the Second World War.” His voiceover is played over a set of twelve photographs of malnourished children (Figure 12). This scene is taken directly from Desnoes’s novel, but the crude photographs added to it amplify the impact of the words. Not only do we listen to the tragic consequences of the Spanish empire in Latin America, but we also see the rotten bodies of malnourished children. Although the sources of these images are not cited, the voiceover “labels” them

and the audience is expected to assume that they were taken in Latin America. More importantly, the cruelty depicted in them aims to displace any doubts of this representation of “truth.” These documentary photographs, then, like others in the film, pretend to represent an “objective” view of the Cuban reality and the Cuban past. In this case, however, the film also mirrors the documentary genre, but this time a documentary about hunger in Latin America, not just Cuba.



Figure 12: Pictures of Hunger in Latin America

“Una aventura en el trópico,” another episode in the film, also captures this documentary “spirit”, but in regard to the North-American writer Ernest Hemingway and his involvement in the Spanish Civil War. Hemingway was hired as a journalist by the North American Newspaper Alliance in 1937 to cover this war, an experience that served as the basis for his play *The Fifth Column* and his novel *For Whom the Bells Tolls*.¹⁴⁴ In the film, however, Gutiérrez Alea portrays Hemingway’s connection to the Spanish Civil War with photographs found at Hemingway’s house-museum Finca Vigía in San Francisco de Paula, Cuba. Sergio and Elena visit that museum and find an album of

¹⁴⁴ Hilary Hemingway and Carlene Brennen, *Hemingway in Cuba* (New York: Rugged Land, 2003).

pictures of the Spain Civil War and, once more, the film detours from Sergio's story line to depict a documentary about the brutality of this war. Among these photographs, we see Robert Capa's famous picture "The Falling Soldier"¹⁴⁵ that supposedly captured a militiaman hit by a bullet and his precise moment of death (Figure 13A). The photograph captures a soldier dressed in white, falling backwards after being shot in the head. All of these images bring up into the discussion a theme that is exceptionally relevant for Cuban Revolutionary Cinema: what should be the relationship between intellectuals and war? Hemingway is one good example, since he participated in the Spanish Civil War. Yet, Sergio is part of this question as well since he is also an intellectual but one that decided not to join Castro's armed rebellion or give his open support to the revolution. The questions that arise here are: Should intellectuals be involved in war or not and how? What should be the role of intellectuals in the revolution?

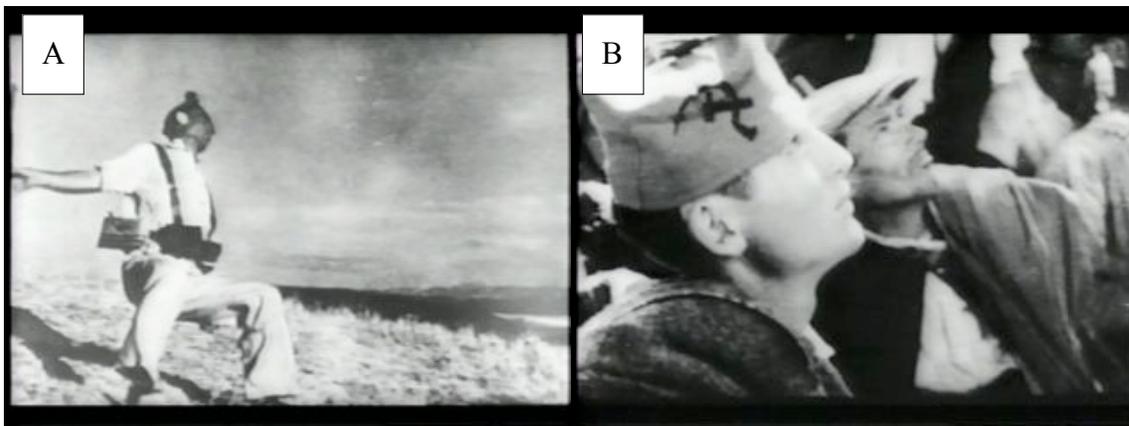


Figure 13: Images from the Spanish Civil War

All of these documentary-like examples are linked to Sergio in some way or another, maintaining the film's structure as a mixture of narrative and documentary

¹⁴⁵ Robert Capa was a Hungarian photographer that covered many wars including the Spanish Civil War, World War II, and the Arab-Israeli War, among others. One of his most famous pictures is the one mentioned above.

styles. However, earlier in the film, the narrative voice splits into two with the beginning of another documentary episode called “The Truth of the Group Is in the Murderer.” Sergio’s voiceover provides quotes from *Moral burguesa y revolución* by Argentine Marxist philosopher León Rozitchner as the narration for the images.¹⁴⁶ Yet, the images shown are not connected with the previous ones; they are also documentary footage but of a different kind of that has been featured so far. From here on, the film becomes a documentary about the prisoners of the Bay of Pigs’ invasion and the trial process against them after their capture. To build this mini-documentary episode, images of Gutiérrez Alea’s own newsreel on the Bay of Pigs called *Muerte al invasor* (1961) were used.¹⁴⁷ Politically speaking, all these images are heavily charged. Together they function as a kaleidoscope of the abuses of Batista’s dictatorship; i.e. executions and murders during his regime. On the voiceover, we not only hear Sergio’s voice reading Rozitchner, but testimonies from actual tapes of prisoners and witnesses. The prisoners included priest Lugo, the businessman Fabio Freyre, the official Felipe Rivero, the torturer Ramón Calviño, the philosopher José Andreu, and the politician Carlos Varona, as well as many anonymous mercenaries not mentioned by name. Of all of them, Ramón Calviño’s testimony is crucial as María Elena, one of the women that he tortured who is now part of the revolutionary militia, interviews him. She describes in detail how Calviño kicked her in the stomach causing a hemorrhage and brings her bloodstained housecoat as evidence. There, in front of the cameras, she asks him to confess what he did to her. Other witnesses also testify and interrogate Calviño, explaining his inhumane way of killing and laughing at the dead bodies. Each of their voices is also brought up from the archives

¹⁴⁶ León Rozitchner, *Moral burguesa y revolución* (Buenos Aires: Procyón, 1963).

¹⁴⁷ Reynaldo González refers to *Muerte al invasor* in: González, *Cine cubano: ese ojo que nos ve*. Alea also admits this insertion in his interviews that appear on Ambrosio Fonet’s *Alea, una retrospectiva crítica* (La Habana: Letras Cubanas, 1998).

to use it in this mini-documentary episode, but images also complement these voiceovers and add further meaning to them.

To the testimonies of the prisoners and witnesses, for example, Gutiérrez Alea added photographs that augmented the tension to the film. The audience sees human bones and tools for torture, weapons inspected by Batista and the chief of police, men with signs of torture on their backs, and corpses on the streets. Some of these images follow the argument of Rozitchner's book that links the Bay of Pigs invasion to a bigger problem of the bourgeoisie, but others serve as evidence to the atrocities committed by the Batista regime. In all, they leave no space for a doubt of the prisoners' culpability. For example, to the words of Calviño, the film not only juxtaposes the testimonies of actual witnesses but also the images of the people that suffered torture, the tools used, corpses, etc. Hence, while the witnesses ask him to confess, the audience already is moved to think that he is guilty. The same thing happens when Father Lugo, also a prisoner, tries to defend himself. He says: "It seems as though you want to accuse me of being the originator of the invasion and all those things. I want to insist that my mission was purely spiritual. I have never handled a weapon, before or after. The fact that one is mixed up in a conspiracy doesn't make one a conspirator."¹⁴⁸ Rather than accusing him directly or propagandistically, the film accuses him through images as we see a priest offering communion to the mercenaries. Once again, Gutiérrez Alea leaves it to the audience to understand the accusation and leads them to decide if Father Lugo is guilty or not. Miguel Coyula, however, as we will see later on, will question the benefit of these trials, the "justice" implemented, and will add a different version of this same episode to the Cuban Revolutionary Archive.

¹⁴⁸ Translation cited from the English translation of the script by Michael Chanan. See: Gutiérrez Alea and Desnoes, *Memories of Underdevelopment*, Rutgers UP: 48.

The last inserted documentary in the film appears towards the end with the Missile Crisis of 1962. The voiceover uses US President John F. Kennedy's speech as he announces the quarantine imposed around Cuba and a possible US military attack to the island. On screen, we see the images published by international press agencies of the nuclear missiles supposedly found in Cuba (Figure 14A), of a USSR ship supposedly carrying weapons of mass destruction into the island (Figure 14B), of US war tanks and militia being mobilized (Figure 14C), and of war ships preparing for a possible armed conflict (Figure 14D). Similar to the archive of the Spanish Civil War, these images complement the Cuban Revolutionary Archive with pictures taken from international archives that documented the Missile Crisis. Gutiérrez Alea also assembles these images in a documentary style to convey and build the tension experienced on those days, a tension that will ultimately lead to the climax of his film. Once again, any documentary about the Cuban Revolution would have to include this date as a crucial one in Cuban history. Therefore, the scene is not an arbitrary one. And in a sense, Gutiérrez Alea's film is implying that the climax of the film is also a climax or tipping point in Cuban history, a threshold of no-return.

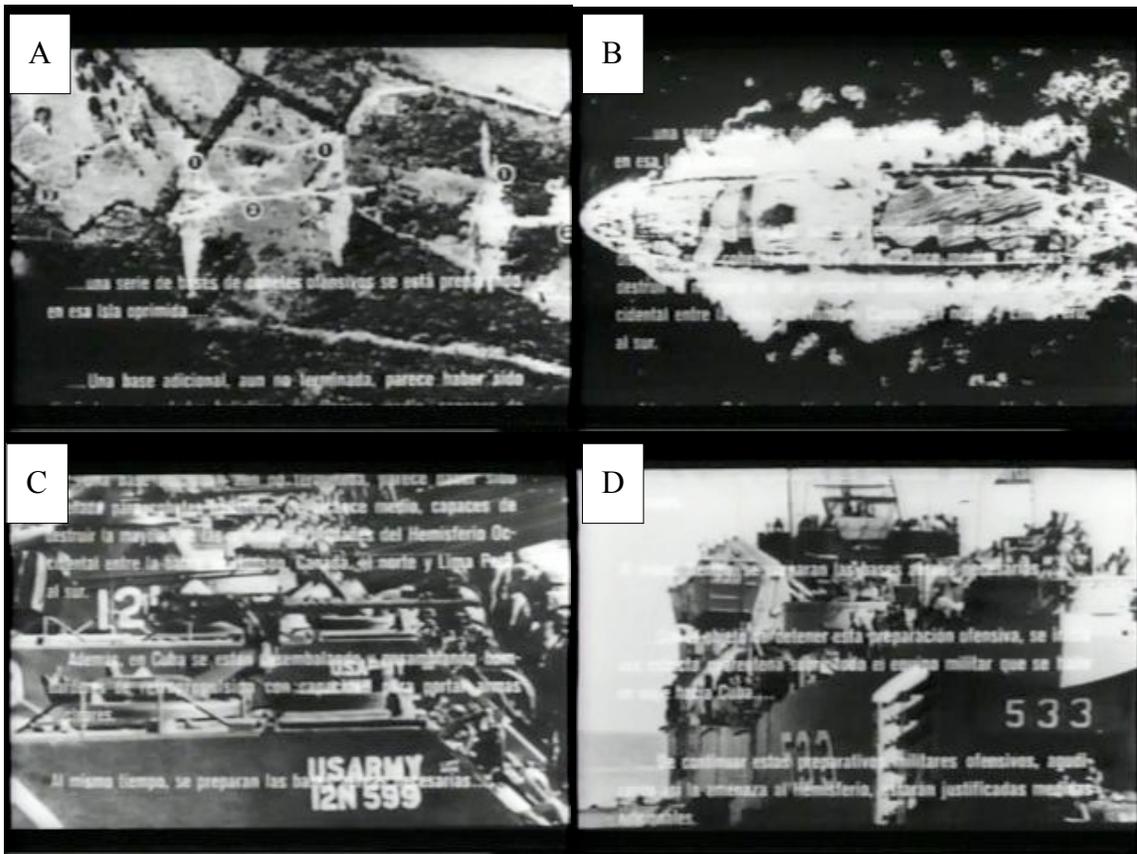


Figure 14: Images of the Cuban Missile Crisis

FROM DOCUMENTARY FOOTAGE TO STAGED MEMORIALIZING

The use of flashbacks in *Memories of Underdevelopment* is also complex and reflects on the process of recording history versus how images operate in memory. The images and the juxtaposition of the present and the past create a “jumbled” result that disrupts a chronological order. It confuses the audience to a certain point, but also alludes to the complex relationship that Cubans have with memory. Two crucial questions related to this are: What should be remembered? How should we remember? The film’s insistence on flashbacks unveils the concern that new filmmakers had with memory in the

1960s, and how the “weight of history” remodeled their work.¹⁴⁹ Interestingly, *Memories* divides the representation of memory and history into two different realms. On one hand, history is portrayed through the use of documentary images, as demonstrated above. The historical records are the documentary images themselves. Memory, on the other, is portrayed through Sergio’s experiences, that is, through fiction.¹⁵⁰ Sergio not only remembers his life with Laura on the island, but also his childhood friend Francisco de la Cuesta, his High School, the brothel where he lost his virginity, Hanna’s relationship, among other things. Near the end of the film, however, the line that separates memory and history will be blurred. The audience will decide which “memories of underdevelopment” should be remembered.

One cinematic technique that Gutiérrez Alea uses for his representation of memory is that of editing. He experiments with film narration when he constructs a sequence of still images to show how Sergio recalls his previous day with Elena. In the film, unlike the novel, Elena visits Sergio’s apartment two days in a row. On the second day, Sergio remembers his previous day with her in a succession of still images that appear on the screen (Figure 15). While Sergio’s voiceover describes Elena’s “underdeveloped” character because she is unable to connect the past with the present, the film projects still photographs in reverse order of their previous day: first Sergio remembers Elena in his bedroom wearing Laura’s dress (Figure 15A, B); then in the

¹⁴⁹ Pérez explains: “History occupied a position of prominence in broadcast media. Radio broadcasters and television producers routinely incorporated historical themes into daily programming. [. . .] The resources of the Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográficos (ICAIC) were similarly allocated to the production of full-length feature films and documentaries addressing historical themes.” See: Louis A. Pérez, *The Structure of Cuban History: Meanings and Purpose of the Past* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2013) 255.

¹⁵⁰ For a discussion on the terms memory and history in historiography see: Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper & Row Colophon Books, 1980). A much more “porous” classification of both terms appears in: Peter Burke, “History as Social Memory,” *Memory: History, Culture and the Mind*, ed. Thomas Butler (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989) 97-113.

living room wearing her own dress (Figure 15C); then at ICAIC's audition (Figure 15D); then at the restaurant (Figure 15E); and finally at La Rambla where they met for the first time (Figure 15F). Through editing, Gutiérrez Alea disrupts the film's chronological narration to simulate how memory operates— in reverse and through stills— and the audience is able to recognize the images because they were taken from a previous scene. The changing clothes and spaces convey the passage of time. This recollection of stills underlines the photographic character of memory and at the same time demonstrates Gutiérrez Alea's experimentation with narration. This experimentation distances itself from Rebeca Chávez's chronological portrayal in *Ciudad en rojo*, as seen in the previous chapter, and exemplifies the way that *Memories of Underdevelopment* privileged an aesthetic goal as well as content. It also shows how memory intersects with the Cuban Revolutionary Archive.



Figure 15: Sergio's Flashback of Elena

This narrative strategy reappears when Gutiérrez Alea presents another character in the film: Sergio's first girlfriend Hanna. As his European lover, Sergio has fond memories of her and also remembers her through still images. Various scenes in the past are shown through photographs of both of them together in the park (Figure 16A), of them kissing (Figure 16B), as well as both of them in bed (Figure 16C, D). The static photographs emphasize that those images are fixed in the past, events that were recorded in time but that are no longer occurring. Leo Brower's music also labels these images as memories with a leitmotif that repeats itself every time that Sergio recalls past events.

Before Hanna's scene, Brower had accompanied the memories of his High School friend Armando and Sergio's relationship with prostitutes with the same melancholic song. This music also alludes to the emotional and subjective character of memories in the film. Sergio will remember those times with nostalgia.



Figure 16: Sergio's Memories of Hanna

The scene of the cassette recorder with Sergio and Laura's fight, already discussed, also exemplifies the complex representation of time in the film. On one hand, we listen to the conversation in the past while parallel actions are taking place in the present. With her bourgeois mentality, Laura complains in the recording about the heat, the sweat and how filthy Cuba has become with the revolution. Sergio, also in the recording, responds with a sarcastic tone, making fun of her superficiality. While the audience listens to the conversation, we see Sergio, in the present, using her lipstick to draw an image of her in the mirror. The fight continues in the audio as Laura complains

about Sergio's appearance, screaming at him and calling him a filthy monster. In the present, we see Sergio wearing a stocking over his head, looking straight into his drawing of Laura and teasing her with his "monster" look (Figure 17). The fusion of both narrations in the past and the present reminds us of a common trope in Cuban cinema: always revisiting the past, above all, the years of the revolutionary struggle as exemplified by *Ciudad en rojo* in the first chapter. Here, however, Gutiérrez Alea revisits a bourgeois past, distinguishing itself from other more propagandistic films.



Figure 17: Sergio's Monster Look

This same scene is repeated as a flashback later on in the film, but this time more details are added to the fight. Although the first time we do not see Laura on the screen, we only listen to her voice, when the scene is repeated the images take us to the actual fight as it was happening. Laura appears in front of the camera and the audience looks at her from a point of view perspective, that is, from Sergio's own eyes. This perspective is the first addition to the scene since the first time that we listened to the audio we were outside the conversation. During the repetition, the audience takes on Sergio's shoes as we see Laura through his memories and her body language is another addition to the scene since some of Laura's emotional state is portrayed through her non-verbal

language. Furthermore, the audio flashback begins almost at the end of the argument when Sergio tells Laura that she is being recorded. The first time we hear it, the flashback stops here, but the second time we see the whole argument until Laura decides to leave Sergio and starts to pack her things to go to Miami. This is the third addition to the flashback. In this way, Gutiérrez Alea's flashbacks seem to recover lost pieces from the past every time they repeat themselves. It is not a simple repetition but one that gives us more information about a known event. In this way the film reflects on the process of memory, specifically about recollection of events, and suggests that a constant revision of them is needed. Schroeder also summarizes Gutiérrez Alea's main objective with these repetitions: "In each of these double repetitions, the first sequence serves to help the viewer identify with Sergio, while the repetition serves to help the viewer break off that identification and replace it with a critical attitude toward Sergio."¹⁵¹ Hence, the audience revises Sergio's memories from a critical standpoint.

Gutiérrez Alea also builds his film similar to a "photo album," as another narrative device. Before getting in trouble with Elena's family, Sergio finds photographs of his childhood in the lower drawer of the dresser and begins to remember his early years. Then we begin to see a slideshow of the images themselves: Sergio as a baby, with his mother as a child, when he was 13, 15, 25 years old as the owner of a furniture store, and with Laura at their wedding. All of the images are new to us but we know the story behind them. Here, this "photo album" technique proposes another way that Cuban films could narrate their stories, that is, memories connected to photographs.

Now, another important scene that discusses the theme of memory is the one with Noemí. Like Desnoes, Gutiérrez Alea proposes a link between memory and imagination that problematizes both concepts and the way that we remember. At the beginning of the

¹⁵¹ Schroeder, *Tomás Gutiérrez Alea: The Dialectics of a Filmmaker* 57.

film, Sergio fantasizes with his maid Noemí as she talks about her religious baptism in the river. Sergio imagines her naked in his bed (Figure 18A) and with a white shirt clinging to her body (Figure 18B). Later on, however, Noemí brings the actual photographs of her baptism and Sergio discovers that it was nothing like he imagined. Instead of an erotic image of Noemí, he finds a multitude of people witnessing the baptism (Figure 18C) and a minister submerging her in the water (Figure 18D). He says: “It wasn’t like I thought it would be. It’s nothing. The clothes didn’t cling to her body. There were lots of people. I hadn’t thought about them. Witnesses who are always everywhere.” Here Sergio’s subjective imagination is contested by the images of what actually happened. In this way, the film links imagination to memory as Sergio sought to “remember” what happened during the baptism. Gutiérrez Alea suggests here that memories are also imagined since he uses the same narrative techniques. The “memories” of Noemí are actually imagined by Sergio, underlining here the common root between images and imagination. At the same time, Gutiérrez Alea questions the veracity of these images if one “imagines” them.

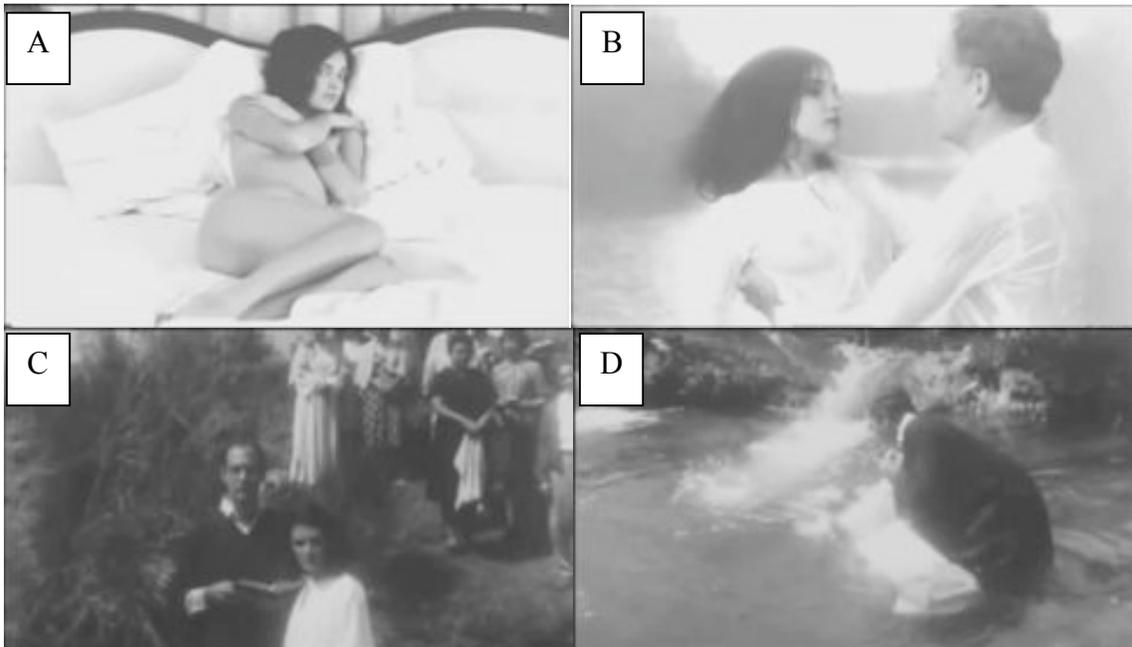


Figure 18: Sergio's Fantasies with Noemí and Her Baptism

In a way, Gutiérrez Alea looks for a representative and “authentic” aesthetic in his *Memorias*, although he combines different known film techniques to create his own. As we have seen before and thanks to his studies at the *Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia* in Rome, Italian Neo-Realism influenced Gutiérrez Alea. The *cinéma-vérité* images and the use of non-actors discussed previously exemplify this. But also, the final scene when there is an imminent nuclear attack to Havana is a clear example of how the French New Wave got translated into the Caribbean context. Nelson Rodríguez, the editor of the film, admits it in one of his interviews:

[Alea] didn't like too much the lighting work that Ramón Suárez had done in that sequence, done as it was with night illumination in the apartment. [. . .] And it occurred to us to use Godard [. . .] so a situation of chaos is created in the character, based on a montage that can support all that confusion in the film, especially since what follows is that whole sequence in which one can see the

whole city being mobilized by the militias and the military. And he said to me “look, let’s try it, go ahead and do it.”¹⁵²

That is why in the last minutes of the film we see a crosscutting of two scenes: one following Sergio trapped in his apartment and anxious (Figure 19B, D, and E), and another one following the Cuban militia getting ready for a possible US nuclear attack (Figure 19A, C, and F). Both scenes are combined through a montage that builds tension and sets the climax of the film. Interestingly, this climax is a turning point in the fate of Sergio and the fate of Cuba. Early on in the film, the theme of suicide was mentioned briefly in regards to Hemingway, but other clues near the end announce Sergio’s death as Schroeder explains: “During this very intense sequence, several important clues to the film may escape the viewer. Two of them foreshadow Sergio’s death: the glass rooster that he breaks and a drawing in which a figure holds a decapitated head by the hair.”¹⁵³ These two symbols evidence in some way that Sergio is about to die. Now one of the questions that remains in the audience is: Will Sergio commit suicide? But the ending also brings up questions about Cuban history: Will the US invade Cuba? Will a nuclear war begin? The film provides no answers to these questions as it ends with an unresolved climax, an open ending. At that moment, Cuban history seemed to have no clear direction.

¹⁵² Unpublished interview to Nelson Rodríguez by Jorge Ruffinelli. The quote is cited in: Schroeder, *Tomás Gutiérrez Alea: The Dialectics of a Filmmaker* 48.

¹⁵³ Schroeder, *Tomás Gutiérrez Alea: The Dialectics of a Filmmaker* 49.



Figure 19: Sergio and the Missile Crisis Crosscutting Sequence

Forty years later, new memories of the revolution will appear with the sequels to Desnoes's novel and Gutiérrez Alea's film. But they will find different answers to the questions posited above.

Chapter 3: Subverting the Cuban Revolutionary Archive

INTRODUCTION: EDMUNDO DESNOES AND MIGUEL COYULA

Nearly forty years later, Desnoes revisited the 1960s and wrote a sequel to his novel titled *Memorias del desarrollo*,¹⁵⁴ positioning Sergio, the protagonist of his first novel and now called Edmundo, in a capitalist society rather than a socialist one. This sequel was published in 2007 by Mono Azul in Spain and was turned into a film three years later by the young Cuban director and graduate of the International Film and Television School in San Antonio de los Baños (EICTV), Miguel Coyula. This second film, also titled *Memorias del desarrollo (Memories of Overdevelopment, 2010)*,¹⁵⁵ is a free adaptation of Desnoes's novel, screened both at the International Film Festival of New Latin American Cinema and at the 10th National Exhibit of New Filmmakers (*10^{ma} Muestra Nacional de Nuevos Realizadores*) in Havana. As an independent production whose script was written by Coyula himself, it takes a completely different path than Rebeca Chávez's *City in Red* (2009). Instead of going back to pay tribute and re-institutionalize Cuban literature and film, Miguel Coyula's iconoclastic production revisits the past to do the opposite: subvert the Cuban Filmic Canon that privileged documentary images as vehicles of truth, as previously discussed in the first chapter. As I will argue, this subversion is more evident in Coyula's film than in Desnoes's 2007 novel and it is based on the use of the image as spectacle. By looking closely at Coyula's film, we will try to decipher his *modus operandi* to contest notions of history, literature, film and memory within the revolutionary context. Desnoes 2007 novel will also help us trace

¹⁵⁴ Edmundo Desnoes, *Memorias del desarrollo*, 1st ed. (Sevilla: Mono Azul Editora, 2007).

¹⁵⁵ *Memorias del desarrollo*, dir. Miguel Coyula, 2010. This film has traveled abroad in the international circle of festivals but has not found distribution. It has also been presented in various universities such as Indiana U-Bloomington, Cornell U, U of Washington, UC Santa Barbara, UC Los Angeles, Florida Atlantic U, U of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and Tulane, among others.

the ways that new memories of the revolution are constructed from abroad. But before examining both *Memorias del desarrollo*, it is important to look at the historical changes that have taken place in more than forty years of literary and filmic productions.

“NEW” MEMORIES OF THE REVOLUTION: *MEMORIES OF OVERDEVELOPMENT* (2010)

Another important branch of the Cuban Revolutionary Archive is that of independent films being produced recently. As we have seen, in the first three decades of the Revolution, cinema produced inside of Cuba was supported, almost in its totality, by the Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC). Films in exile, however, as we will address in Chapter 4 to examine their contributions to the Revolutionary Archive, were supported mostly by funds linked to television. But on the island and during the first thirty years—from 1959-1989 approximately—the state-sponsored cultural agency ICAIC managed to portray the official story of the revolutionary struggle by privileging the cinematographic image. As demonstrated in Chapters 1 and 2, the ICAIC was in charge of controlling Cuban history and popular memory side by side with other cultural institutions such as *Casa de las Américas*, the National Union of Artists and Writers (UNEAC), and the Book Institute (Instituto Cubano del Libro) in charge of the print publications. In the new century, however, independent productions have changed this panorama.

Yet within ICAIC’s complex apparatus, as seen previously, both film and literature were institutionalized and the docudrama film genre flourished. This genre exemplified the main formal ideology governing films sponsored by the Cuban government. Fiction films were fused with documentaries, that is, dramas had to be anchored to its social context; images of the revolutionary struggle. The iconic example of these productions is *Memories of Underdevelopment* (1968), the docudrama *par excellence*, combining— as we have seen— the fictional story of Sergio, the protagonist,

with documentary footage of the main historical events in the Cuba of the sixties: the Bay of Pigs invasion, the massive post-Bay of Pigs migration in 1961, and the Cuban Missile Crisis, among others. Other representative examples of docudramas include *La primera carga al machete* (*The First Charge of the Machete*, 1969), *Girón* (*Bay of Pigs*, 1972), and *De cierta manera* (*One Way or Another*, 1974). *Memories* also proved the success of another technique: that of film adaptations. Yet ironically, although documentary footage seems obligatory in the canonical docudrama mode of production— in order to portray the “truth”— many films of the Revolution are anchored in fiction novels such as *Memorias del subdesarrollo* by Edmundo Desnoes. This development shows how negotiations between fiction and non-fiction films are more complex than they appear. In these docudramas, it was evident that the documentary inserts were praised as vehicles of “truth” and valued as an archive where memories could be deposited. The document— or the photographic image— served as a crucial artifact to remember Cuban history. But fiction will also serve as a vehicle to portray this history.

Two decades later, with the fall of the Soviet bloc, Cuba entered a deep economic crisis— known as the Special Period— that had a major impact on the island and its literary and filmic industries. Ester Whitfield has analyzed in depth the transformations in literature during this period,¹⁵⁶ and Cristina Venegas has pointed out ICAIC’s need for foreign capital in order to survive.¹⁵⁷ Simply put, the crisis provoked a shift toward film co-productions and a change in gear away from the classic docudramas of the sixties and seventies mentioned above or the historical films of the seventies and eighties— such as *El otro Francisco* (1974), *Cecilia* (1982), and *Amada* (1983), among others. The shift also

¹⁵⁶ See: Esther Whitfield, *Cuban Currency: The Dollar and “Special Period” Fiction* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2008).

¹⁵⁷ Cristina Venegas, “Filmmaking with Foreigners,” *Cuba in the Special Period: Culture and Ideology in the 1990s*, ed. Ariana Hernandez-Reguant, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). 37-50.

introduced new themes to Cuban cinema, such as that of homosexuality and homophobia, in another film by Gutiérrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabío called *Strawberry and Chocolate* (1993). As a co-production with Spain, this film exemplified the major support of foreign countries to Cuban films during the 1990s. Nonetheless, the crisis got to the bare bone of ICAIC when no feature film was produced in 1996.¹⁵⁸ Consequently, productions outside of the industry began to flourish with the rise of new technologies; video camcorders in the nineties and digital media later on.

As Ann Marie Stock has noted in her book *On Location in Cuba*,¹⁵⁹ new technologies enabled new ways of filmmaking and new stories to be told outside of the state-controlled apparatus. Consequently, a new history began to appear on the big screen built a younger generation and an “independent” branch of the Cuban Revolutionary Archive was born. This evolution is very particular to the Cuban circumstance and provides an extraordinary example of independent cinema today. Cuban films now have turned to be sustainable independent productions unlike those in other countries in Latin America where neoliberal policies have ruined the national industry and have left it in the hands of the global market.¹⁶⁰ One of the main representatives for this independent movement, the director Miguel Coyula, explains this phenomenon succinctly:

I think that thanks to digital technology there has been another awakening in the film industry, although it is not really the industry any more, it is more isolated

¹⁵⁸ For a list of ICAIC’s productions per year up to 2004 see: María Eulalia Douglas, Sara Vega, Ivo Sarría and Jorge Menella, *Producciones del Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industrias Cinematográficas. 1959-2004* (La Habana: Cinemateca de Cuba, 2004).

¹⁵⁹ Stock, *On Location in Cuba: Street Filmmaking During Times of Transition*. This is the best and most complete history of Cuban cinema in the 1990s and the first decade of the 20th century.

¹⁶⁰ For an overview of the situation in Latin American Film Markets, primarily in Mexico and Argentina, see: Néstor García Canclini, “Will There Be Latin American Cinema in the Year 2000? Visual Culture in a Postnational Era,” trans. Adriana X Tatum and Ann Marie Stock, *Framing Latin American Cinema: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*, ed. Ann Marie Stock (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997) 246-58.

independent filmmakers that are doing their own films with a camera and a computer basically, because before they depended on the whole industry with 35mm and all that. So I think that after the collapse of the Soviet Union the Cuban film industry started depending on foreign investors and the films had to have the cliché views of Cuba like dancing girls, the beaches, rum, tobacco, the *Cohibas*, that kind of view that was terrible. So now by doing the films independently, the filmmakers are sort of finding a new voice that was missing.¹⁶¹

Interestingly, this change in gear toward independent films coincided with a transformation at ICAIC in 2000, as Stock has noticed. Alfredo Guevara, who had been president for more than thirty years, retired and Omar González, president of the Cuban Book Institute, replaced him. The new administration opened the doors to younger generations and established the National Exhibit of New Filmmakers (*Muestra Nacional de Nuevos Realizadores*) where many of the independent productions were screened. As Stock explains while referring to the *Muestra*:

Oftentimes, the focus is individuals and their idiosyncrasies. Personal stories, frequently drawn from the filmmakers' own experience, prevail over historical epics. Subjects once considered taboo in Cuba—inconsistencies between official policies and actual practices, sexuality, domestic violence, drugs, prostitution, housing shortages, censorship, discrimination, and so on—now figure prominently. The films employ a broad range of protagonists, including children, disenchanted urban youth, the mentally ill, *campesinos*, transvestites, graffiti artists, and other disenfranchised sectors. [. . .] Works by these Street Filmmakers cease to celebrate the Revolution's triumphs and idealize its subjects, as did many ICAIC classics of the 1960s and 1970s. Instead, they explore the tensions provoked by the island's accelerated transformation—the pervasive absences and exodus, the topsy-turvy values and ethics, and the omnipresent *doble moral*.¹⁶²

The revolutionary heroes are absent in most of these independent films and their idealization is subverted. The protagonists are no longer revolutionary heroes but rather the opposite. A recent example of this subversion is present in the work of the young independent filmmaker Miguel Coyula.

¹⁶¹ Elliot Kotek, *Interview with Miguel Coyula*, 2006, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eHfmg7-_Xgs>

¹⁶² Stock, *On Location in Cuba: Street Filmmaking During Times of Transition* 18.

Other films had criticized and parodied the canon of Cuban films from early on, such as *Demasiado miedo a la vida o Plaff* (1988) by Juan Carlos Tabío. As the critic John King has noticed: “*Plaff* [. . .] pokes fun at all the sacred cows. Its opening parodies notions of ‘Imperfect Cinema’, the famous thesis essay of García Espinosa: the film has to start without the first reel, since it has not been developed in time.”¹⁶³ But these critiques came from inside the same institution that they were spoofing and were thus “benevolent.” *Plaff* was produced by ICAIC and, all in all, subscribed García Espinosa’s film theory, even though it was aimed as a parody. As Linda Hutcheon would say, “it both legitimizes and subverts that which it parodies.”¹⁶⁴ But later on, however, new organizations—studied in depth by Stock—such as the International School of Film and Television (EICTV), the Saíz Brothers Association, the National Video Movement of Cuba, and the Ludwig Foundation of Cuba, provided a new setting to criticize Cuban society from a different standpoint outside the ICAIC. This enabled younger filmmakers to experiment with newer ways of filmmaking as well as more pungent and politically incorrect topics. To these organizations one has to add the work done at the National Exhibit of New Filmmakers— from 2000 on— that opened the doors for debate on the film controversies of the past. The exhibit not only screened new films by independent filmmakers, but also organized panels and screened retrospectives on marginalized or blacklisted directors such as Nicolás Guillén Landrián and Oscar Valdés, as well as on the “polemical 1960s” including the film *P.M.* directed by Sabá Cabrera Infante and Orlando Jiménez Leal, censored in the early years of the revolution. A new atmosphere of change and evolution within the Cuban film movement was taking over, and young

¹⁶³ King, “Cuba: Revolutionary Projections,” 163.

¹⁶⁴ Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002) 97.

filmmakers– such as Miguel Coyula– would take advantage of the moment and these organizations for their own professional development.

MIGUEL COYULA: THE YOUNG FILMMAKER

The son of the renowned Cuban architect and professor at the University of Havana, Mario Coyula, Miguel began his film career as an amateur filmmaker working with a VHS camcorder. Later on, in 1998-99, he formally studied direction at the International School of Film and Television (EICTV) in San Antonio de los Baños. He directed four shorts at the school: *Idea* (1998), *Detalles* (1998), *Bailar sobre agujas* (1999) and *Buena onda* (1999), the latter as his thesis project. With these shorts, Coyula familiarized himself with the celluloid medium, the documentary and fiction genres, and 35mm films. EICTV's main pedagogical structure is set to expose students to work within a film industry scenario; from the second year on each student has to choose an area of specialization such as directing, scriptwriting, editing, producing, and cinematography, and stick to it.¹⁶⁵ As mentioned above, Coyula chose directing and started working on another pre-requisite that the Film School has, that of filming a documentary. His documentary project was titled *Idea* and filmed in 1998. In it, however, one can already perceive his predilection for fiction. The film basically “documents” a group of kids that play with a video camera while they go into a dark cave. But towards the end of the film, a fictitious earthquake is staged. His other films at the school also evidence his preference for alternative realities and the horror genre. *Bailar sobre agujas*, for example, is a surreal story of a psychotic woman tormented by memories of her violent childhood. Her nightmares are narrated as a horror film with blood, low-key lighting and a lot of shadows. *Buena onda*, his thesis project, could also be considered a

¹⁶⁵ This pedagogical structure is explained in EICTV's website: <<http://www.eictv.org/en/content/curso-regular>>

horror film, about a magic flute that gives diabolical powers to Janet, the protagonist. At the end, as one may guess, she ends up killing everyone with the red flute and her super powers.

Later on, Coyula distanced himself from 35mm and preferred more manageable equipment where he would not depend on a whole crew to film. His interests also proved to be closer to sci-fi and animation with two shorts: *Clase Z Tropical* (2000) and *The Plastic Fork* (2001). In both of them, Coyula began to experiment with special effects, an experience that he would later use for his first feature *Red Cockroaches* (2003) as well as for his *Memories* (2010). Filmed with a budget of \$2,000, *Red Cockroaches* placed Coyula's name on the map when it ran in the US circuit of film festivals because it was favorably reviewed in *Variety*.¹⁶⁶ Later on, Herectic Films distributed this film in the United States. In it Coyula deals with the taboo of incest and demonstrates his mastery as an overall filmmaker: he directed the film, photographed it, edited it, composed the music, and did the special effects. Interestingly, following the tradition of favoring film adaptations of literary fiction at ICAIC, Coyula's *Red Cockroaches* was based on an unpublished novel he had written called *Mala Onda*. With this film, Coyula was already breaking boundaries and challenging the audience, but his second feature-length film—*Memories of Overdevelopment*, also an overall production by him—, will push the boundaries to the extremes. This tactic, as Dean Luis Reyes explains, will be part of a trend of a new generation of Cuban filmmakers:

La generación de cineastas cubanos a la que Miguel Coyula pertenece busca interpretaciones propias para el contenido de lo histórico que heredan. [. . .] La postura esquizoide es el resultado natural del desencanto con que se aproximan a

¹⁶⁶ Ronnie Scheib, "Review: 'Red Cockroaches'," *Variety* 8 June 2004.

las utopías sociales, los proyectos nacionales y los metarrelatos que le acompañan.¹⁶⁷

[The generation of Cuban filmmakers that Miguel Coyula belongs to searches for its own interpretation of its inherited historical content. [. . .] This schizoid point of view is the expected result of their disillusioned approach to social utopias, national projects, and the meta-stories that accompany them.]

In this generation we find figures such as Pável Giroud, Esteban Insausti, Lester Hamlet, and Miguel Coyula himself. Interestingly, some of them have been absorbed by ICAIC after beginning their career as independent filmmakers. Giroud and Insausti, for example, have recently directed ICAIC feature films: *Omerta* (2008) and *Larga distancia* (2011), respectively.¹⁶⁸ But both of them are bringing new film genres, like suspense and film noir, to the ICAIC. The prohibition of Hollywood genres inside the Cuban Film Institute has expired.

In 2010, Coyula also broke the model of ICAIC films when he completed *Memories of Overdevelopment*, a film based on Edmundo Desnoes's 2007 sequel of his 1965 *Memories of Underdevelopment* novel. In it, Coyula has a greater goal: to deconstruct the canon of what Cuban films have been so far, aiming towards the end of ideologies and undermining the official revolutionary discourse popularized by ICAIC. To do so, as we will see, Coyula uses the strategy of questioning the value of images, proposing, metaphorically speaking, the death of the image itself. This nihilistic view of politics was already present in Desnoes's 2007 novel but portrayed through the main character, not through images. But before delving into the film itself, it is important to pay close attention to Edmundo Desnoes's revival in Cuban letters with his new novel

¹⁶⁷ Dean Luis Reyes, "Memorias del desarrollo: el nombre propio de la historia," *Cine Cubano* 180 (2011): 106.

¹⁶⁸ *Omerta* was a coproduction of ICAIC and AbraProd in Bilbao, Spain. It is a gangster film that tells the story of an old bodyguard of the 1940s Cuban mafia whose job has become obsolete within the Cuban Revolution. *Larga distancia* is also a genre film that uses the techniques of the thriller to talk about the experience of migration in contemporary Cuba.

Memorias del desarrollo. His reappearance will reveal the ways in which Cuban institutions have revisited the past in recent years.

EDMUNDO DESNOES'S REVIVAL IN CUBAN LETTERS

With his exile in 1979, Desnoes ceased to publish literary work. After a failed attempt in 1980 to write a novel he never finished, called *El traidor*,¹⁶⁹ his exile from the island seemed to extinguish his creative inspiration. His publications were limited to a 1981 edited collection— with William Luis— of Cuban literature called *Los dispositivos en la flor*.¹⁷⁰ Aside from this collection, he also published translations into English of his academic work with the semiotician Marshall Blonsky in the first half of the 1980s.¹⁷¹ In an interview with William Luis, Desnoes admits that this creative block had something to do with the silence imposed by the consequences of the Padilla affair.¹⁷² After Heberto Padilla was incarcerated in 1971 for his “counter-revolutionary” poetry, Cuban writers

¹⁶⁹ Desnoes mentions this unfinished novel in: Luis, “America Revisited: An Interview with Edmundo Desnoes,” 14.

¹⁷⁰ This literary collection created a heated debate between Reynaldo Arenas, Guillermo Cabrera Infante and Desnoes himself. Both Arenas and Cabrera Infante were infuriated because Desnoes had published Fidel Castro’s and Ernesto Che Guevara’s discourses as literary pieces within the collection. They argued that Desnoes stole their work to include it in it and accused him of plagiarism. For a heated response see: Guillermo Cabrera Infante, “Contra Edmundo Desnoes,” *El País* 14 Jan. 1982: 11-12, Reinaldo Arenas, “Los dispositivos hacia el Norte,” *Escandalar* 17-18 (1982): 197-219. And for a summary of the dispute see: Jacobo Machover, *La memoria frente al poder: escritores cubanos del exilio*, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Severo Sarduy, Reinaldo Arenas (Valencia: Universitat de València, 2001).

¹⁷¹ Desnoes is about to publish with Blonsky *The Age of Uncertainty: The New World Disorder at the Top of the 21st Century* (forthcoming). He also published ““Will You Ever Shave Your Beard?””, “The Death System”, and “Cuba Made Me So” in Marshall Blonsky, ed., *On Signs* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1985).

¹⁷² William Luis asked Desnoes: “*Memories of Underdevelopment* was your last novel. Since then you have published *Punto de vista* and *Para verte mejor América Latina*. What is the reason for your silence? Does it have to do with the events of the Padilla Affair?” And Desnoes responded: “To some extent they have to do with these events. That was a trauma for a lot of writers. In one way or another, I was also going through a re-evaluation of the role of a writer in a revolutionary society.” This excerpt appears in: Luis, “America Revisited: An Interview with Edmundo Desnoes,” 18.

that believed in auto-criticism within the revolution, such as Desnoes, had to rethink how and what to write next. This reflection took Desnoes almost thirty years.

His revival really began in 2002 when he was invited by Casa de las Américas to participate as part of the jury for its 2003 literary prize.¹⁷³ In that same year of the prize, an excerpt of his new novel *Memorias del desarrollo* was published in *La Ventana*, an online journal hosted by *Casa de las Américas*.¹⁷⁴ Simultaneously, a new edition of *Memorias del subdesarrollo*— the 1965 novel— was published by the Cuban Book Institute under *Letras Cubanas*,¹⁷⁵ sponsored by Alfredo Guevara’s idea to promote the screening of Gutiérrez Alea’s 1968 film adaptation at the 26th International Festival of New Latin American Cinema with a new edition of the book.¹⁷⁶ After retiring as head of the Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC) in 2000, Guevara remained as president of the International Film Festival until his death in April 2013, and still retained an important role in Cuban film circles. Thanks to him, Desnoes participated in the 26th International Festival to present Gutiérrez Alea’s film adaptation of his novel and to give a talk titled “Nacer en español” as part of the “Latinos en USA” panel, later published in the *Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano* journal No. 7. One year later, in 2005, Desnoes returned to the

¹⁷³ For an account on Desnoes’ reception on the island see: Navarro, “Retorno a la amistad y la sangre (Entrevista después de 20 años en EEUU).”

¹⁷⁴ Edmundo Desnoes, *Memorias del desarrollo (fragmento)*, 21 Jan. 2003, <<http://laventana.casa.cult.cu/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=824>>

¹⁷⁵ Edmundo Desnoes, *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (La Habana: Letras Cubanas, 2003).

¹⁷⁶ See Alfredo Guevara, *¿Y si fuera una huella?: epistolario*, ed. Yaíma García (Madrid: Festival del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano: Ediciones Autor, 2008) 607. This collection includes the formal invitation to the festival from Alfredo Guevara in a letter to Desnoes on November 16th, 2004.

festival to participate on another roundtable called “Estados Unidos-América Latina: lo que nos une y lo que no debiera separarnos.”¹⁷⁷

His revival also reached the academic circles outside the island with two dossiers on Desnoes in *La Habana Elegante*. The first one, published in 2003, was compiled by Jorge Luis Camacho and included an introductory essay by Camacho himself, the first chapter of *Memorias del desarrollo*, the same essay “Nacer en español,” and excerpts from an interview with Desnoes.¹⁷⁸ Two years later, in 2005, an addendum to this dossier included a long interview to Desnoes by Denis Berenschot.¹⁷⁹ The second dossier appeared in 2010 to commemorate Desnoes’s 80th birthday. In it, Jorge Camacho, Al Schaller, Magdalena López, Rafael E. Saumell, Alejandro Luque, and Cecília Araújo collaborated.¹⁸⁰ A few years earlier, Schaller had published another English translation of *Memories of Underdevelopment* (2004)¹⁸¹ as part of the Discoveries Series of the Latin American Literary Review Press in Pittsburg. This series aims to familiarize readers outside the field with Latin American literature and offers translations of important

¹⁷⁷ For a press coverage of Desnoes’ return to Cuba see Rosete Silva, “El regreso del hijo pródigo,” *La Jiribilla* 12 (17-23 Dec. 2005), <http://www.lajiribilla.cu/2005/n241_12/241_02.html>. Desnoes’s presentation was later published in: Edmundo Desnoes, “Nacer en español,” *Revista Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano* 6.7 (2005): 42-45.

¹⁷⁸ This dossier published in 2003 included the following sections: Jorge Luis Camacho’s “Un trazo de pintura roja en el suelo: Edmundo Desnoes entre New York y La Habana,” Edmundo Desnoes’s “Memorias del desarrollo (capítulo inédito),” and the interview titled: “La duda radical y la certeza ridícula: entrevista a Edmundo Desnoes.”

¹⁷⁹ The second interview appeared two years later as: Denis Berenschot, “Entrevista con Edmundo Desnoes,” *La Habana Elegante*, 2005. <<http://www.habanaelegante.com/Summer2005/VerbosaDos.html>>.

¹⁸⁰ This second dossier in 2010 included academic essays, personal accounts and a poem. See Jorge Camacho’s “¿Por qué Desnoes esconde la letra?,” Magdalena López’s “Itinerarios de la memoria: letras y revolución en la novelística de Edmundo Desnoes,” Rafael E. Saumell’s “*Memorias del subdesarrollo*: El sueño de Sergio Carmona Bendoiro,” Al Schaller’s “The Porous Dark, the Artificial Light,” Alejandro Luque’s “Cumpleaños de un esteta,” and Cecília Araújo’s “La nada y el viento.”

¹⁸¹ Edmundo Desnoes, *Memories of Underdevelopment*, trans. Al Schaller (Pittsburgh: Latin American Literary Review P, 2004).

creative works written in Spanish. Within this project, Desnoes was added to a long list of notable translated authors such as Miguel Ángel Asturias, Rosario Castellanos, Severo Sarduy, Benito Pérez Galdós, Ana María Matute, among others. In other words, he was recognized among the canonical authors of literature in Spanish with this publication.

But his revival was not limited to Cuba and the United States. Mono Azul Editora in Spain also republished *Memorias del subdesarrollo* in 2006¹⁸² as a preamble to Desnoes's sequel novel. One year later, and after almost twenty years in literary reclusion, Desnoes published *Memorias del desarrollo* (2007) with this same publisher. Interestingly, his revival on the island seemed to be more focused on the "old" Desnoes than on the "new" one, which explains why there was no interest to publish *Memorias del desarrollo* in Cuba.¹⁸³ To publish his manuscript, he had to look for an outside publisher. Yet critics inside and outside the island praised the film adaptation of the sequel, as we will see below.

The new novel, however, was in the works long before its publication in 2007. As early as in 1992, in one of his last interviews Tomás Gutiérrez Alea makes known that he is aware that Desnoes is writing a sequel to *Memorias del subdesarrollo*, which he, in turn, would also adapt into a film:

Hay otro [proyecto futuro] que se derivaría de la propuesta que en 1993 hice a la John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. El argumento de aquella propuesta apareció mientras estuve en Nueva York en mayo y junio de 1992: la segunda parte de *Memorias del subdesarrollo*. Allí me encontré otra vez con Edmundo Desnoes, y hablamos de preparar un proyecto cuyo protagonista tuviese rasgos en común con Sergio, el personaje principal de [la primera] *Memorias...* Al principio él y yo pensamos en un cubano que en 1971, luego de la frustrada zafra

¹⁸² Edmundo Desnoes, *Memorias del subdesarrollo*, 1st ed. (Sevilla: Mono Azul Editora, 2006).

¹⁸³ Navarro, "Retorno a la amistad y la sangre (Entrevista después de 20 años en EEUU)." In this interview, Desnoes mentioned his intentions to publish *Memorias del desarrollo* in Cuba. However, the sequel has not been published on the island to date.

de los diez millones, emigra a los Estados Unidos de América con el mismo sentido crítico frente a las circunstancias, con el mismo desarraigo y ahora con más frustraciones acumuladas, y tampoco logra insertarse plenamente en aquel otro contexto. Sería una víctima del choque cultural. Aquí veo una película que debería nutrirse mucho del documental, mezclando la ficción y el testimonio, incluso en mayor medida que *Memorias...*¹⁸⁴

[There is another [future project] that would derive itself from the 1993 proposal that I sent to the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. The argument for that proposal originated in May and June 1992 while I was in New York: a sequel to *Memories of Underdevelopment*. There, I met again with Edmundo Desnoes, and we talked about starting a new project whose protagonist would have similar characteristics with Sergio, the protagonist of [the first] *Memories...* At first, he and I thought of a Cuban that in 1971, after the unsuccessful ten million *ton sugar harvest*, migrates to the United States with the same critical attitude toward his circumstances, with the same uprooting and now with more accumulated frustrations, and he isn't able to fit in the new context. He would be a victim of cultural shock. Here I see a film that would nourish itself a great deal from the documentary genre, mixing fiction with testimony, even more than the first *Memorias...*]

Hence, the idea of exposing Sergio to a capitalist society originated in the 1990s, but eventually the protagonist and the story in the new novel would be very different from what Gutiérrez Alea had then in mind. This new Sergio would be much older and the final film sequel, the one by Miguel Coyula, will be a highly fictionalized story, with an abundance of special effects and animation instead of mainly testimonial footage.

Desnoes admits that *Memorias del desarrollo*– the novel– was a 10-year project that began in the 1990s. His version, however, departs from an autobiographical account of his life in the United States. The protagonist, whose name is Edmundo, distances himself from the Sergio of the first *Memorias*.¹⁸⁵ As previously seen, Sergio does not pretend to be Desnoes in the first novel, but rather his friend, a bourgeois intellectual who reads *No hay problema* and criticizes Desnoes for using the revolution as a red carpet for

¹⁸⁴ Évora and Gutiérrez Alea, *Tomás Gutiérrez Alea* 164.

¹⁸⁵ From now on, I will refer to the protagonist of the new novel as Edmundo and to the author as Desnoes to avoid confusion between the two.

his fame. Edmundo's story, however, reflects the history of the author himself as a Cuban exile that left the island in 1979. Like Desnoes, he has written various novels, among them *Memorias del subdesarrollo*, whose translations he recalls:

Mi tercera y única novela cuyo recuerdo no me ofende, *Memorias del subdesarrollo*, se tradujo y publicó en Inglaterra, Alemania, Italia, Suecia y los Estados Unidos. La primera [*No hay problema*] recibió elogios en la Unión Soviética y Hungría; la tercera fue exaltada en los decadentes países occidentales.¹⁸⁶

[My third and only novel which I remember without being offended, *Memories of Underdevelopment*, was translated and published in English, Germany, Italy, Sweden and the United States. The first one [*No hay problema*] was praised in the Soviet Union and Hungary; the third one in the decadent Western countries.]

In this case, Edmundo— the protagonist— serves here as a vehicle to rescue the literary history of the author who is writing the novel.

Similar to *Memories of Underdevelopment's* storytelling, however, the narration is in first person but now Edmundo is a 67-year man experiencing alienation in the big city of Manhattan. The novel is also written within the narrative structure of a diary but following a professor at Hampshire College and Smith College in Massachusetts about to quit his job to detach himself from society. He will move to the Upper West Side in Manhattan to start experiencing this alienation. Later into the novel, he moves outside of New York City into a rustic hut near the Catskill Mountains. From that place, Edmundo writes more than half of his novel recounting his memories of his Cuban wife Caridad Virginia Carreño, his English wife Cornelia, his female lovers Ángela, Deirdre, María Eugenia, and Dorothy, as well as the story of his aunt Julia, who took care of him in Cuba when he was young. Memories of his childhood begin to emerge as he gets older and older, preparing to die, and the novel turns into a reflection about growing old.

¹⁸⁶ Desnoes, *Memorias del desarrollo* 86-87.

Although *Memorias del desarrollo* is organized as a diary in chronological order, structurally speaking, there are some differences between the first novel and the second one. Similar to the 1965 *Memories*, vignettes of the Cuban Revolution are intertwined in the diary of the everyday life experiences of the protagonist. In Sergio's case, the burning of El Encanto serves as one example of this process. These vignettes of revolutionary Cuba will also intersect Edmundo's life, as his memories of the 1950s and early 1960s come back to him. These memories, however, are separated into their own individual chapters, demonstrating that *Memorias del desarrollo* seeks a less experimental mode of narration than the first novel; everything will be compartmentalized into its own sections rather than fused into a collage. In all, chapters 3, 6, 8, 10 and 12 include these memories of underdevelopment from the United States. A major difference also appears at the end of the sequel, when Edmundo's daughter Natalia finishes his diary after he dies. This epilogue changes in tone and in narrative style, giving the book a completely different turn than the original 1965 novel.

The sequel resembles the first *Memorias*, however, in the same paternalistic tone and portrayal of the female characters in the story. In *Memorias del subdesarrollo*, Sergio narrates his life with Laura, Elena, and Noemí— all from different socio-cultural contexts— from a “superior” misogynist standpoint. *Memorias del desarrollo* assumes the same tone while describing Edmundo's relationships with women. On one hand, Caridad appears only in his memories as the wife that stayed in the island. With her Edmundo has his first and only daughter, Natalia, whom he has never met. His relationship with women then, from the beginning on, is marked by neglect. Near the end of the novel, Natalia will travel to the United States in search of her father but reconciliation will never be possible because it is interrupted by his death. Another paternalistic relationship develops with his college student Deirdre, whose leftist ideals of the revolution are portrayed as naive by

the skeptical Edmundo. The young Deirdre glorifies Ernesto “Che” Guevara and the Cuba revolution in opposition to Edmundo’s memories of its failures, as we will examine further. She serves as a counterpoint to the pessimist and iconoclastic views of the protagonist. The only female character in the novel that Edmundo remembers with affection is his aunt Julia, his guardian back in the 1950s. Memories of her bring back his life in Cuba with nostalgia. The rest of the novel will revolve around other memories that are key to understand Desnoes’s goal with his sequel. As we will see below, the “new” memories from overdevelopment search for a rather different past than his 1965 novel.

One of the old memories of underdevelopment is that of the protagonist’s brother: Pablo Desnoes. To the story of the aging Edmundo, the novel inserts chapters that recount his childhood with Pablo from the early years of the 1960s on. Desnoes uses this fraternal relationship to pay homage to filmmaker Néstor Almendros— his former brother-in-law— who gained recognition in France and the United States as a cinematographer. Although he was born in Barcelona, Spain, Almendros moved to Cuba in 1948 bringing with him a love for film inspired by the film society of his hometown. Later on he produced some of the first *free-cinema*¹⁸⁷ style films— some in collaboration with Orlando Jiménez Leal— after the revolution took control of the island. One of Almendros’ films, *Gente en la playa* (1961),¹⁸⁸ created a commotion in the early years of the revolution as did *P.M.* (1961), another *free-cinema* short film by Sabá Cabrera Infante and Jiménez Leal, which we will examine in the next chapter. After this commotion, Almendros

¹⁸⁷ Free-cinema was a film movement that originated in Britain in the early 1950s and that consisted in letting loose the camera to allow it to film “freely” the subjects being captured.

¹⁸⁸ Almendros describes what happened to his film *Gente en la playa* in his autobiography: “To my surprise, while I was editing *Gente en la playa*, the authorities intervened to prevent me from finishing it. The editing room was locked and two armed guards stationed outside the door. [. . .] Ultimately, the film had been banned because it was *not* political, because it had been made at the fringe of official productions.” This testimony appears in his autobiography: Nestor Almendros, *A Man with a Camera*, trans. Rachel Phillips Belash (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1984) 38-39.

briefly worked as a movie critic for *Bohemia* and soon decided to move to Paris. There he ended up working with Eric Rohmer and François Truffaut in the renaissance of French cinema, known as the *Nouvelle Vague*. He also worked with director Terrence Malick in *Days of Heaven* (1978)– among many other Hollywood films– winning an academy award for best cinematography. Later on, Almendros also became one of the main anti-Castro filmmakers abroad, collaborating in films such as *Conducta impropia (Improper Conduct, 1983)* and *Nadie escuchaba (Nobody Listened, 1987)*. Now through Pablo, Desnoes rescues this figure and the film *Gente en la playa*, which was never screened in a Cuban theatre. Hence, rather than recording the climatic moments in Cuban history, such as the Missile Crisis and the Bay of Pigs invasion of the first *Memorias*, Desnoes aims to pay attention to the years of censorship.

Desnoes also uses the figure of Pablo to represent the early conflicts that Cuba had dealing with homosexuals. Cuba followed the tradition of the Soviet Union that considered homosexuality as an illness that could be cured.¹⁸⁹ Like the GULAGs under Stalin, Cuba had Military Units of Aid Production (UMAP) which served as concentration camps to detain homosexuals– and other “*desviados*”– and forced them to do hard work to fix their deviations. Many literary figures, painters and musicians, among other people, ended up at UMAPs, and in Desnoes’s sequel Pablo represents the figure of a homosexual that decides to leave the island because of the communists’ repressive attitude toward gays.¹⁹⁰ As Pablo says:

¹⁸⁹ See: Dan Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2001), and Oleg V. Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag: From Collectivization to the Great Terror* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2004).

¹⁹⁰ For a discussion of homosexuality in Cuba and the UMAPs see: Emilio Bejel, *Gay Cuban Nation* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2001), Ian Lumsden, *Machos, Maricones, and Gays: Cuba and Homosexuality* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1996), Marshall, *Cuba libre!: Breaking the Chains*, and Allen Young, *Gays Under the Cuban Revolution* (San Francisco: Grey Fox P, 1981).

Me van a lanzar a una granja como si fuera un cerdo, una gallina. [. . .] No puedo vivir en un país donde persiguen a los homosexuales. Eso, para mí, invalida por completo a la revolución. Todo lo que hagan, a partir de ahora, estará contaminado, envilecido. (79-80)

[They are going to throw me onto a farm like a pig, a hen. [. . .] I can't live in a country where homosexuals are persecuted. That, for me, completely invalidates the revolution. All that they do, from now on, will be contaminated, debased.]

Hence, the figure of Pablo is used as a way to remember the dark years of the Cuban Revolution. More than remembering the relationship with his exiled wife or his Jewish lover— as Sergio did in the first *Memorias*—, when writing his second *Memorias* Desnoes decides to focus on that which the Cuban Revolutionary Archive has tried to erase from history: the repression against homosexuals and other “*desviados*,” and the UMAP concentration camps.

Desnoes also decides to remember— through Pablo's character— the censorship imposed by ICAIC during the early years of the revolutionary process. This is another memory from the land of underdevelopment. As we will see in the following chapter with the film *P.M.* (1961), *free-cinema* was not well received on the island and a couple of films within this genre were the first to be censored by the Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC). One of these films was *Gente en la playa* (1961) by Néstor Almendros, mentioned above, which is represented in the novel as *La playa* by Pablo Desnoes. In theory, the main idea of this documentary was to film “freely” people at Cuban beaches, that is, to show how everyone was enjoying a sunny day. But the way that the film captures the bodies creates a sexual atmosphere and a homoerotic tension between the predominantly male bodies. The camera gets closer and closer to them and moves in a sensual way simulating a ritual of seduction. Superficially, it may seem like a regular day at the beach, but the homophobic mindsets of the censors quickly perceived it as threatening to the *macho* discourse of the revolution. As Edmundo puts it:

[L]os ataques contra *La playa* fueron implacables y feroces; el candor del documental era contrarrevolucionario, el placer de los cuerpos era irresponsable o peor aun, puro escapismo en el preciso momento en que la realidad social exigía el compromiso consciente. Los viejos comunistas aprovecharon la retórica del realismo socialista para reclamar la industria cinematográfica que Lenin consideraba vital para promover los valores socialistas. Y Pablo, mi hermano, acabó varado en la arena, enterrado hasta el cuello, paralizado. [. . .] El documental fue censurado, retirado del Rex Cinema y mi hermano empezó a renguear, herido mortalmente.¹⁹¹

[The attacks against *La playa* were ruthless and violent; the candor of the documentary was counterrevolutionary, the pleasure of the bodies was irresponsible or even worse, pure escapism at the precise time when social reality required a conscious commitment. The old communists took advantage of the socialist realism rhetoric to demand the film industry that Lenin considered vital to promote socialist values. And Pablo, my brother, ended up stranded on the sand, buried up to the neck, paralyzed. [. . .] The documentary was censored, removed from the Rex Cinema and my brother started limping, fatally wounded.]

After a while, Desnoes fuses the figure of Almendros with Sabá Cabrera Infante and Orlando Jiménez Leal when Pablo talks about his intentions to film a second project: “Lo que quiero filmar ahora es *La Habana de noche*. Acerca de la pura existencia, el baile y la música cómo la expresión mística del cubano. Quiero hacer una serie de documentales sobre la trascendencia de lo cotidiano” (73). This film about Havana’s night-scene is precisely *P.M.*, the project that sparked Fidel Castro’s famous speech “Palabras a los intelectuales” (“A Word to Intellectuals”), as we will discuss later in detail. In a sense, in this novel Desnoes is recovering those films and filmmakers previously censored and banned from the island. And this was the fate of not only Néstor Almendros’ career in Cuba but that of Sabá Cabrera Infante and Orlando Jiménez Leal. All of them would end up in exile after their first film attempts crashed into ICAIC’s censorship wall.

Another memory remembered in the novel is that of the Communist Party taking over Cuban culture and institutionalizing socialist realism. As the Soviets had done in the

¹⁹¹ Desnoes, *Memorias del desarrollo* 64-65.

past, the Cuban government implemented a policy of socialist realism for new cultural productions. Although this policy took a few years to be put into practice, Edmundo remembers it as being the spark that ruined Cuban literature, censored his literary career, and forced him to leave the island:

El sonoro Partido Comunista de Cuba invadió y ocupó las tierras del arte y la literatura. Ya no era, como escritor, la conciencia de la sociedad; el Buró Político no sólo nos tomó de la mano para cruzar la calle, nos entregó lo que debíamos llevar bajo el brazo y prescribió el ritmo y la distancia entre los pasos. Decidí que así no valía la pena cruzar la calle.¹⁹²

[The Cuban Communist Party invaded and occupied the lands of art and literature. I was no longer, as a writer, the conscience of society; the Executive Committee not only took us by the hand to cross the street, but also gave us what to carry under our arms and dictated the rhythm and the distance between our steps. I decided it wasn't worth it to cross the street like that.]

This memory referred back to the First National Congress of the Community Party when Castro certified the Communist control of Cuban culture. Edmundo says: “todos estábamos a tu lado durante los primeros diez años. Luego lo echaste todo a perder con ese primer congreso” (16) [We were all by your side during the first ten years. Then you ruined everything with that first congress.] And failure and betrayal are precisely two of the main themes of the novel.¹⁹³ The new memories of the revolution are precisely those of its failures and betrayal. In Edmundo's eyes the revolution has failed to achieve what it promised, and a better slogan would be: “¡Patria o muerte, fracasemos!” (93) [Our country or death, to failure!]. In this phrase resides Edmundo's cynicism toward the revolution and his disillusionment with the revolutionary project.

¹⁹² Desnoes, *Memorias del desarrollo* 87.

¹⁹³ Here Desnoes joins a trend of Cuban cultural productions that deal with the theme of betrayal as explained in: Nelson P. Valdés, “Cuban Political Culture: Between Betrayal and Death,” *Cuba in Transition: Crisis and Transformation*, eds. Sandor Halebsky, John M. Kirk and Carollee Bengelsdorf (Boulder: Westview P, 1992) 202-28.

One of the scenes in the novel also reflects on the purpose of art. Edmundo, the protagonist, hires a model to paint a reproduction of Masaccio's Eve. But the model he hires is older and her body does not resemble that of the famous painting. When Ángela, the model, says that she is too old to be Eve, Edmundo responds: "That's the whole idea." He aims to paint famous nudes corrupted by time, he says. The scene, however, symbolizes the view of art in the novel, that which has been corrupted by the passage of time. In a sense, the novel itself has been trying to recover the first *Memories* after forty years and the sequel cannot avoid being marked by the passage of time. Art, as well as the revolution, has grown old.

As we see, the protagonist of Desnoes' 2007 novel is far away from Soler Puig's representation of *santiagueros* and from the Sergio of the first *Memories*. Instead of portraying the national heroes that risked their lives to spark the revolution in Santiago de Cuba, as in *Bertillón 166*, or portraying the failed bourgeois writer Sergio that did not leave the island in order to experience and write about the revolution, Edmundo is an old cynic Cuban exile who can only remember the failures of the revolution. Furthermore, Miguel Coyula's main protagonist would be a far cry from the protagonists of Chávez's *City in Red* and Gutiérrez Alea's *Memories*.

MEMORIES OF OVERDEVELOPMENT: REMEMBERING THE GOLDEN YEARS OF CUBAN CINEMA

Like in Desnoes's novel, the protagonist of Coyula's film is a Cuban exile who lives in New York City and fails to adapt to a capitalist society. In contrast to the first Sergio of Gutiérrez Alea who was not able to fit in a socialist society, the protagonist feels alienated from all societies; he fails to belong to any given one. But Coyula decided to cast a protagonist that would be in his fifties to use it as a bridge between Desnoes's generation and his. Coyula explains:

Ni siquiera usé el mismo personaje que en la novela de Desnoes. En *Memorias del desarrollo* [la novela] Sergio tiene ochenta años y es una especie de álgter ego de Edmundo Desnoes. Yo comencé a filmarla cuando tenía treinta años y el personaje de la película está a mitad de camino entre nuestras dos generaciones. Tiene cincuenta y pico de años. O sea que lo quise utilizar como un puente para hablar tanto de las experiencias de Edmundo como de las mías.¹⁹⁴

[I didn't even use the same protagonist of Desnoes's novel. In *Memorias del desarrollo* [the novel] Sergio is eighty years old and is a sort of alter ego of Edmundo Desnoes. I started to film it when I was thirty and the film's protagonist is in between our two generations. He is fifty something years old. So I wanted to use him as a bridge to talk not only about Edmundo's experiences but also my own.]

He needed a younger Sergio because he wanted to recount his own experiences in New York City after being awarded a scholarship to study at the Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute in 2000. A second fellowship in 2009 from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation in New York also helped him finish the scenes filmed in the United States for his *Memorias del desarrollo*.

Similar to Rebeca Cháves' prologue in *City in Red* and to Gutiérrez Alea's opening scene in *Memories*, Coyula's first three minutes into the film are crucial to understand the whole film. The opening sequence defines the ideological position of the director as well as his film poetics, marking the narrative with a postmodern label. Astrid Santana already noticed this while referring to *Memorias del desarrollo* as a "delirious postmodern collage."¹⁹⁵ As the film begins, images of empty flagpoles (Figure 20A) make explicit Coyula's overt goal with the film: proclaiming the end of ideologies. All flags have disappeared from their poles, that is, all nations have vanished. Later on,

¹⁹⁴ Excerpt taken from a personal interview to Coyula in 2011 in Havana, Cuba.

¹⁹⁵ Astrid Santana Fernández de Castro, "Para memorizar el desarrollo: encuentros de Coyula con Gutiérrez Alea," *Cine cubano* (n.y.), <<http://www.scribd.com/doc/157271289/Para-Memorizar-El-Desarrollo-Encuentros-de-Coyula-Con-Gutierrez-Alea-Astrid-Santana-Cine-Cubano-185-186> <http://www.cubacine.cult.cu/sitios/revistacinecubano/digital25/articulo253.htm>>.

however, the camera is set farther away in a long shot where Sergio Garcet,¹⁹⁶ the protagonist, looks straight at one of the poles with the US flag (Figure 20B). This anchors the film in the specific setting it will take place: the United States. But by looking closely at the background, both the Twin Towers and the Statue of Liberty are seen on the left and right corners, respectively, restricting the location to New York City. The audience familiar with *Memories of Underdevelopment*, the first film, will understand that the first Sergio has gone into exile. But this exile looks gloomy and dark with all the clouds and the sounds of a storm that is about to arrive. Coyula is creating the atmosphere of not belonging for his main character.

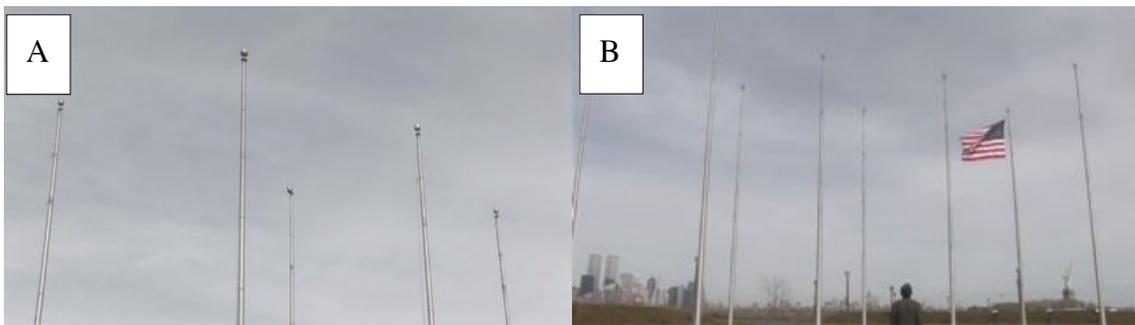


Figure 20: Empty Flagpoles and the Flag of the United States

Then the film cuts into a dark room where we begin to see odd, stray objects that belong to and help define the character. We see a cane, a Barbie doll, and camera, a recorder, and a laptop computer. Those five objects are key for the construction of the protagonist. The cane, found on the beach, is Sergio Garcet's only friend and companion, nicknamed Fiddle, which according to the protagonist was the name that the mafia gave Fidel Castro in the fifties. Many dialogues in the novel and in the film will be between Fiddle and the protagonist. The Barbie doll represents Sergio Garcet's obsession with the

¹⁹⁶ From now on I will use Sergio Garcet's full name to refer to the protagonist of *Memorias del desarrollo* (the film) to avoid confusion with the first Sergio of *Memories of Underdevelopment*.

female body. The camera presents him as a photographer and later on we will discover how he uses photographs for his collages. More importantly, the recorder recalls the first Sergio of *Memories of Underdevelopment* and how he used it to record surrounding conversations as an inspiration for his writing. The Sergio of the new *Memories* will also use the recorder as a writing tool. Last but not least, the laptop defines Sergio as a writer. All of these objects describe different parts of Sergio Garcet's personality that will be further developed throughout the film.

After presenting these objects, form becomes the main protagonist in the film. The construction of *Memories of Overdevelopment* follows the collage formula of Gutiérrez Alea's 1968 film, but takes it a step further by filming the process of putting together a literal (not simply cinematographical) collage of paper and photographic clippings in the style of Max Ernst and other surrealists, mixing images taken from Cuban and US history photographs with those taken from religious, fashion and porn magazines. Coyula uses the paper collage medium to portray the protagonist's alienation from his surroundings, presenting Sergio Garcet as a character that builds collages as a hobby. This idea was taken from Desnoes's own venture in the visual arts in the 1980s of putting together collages with images from magazines. In 2010, Desnoes presented a series of these collages at the International Film Festival in Cali, Colombia, called *Mujermundo: 1985-2010* (Figure 21). The exhibition consisted of work produced over a 25-year span, and already presented the main themes that Desnoes developed with this art form: sexuality and politics. Not only was Desnoes obsessed with the female body (Figure 21A), but also with nudity in classic art –Sandro Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*– and in pornographic magazines. Desnoes aims to create “modern Venuses” placing images of porn star models in the same setting of Botticelli's painting, that of the sea. The models are nude like “Venus,” emerging from the sea, and images of birds add a phallic

symbol to create sexual tension and comment on the theme of sexuality. His second collection (Figure 21B), also deals with sexuality but primarily questions the political ideology behind the tragedy of September 11, 2001 in New York City. The Twin Towers burning are juxtaposed to images of women getting undressed or nude and the passengers on the airplanes that crashed into them seem to carry naked women too. With this set, we perceive Desnoes irreverent and iconoclast reading of images that Miguel Coyula will continue to develop on his film. What do images of 9/11 represent? Why are they sacred and untouchable images? What happens if we place other provoking images on top of them? Desnoes plays with these images of destruction to empty them of meaning. Coyula will follow his lead and question sacred images within another context: the Cuban Revolution.



Figure 21: Edmundo Desnoes's Collages from His 2010 Exhibition Titled *Mujermundo*

Coyula, then, starts the film prologue, literally, with an explosion of images. This collage not only served to pay tribute to other Cuban filmmakers such as Gutiérrez Alea and the documentarist Santiago Álvarez, as Michael Chanan has noted,¹⁹⁷ but also to question the use of images in films, particularly, those used in documentaries. By juxtaposing “sacred” images of Fidel Castro and Che Guevara with images of top models from pornography, Coyula’s film empties all signifiers-pictures of their meaning and places them on the same plain: that of mere spectacle. Instead of worshiping the figures of Castro and Che as heroes of the Cuban Revolution, the collage questions their consecration¹⁹⁸ and puts that consecration on the same level of the “free-world’s” mass media obsession with photographs of fashion models or even the male sexual gaze and morbid fascination with porn images. Che and Fidel are, like Jesus Christ (Figure 22D), subverted with the use of porn. Coyula suggests here literally that Fidel Castro and Ernesto “Che” Guevara have become “porn stars.” But it is also important to mention that the images of Fidel and Che used in this scene are some of the most important ones in the history of the Cuban Revolution. Fidel’s picture (Figure 22A) was taken by Paco Altuna, alias Francisco Díaz, and became one of the paradigmatic images of the Cuban leader. This photograph was taken at the first speech that Castro gave to the Cuban people when he arrived in Havana in January 8, 1959. The image became iconic because of the white doves. And Che’s portrait (Figure 22B) is a reproduction of Alberto Korda’s *Guerrillero Heroico*, potentially the most important image of Che in the history of Cuban photography. Thus, Coyula is carefully questioning the most important images of the

¹⁹⁷ For a commentary on Coyula’s film see: Michael Chanan, “Memories of Memories,” *Putney Debater* (6 Nov. 2010).

¹⁹⁸ Gutiérrez Alea had done something similar in his *Memorias* as seen in Chapter 2.

Cuban Revolution. By questioning them, Coyula puts into question all of the other images that follow.

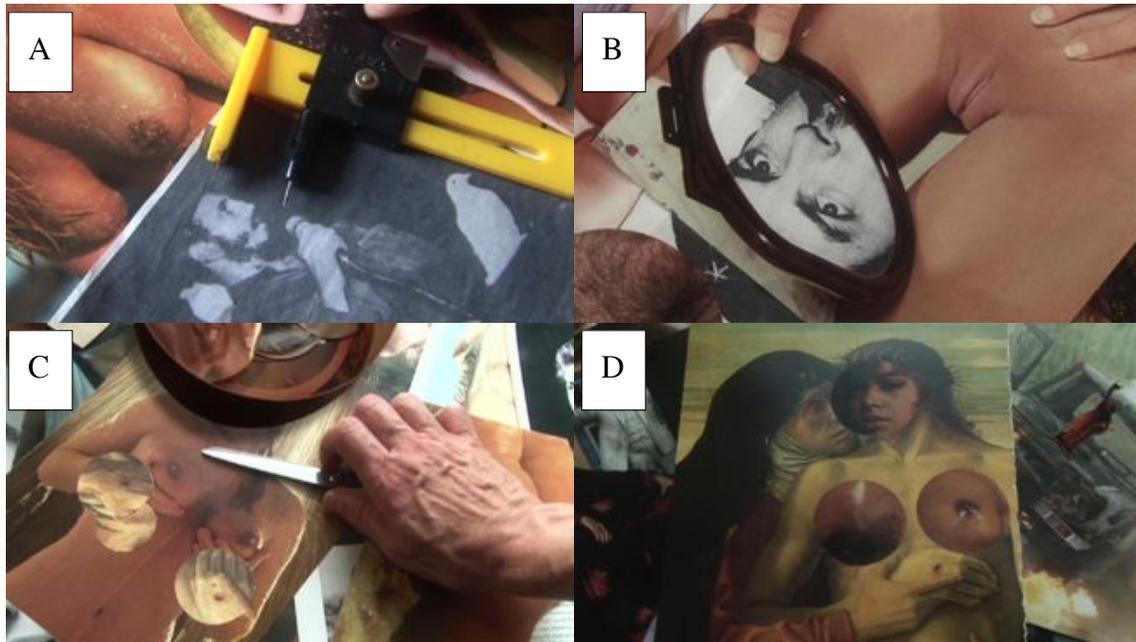


Figure 22: Sacred Images of Fidel and Che Subverted

This morbid fascination goes to the extreme with the images of Che's corpse over and over throughout the film. It reminds us of one of the central Baudrilliaian themes in Coyula's *Memories*: that of death. The image of death is at the same time the death of the image because the signifier is used to overturn the image's power (Figure 23). Che's death was universally regarded as that of a martyr, similar to Christ's crucifixion, and turned him into a mythological figure. But the film uses the image to focus on the dead corpse. It even places Che's body on the big screen (Figure 23B), drawing attention to the image of death. From here on, corporality becomes another key topic of the film—emphasizing the flesh— with other corpses and images of massacres under Batista and executions under Castro. Coyula uses images of death to argue for the death of

ideologies. Like Sergio Garcet, Coyula is also fed up with both the right and the left, politically speaking.

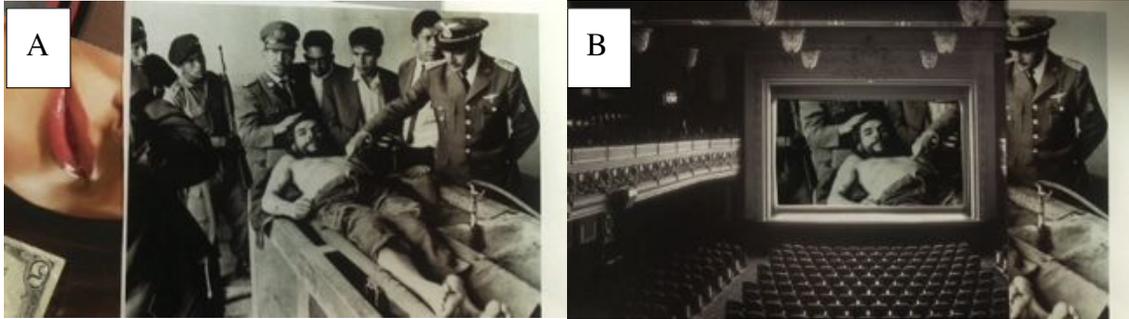


Figure 23: Images of Che Guevara's Corpse

These images of Che's corpse allude to Desnoes's own opinion on Guevara's myth, an opinion that got him in trouble with the revolution over thirty years ago:

En su momento fui criticado porque aseveré que si bien América Latina había producido al Che y la India a Indira Gandhi, EE.UU. había producido a Superman. ¿Superman?, me dijeron, ¿estás comparando al Che con Superman? Pero yo no los estaba comparando. Superman es un ser ridículo, no merece ser comparado con el Che. No obstante, con el mito de Superman están asociados, en EE.UU., muchísimas más personas que las que podrían asociarse con el Che. Los niños en sus juegos se identifican con Superman, con Batman, de una manera espontánea, y el sistema lo propicia, el sistema prefiere tener esas figuras mitológicas a tener figuras de carne y hueso.¹⁹⁹

[At that moment I was criticized because I argued that if Latin America had produced Che and India had produced Indira Gandhi, then the U.S. had produced Superman. 'Superman?', they said. 'Are you comparing Che to Superman?' But I was not comparing them. Superman is a ridiculous character that does not deserve to be compared to Che. However, more people identify themselves with the myth of Superman in the U.S. than those who would identify with Che. Children identify with Superman in videogames, or with Batman, as something spontaneous, and the system promotes it, the system prefers to have mythological heroes than heroes of flesh and blood.]

¹⁹⁹ Desnoes mentioned this anecdote on the interview with Silva, "El regreso del hijo pródigo."

With this comparison, Desnoes argues that what is problematic for him is not the figure of Che but the myth that surrounds him. If we read between the lines, he seems to be suggesting that, like Superman, Che has also lost his flesh and blood. This quote serves as an ideological preamble to Coyula's film. Desnoes's comparison between Che and Superman had already indirectly proposed a critique of Guevara's myth and invited the readers to examine the abuse of political symbols. Coyula will do the same but using his expertise in film animation.

As a result, other techniques that the film uses to undermine the weight of historical images are the use of animation and special effects to modify their original state. Coyula altered the whole film, mainly in post-production. With the animations, however, he also pays tribute to Japanese animé and graphic novels, two art forms that he admires.²⁰⁰ He is also saturated by the idea of manipulation as a form of questioning how images have been used in Cuba as unquestionable historical documents. As seen in Figure 23 with Che's corpse, Coyula uses animation to place the image as if projected in a movie theatre, which actively unsettles how documentary images are used on the screen and for what purpose.

Coyula also uses animation to create mini-documentaries within *Memories of Overdevelopment*. To avoid spending long periods of time telling the story of the Cuban Revolution, Coyula uses animation and special effects to summarize the last fifty years of Cuban history in a few minutes. Imitating the documentary insertions that Tomás Gutiérrez Alea added to *Memories of Underdevelopment*— such as the 1961 documentary *Muerte al invasor* about the political prisoners captured in the Bay of Pigs invasion— this young filmmaker inserts short animation films to portray the main events of the Cuban Revolution. These short films frame the narration within this context. As previously

²⁰⁰ Coyula admitted his love for Japanese animé and graphic novels when I interviewed him in 2011.

mentioned, Gutierrez Alea's *Memorias* takes place between 1961 and 1962, but Coyula's sequel is set between the 1950s and the first decade of the 21st century. In his *Memorias*, Coyula also captures the most important events that lead to the triumph of the revolutionary struggle: the attack to the Presidential Palace in 1957, the rebel's entrance to Havana, among many others.

These short animations follow a chronological order as Sergio Garcet remembers his early childhood in the 1950s. Within the collages that he is creating, a picture of his aunt appears that transports him back to those years. The film goes back in time and we see Sergio Garcet as a child with his aunt in Havana, Cuba. The audience knows these are the years of the revolutionary struggle because sounds of gunfire are heard in the background near their house and Sergio Garcet's story is intertwined with short animations of the historical events that are happening as he grows up. We see an animation of the attack on the Moncada barracks in Santiago de Cuba, of the infamous massacres under the Batista regime, of the failed attack to the Presidential Palace in 1957, of Ernesto Che Guevara's triumph in Santa Clara, and of the rebels' march to the capital. Coyula alters the image Guerrillero Heróico to place him holding a gun and shooting at Uncle Sam (Figure 24A). Fidel Castro appears again with the white doves but now next to fireworks that Coyula added to "celebrate" the triumph of the rebel army (Figure 24B). I put the word celebrate in quotes because these fireworks introduce an ironic tone portrayed throughout the film. Through irony, Coyula will questions the "progress" and subsequent "success" of the revolution.



Figure 24: Animations of the Cuban Revolution

An excellent point of comparison between the tone of the first *Memorias* and the second film is the Bay of Pigs invasion and the subsequent trials because both of these events appear in the two films. Interestingly, however, there is a big difference in the way these films document the same historical event. As seen in chapter two, the *The Truth of the Group Is in the Assassin* episode in *Memories of Underdevelopment* (Figure 25A) focuses on the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs invasion. Sergio, while talking to Pablo, says that the mercenaries think like him and begins to read the book *Moral burguesa y revolución* as a voiceover to the images of the prisoners. Later on, this short documentary shows videos of the trials and audio recordings of the witnesses who suffered torture under the Batista regime. We even hear the voices of those accused of crimes trying to defend themselves. And during their testimonies, the images contradict what they say; corpses of the people who perished in the 1950s are shown to reveal their lies and their moral corruption (Figure 25B). Hence, this insertion in Gutiérrez Alea's film serves to document the atrocities committed by the previous government and the tone is very serious.

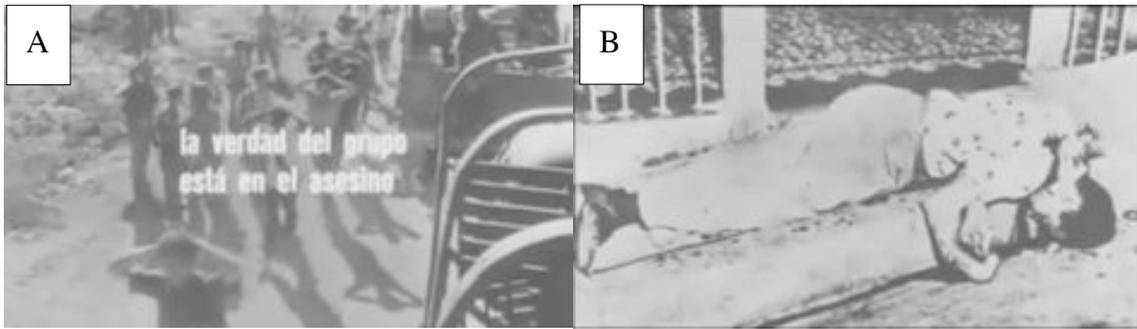


Figure 25: Clips from *Muerte al invasor* and Newspapers in *Memorias del subdesarrollo*

In Coyula’s case, however, the Bay of Pigs episode serves to criticize the similarities between the old Batista government and the new one. Following the “eye for an eye” dictum, the revolutionary government decided to execute many political prisoners from the Bay of Pigs invasion. With his animations, Coyula portrays not only the actual executions, but also images of Cuban people smiling juxtaposed with the executed corpses (Figure 26). This director is not only being ironic with this collage, but also commenting on the bloody history of Cuba. Following Sergei Eisenstein’s theory of the montage,²⁰¹ Coyula creates a new meaning by combining images that seem to be unrelated. In this case, the images of Cubans smiling (Figures 26A, 26C) next to corpses murdered by the revolutionary forces (Figures 26B, 26D) suggest that the Cuban people have been brainwashed and blindfolded to prevent them from noticing the atrocities of the new government. The non-diegetic sound for these images, Gioachino Rossini’s “The Thieving Magpie,” also intensifies the bombastic ironic tone of the film. In a sense, Coyula is asking the audience: Should we celebrate these murders?

²⁰¹ As explained in the previous chapters, Eisenstein defines montage as “an idea that arises from the collision of independent shots—shots even opposite to one another” (49). For more examples on his theory of the montage see: Eisenstein, *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*.



Figure 26: Cuban People Smiling Juxtaposed to Corpses Executed

Similar to the first film, however, is how the theme of memory is portrayed in its sequel. Like Gutiérrez Alea's film, *Memorias del desarrollo* also presents this theme through the protagonist: Sergio. But more important is the fact that memories are also linked to technology: an audio recorder, a camera, etc. In *Memories of Underdevelopment*, these technological objects help Sergio Carmona recall his fights with his wife Laura, among other things. Coyula's film also relies on the use of technology to represent the theme of memory. Photographs are used to travel back in time to the early years of Sergio Garcet's childhood (Figure 27) and those images are juxtaposed to images of the Cuban Revolution and short animations. The photographs of Sergio as a child (Figure 27A) and of his aunt Julia (Figure 27B) provide the background for the story of the protagonist; a child who experienced the revolution while at his aunt's home. Later on, images of his Cuban wife Ana María (Figure 27C) and his daughter Claudia (Figure 27D) add the details about his personal life back on the island. These

images tell us that Sergio Garcet has a daughter he has never met because he moved to New York City. He only knows her through photographs that her mother sends him (Figure 27D).



Figure 27: Family Pictures of Sergio Garcet as a Child, His Aunt, Wife and Daughter

Films also trigger Sergio Garcet's memories in *Memories of Overdevelopment*, specifically the memories of his brother Pablo. Like in Desnoes's 2007 novel, Pablo is a fictitious character that pays tribute to Néstor Almendros and Orlando Jiménez Leal. Interestingly, Coyula continues this tribute by inserting clips of their films within his own narrative. One film that Pablo sends his brother is called *Toward the Sea (Hacia el mar)*, which documents the exodus of the Mariel. Through this massive exile, Pablo left the island and sent a copy of what happened to his brother Sergio. *Toward the Sea* is no other film than the documentary *The Other Cuba* (1984) by Orlando Jiménez Leal, and Coyula included whole clips from it of the people at the Peruvian embassy and the beatings of

those that were planning to leave. But even more important than that, Coyula creates new collages with Jiménez Leal's film to underline the failures of the revolution and the obscure history of Cuba in 1980. *Memories of Overdevelopment* also cites another film by Jiménez Leal: *8-A* (1992). On the TV screen we see the beginning of the film where the local news in Cuba announces the verdict on the trial of General Arnaldo Ochoa. We hear that he was found guilty of the charges of drug trafficking and sentenced to death by firing squad. This trial will be examined further in Chapter 4.

More importantly, Coyula uses his own film collages to rewrite Cuban history. And he does it by replacing images that have been censored in Cuba into his canvas. Figure 28 exemplifies this operation where the portrait of Lenin (Figure 28A) is replaced with a video clip taken from Jiménez Leal's *The Other Cuba*, where a long line of boats headed to Miami "flooded" with Cuban exiles (Figure 28B). With this collage, Coyula argues that the "new" memories of the Cuban Revolution are other ones: those of the critical moments such as the Mariel exodus. Cuba's link to the Soviet Union and its socialist character, then, should be replaced in people's minds with the tragedies of the past. Likewise, the figure of the national hero Ernesto "Che" Guevara (Figure 28C) should be replaced with the history of the Mariel (Figure 28D). Both of these last two images also contain a critic to the educational system in Cuba. Coyula comments on how the history taught in schools indoctrinate children to glorify Che— the ones we see are wearing the typical school uniforms in Cuba— and censors other historical moments such as the Mariel. He emphasizes then the importance of educating youth and how they should be the ones remembering the tragedies the avoid repeating them.

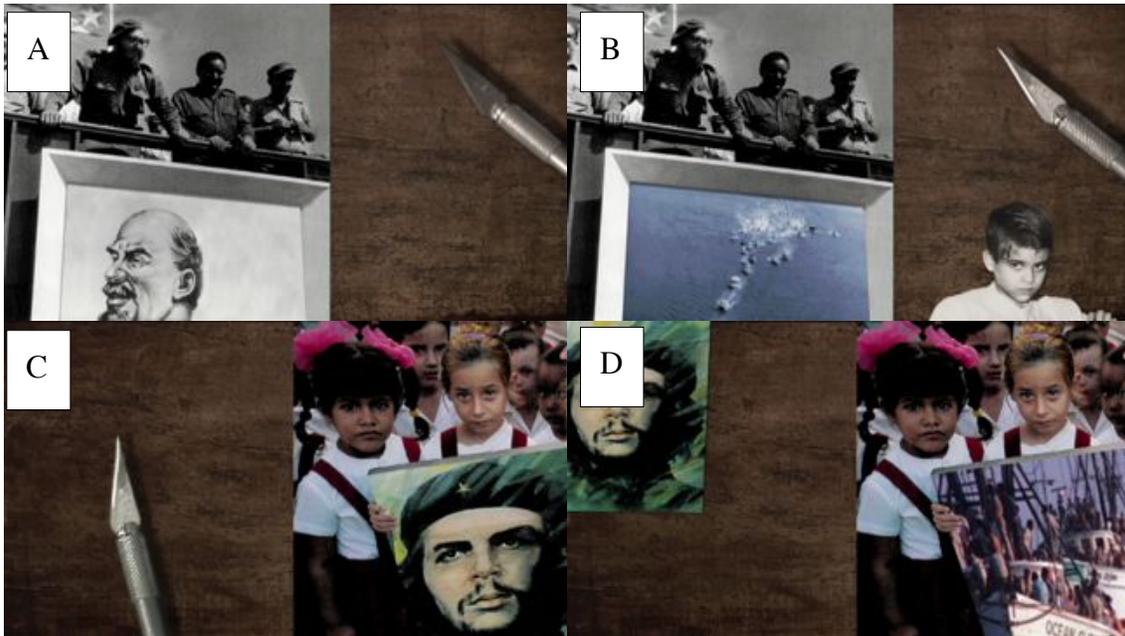


Figure 28: New Collages of the Mariel Exodus

With his editing, Coyula also manages to subvert iconic locations and special events. Figure 29A, for example, presents one of Fidel Castro’s speeches at the Revolutionary Square with an audience of thousands. *Memories of Overdevelopment* however, replaces that audience with the sunset (Figure 29B) alluding to the thousands that have left the island. The public no longer hears Fidel’s words because it has left and the revolutionary leader will have no option but to leave too with no people to govern. That is why Figure 29B places Fidel on a boat leaving, like his people. All of these images (Figure 28 and 29) are accompanied by Bola de Nieve’s famous bolero *Ay amor* whose lyrics frame Coyula’s collage. Bola de Nieve²⁰² sings “Ay amor, si te llevas mi alma / llévate de mí también el dolor / lleva en ti todo mi desconsuelo / y también mi canción de sufrir (Oh my love, if you take my soul/ take also my pain / take with you my

²⁰² Bola de Nieve was a famous afro-Cuban pianist and singer-songwriter who accompanied Rita Montaner in the 1930s.

grief / and also my song about suffering).” The pain, grief and suffering in the love song all refer instead to the hardships that the Cuban exiles went through leaving the island. The song also underlines Coyula’s ironic tone towards the “great accomplishments” of the Cuban Revolution.



Figure 29: Fidel Castro at the Revolution Square and Fleeing to Miami

Coyula also uses Cuban murals to make his ironic tone more explicit. Like at the end of *Memorias del subdesarrollo*, when the mural “Patria o muerte” becomes “Muerte” (Death) in allusion to the atomic bomb, Coyula uses a sequence of two images that contradict each other (Figure 30). On one hand he captured the billboard that says “Vamos bien” [We are on the right track] (Figure 30A). But right after the billboard we see the trial on television of the Ochoa affair (Figure 30B), that is, what some call as the beginning of the fall of the revolution. In this case, Coyula uses the phrase “Vamos bien” with irony to argue that the revolution has really gone off track.



Figure 30: ¡Vamos bien! and the Ochoa Coverage

Hence, through edition and postproduction, the digital platform enabled Coyula to present a critique of the way that memory has been constructed in Cuban cinema, especially in examples like *Ciudad en rojo*. Editing digital media is easier than doing the same in 35mm or 16mm, and Coyula knew how to take advantage of digital technology. On one hand, similar to Gutiérrez Alea's own film, memory is represented as a collage, multiple stories with their own narrative. In Coyula's case, however, images are also used to provoke an explosion. The protagonist and spectator are bombarded with million of images, and the accumulation produces suffocation, creates a void; mere representations without substance; a simulacrum. Astrid Santana puts it succinctly: "En *Memorias del desarrollo* se acentúa la conciencia del simulacro y de la narrativa de la cultura. La Historia es una especie de espectáculo."²⁰³ [In *Memories of Overdevelopment*, a consciousness of the simulacrum and of the narrative of culture is emphasized. History is a sort of spectacle.] Today, new generations are following a similar path with digital technologies questioning the established formulas of films in Cuba, and looking for other modes of expression such as genre films like horror, gangster, zombie films and science

²⁰³ Santana Fernández de Castro, "Para memorizar el desarrollo: encuentros de Coyula con Gutiérrez Alea."

fiction. Two key examples are Coyula himself and Alejandro Brugués with his film *Juan of the Dead* (2010).

Here Coyula serves as the perfect bridge to move on to the next chapter because his *Memorias del desarrollo* pays tribute to both Gutiérrez Alea (Chapter 2) and Jiménez Leal (Chapter 4). Not only does he include citations from Jiménez Leal's filmography but also pays tribute to Gutiérrez Alea's *Memories* by repeating scenes from the 1968 film in his own sequel. The scene of the trial, for example, also appears in *Memories of Overdevelopment* as Sergio Garcet's ex-wife accused him of cruel and inhuman treatment. The scene at the museum is also present when Deidre and Edmundo go together. And there is even a reference to Hiroshima's atomic bomb in a short documentary that includes images of the catastrophe. But to the historical events of Cuba, Coyula also adds footage of other tragedies such as the attack to the Twin Towers in 2001. That is, Coyula's sequel seems to suggest that Cuban history is unavoidable linked to the history of the United States. And to examine this link we should move on to the productions produced in exile.

Chapter 4: History in Exile: Contesting the Official Version of the Cuban Revolutionary Archive from Abroad

INTRODUCTION: CUBAN EXILES AND FILM PRODUCTION

The third branch of the Cuban Filmic Revolutionary Archive that must be considered in order to have a complete panoramic view of how Cuban cinema operates is that of productions in exile. Since 1959, the Cuban Revolution brought about massive migrations such as the 1961 Post-Bay of Pigs exodus discussed in Chapter 2 and the Mariel boat lift in 1980— a phenomenon that inevitably generated cultural productions in the diaspora by an important part of the Cuban population that lived abroad.²⁰⁴ Ana M. López has studied this film movement extensively, dividing the group of exiled filmmakers into three generations: a first generation born and trained in Cuba, a second one born in Cuba but trained in the United States, and a third one of Cuban-Americans.²⁰⁵

Within the first group, López highlights the trajectory of arguably the best Cuban filmmakers in exile: Orlando Jiménez Leal and Néstor Almendros (the latter was born in Barcelona but grew up in Cuba after his family fled from Franco's Spain). This chapter focuses on this first generation.²⁰⁶ According to López, four films are representatives of this group: the fiction film *El Súper* (1979) and the documentaries *L'altra Cuba* (*The Other Cuba*, 1983), *Mauvaise Conduite* (*Improper Conduct*, 1984), and *Nadie escuchaba* (*Nobody Listened*, 1988). To this list we should add Jiménez Leal's last film *8-A* (1992),

²⁰⁴ For a history of Cuban migration see: Maria Cristina García, *Havana USA: Cuban Exiles and Cuban Americans in South Florida, 1959-1994* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1996).

²⁰⁵ For a complete history of Cuban films produced in exile see: Ana M. López, "Cuban Cinema in Exile: The 'Other' Island," *Jump Cut* 38 (1993): 51-59.

²⁰⁶ Although the first generation also included Fausto Canel and Humberto López Guerra, among others, this chapter will focus on Almendros and Jiménez Leal as they represent the most important filmmakers abroad.

a docudrama originally intended for Italian television, which we will analyze in depth in comparison to the films examined in the previous chapters that were produced by the Cuban Film Institute and independently. *8-A* serves as an example of what I call here the counter-archive built abroad that seeks to subvert the official version of the Cuban Revolutionary Archive by foreground its contradictions and inconsistencies. One of its main missions will be to pinpoint what has been silenced by the Cuban state regarding specific developments in the post-1959 history of the Revolution.

The first film within this group, *El Súper*, portrayed the story of a family of Cuban exiles adapting to their inhospitable surroundings in New York City in 1970s. After a brutal winter, the characters of this film find it hard to adapt to the cold weather and their new environment. In all, this film, which has become a classic over the years, laughed at the difficulties of exile through the comedy genre.²⁰⁷ The documentaries, however, have a much more serious and accusatory tone. *The Other Cuba*, for example, captured under a tragic veil the 1980 Mariel exodus that brought more than 120,000 Cubans to the United States.²⁰⁸ Similarly, *Improper Conduct* revealed the repression against homosexuals in the island and the concentration camps known as UMAPs built to “cure” homosexuality, among other “deviations,” as mentioned in Chapter 3. *Nadie escuchaba* also focused on human rights violations within the Cuban Ministry of Justice, denouncing the cruel treatment of prisoners, a recurrent theme also contained in *8-A*, as we will see below. It is important to underline, however, that this first generation started with a more conciliatory tone in *El Súper*.

²⁰⁷ In 2013, the Cuban Research Institute celebrated the anniversary of the film with a screening of a new edition followed by a Q&A with the directors, León Ichaso and Jiménez Leal, and the playwright Iván Acosta. It was part of the 9th Conference on Cuban and Cuban-American Studies.

²⁰⁸ For a history of the complex migratory patterns in the Caribbean context, including the Mariel exodus, see: Jorge Duany, *Blurred Borders: Transnational Migration between the Hispanic Caribbean and the United States* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2011).

The second generation of Cuban filmmakers in exile included: León Ichaso, Ramón Menéndez, Jorge Ulla, Miñuca Villaverde, Iván Acosta, and Orestes Maticena. Of all of them, it is important to point out the figures of León Ichaso and Jorge Ulla because of their collaborations with the first generation: Ichaso co-directed with Jiménez Leal *El Súper* and Ulla co-directed with Néstor Almendros *Nobody Listened*.

López describes the work of this second generation in the following way:

Although their individual trajectories as filmmakers are quite varied, their partial assimilation has meant that they have often felt free to leave behind the explicit denunciations of the first generation in order to focus more and more on the nature of life as exiles; in other words, to wrest the exile's nostalgia away from the tragic discourse of dispossession and to recuperate it as ethnic identity — Cuban-American, but also Latino.²⁰⁹

One of the primary representatives of this search for an identity of the new Cuban-American and Latino voices in the United States was precisely León Ichaso, one of the few directors who later gained access to the Hollywood industry. Different from Jiménez Leal, who mainly sought to archive the history of Cuban exiles in different parts of the world, Ichaso took on his shoulders the enterprise to add to the Cuban Revolutionary Archive the histories of Cuban-Americans in the United States and their struggles away from the island. That is the reason why the histories of those that fled the Cuban Revolution served as a matrix for several of his feature films. As the film *El Súper* demonstrates, both Jiménez Leal and Ichaso sought to present a personal portrayal of the transition of moving from Cuba to New York City. Rather than looking for an epic story of struggle over the fate of Cuba as motherland, they focused— in this, their first feature film— on a smaller story with a more intimate scope: Roberto, Aurelia, and their 17-year-old daughter Aurelita make up a family of exiles surviving in New York City. Roberto and Aurelia represent an older generation of Cubans that fails to adapt to U.S. culture

²⁰⁹ López, “Cuban Cinema in Exile: The ‘Other’ Island,” 56.

while Aurelita as the Cuban-American character in the family introduces the theme of Latinos in NYC. Interestingly, this film marked a bifurcation in the part these two filmmakers would follow in their future work, with Jiménez Leal continuing to document Roberto's and Aurelia's perspective and travails in his later films while Ichaso focusing more on how to express the views and experiences of Aurelita's generation in his.

Ichaso did not limit himself, however, to the Cuban-American experience; he also sought to depict the stories of Latinos in the U.S. in both independent and big studio productions. *Crossover Dreams* (1985), for example, portrayed the life of a Salsa singer—interpreted by the Panamanian Rubén Blades— in search of “crossing over” to the U.S. mainstream music scene. As the title suggests, Ichaso would concentrate in his future feature films on how younger Latinos that have migrated to the United States with their parents or with a “cross over” American dreams like himself have tried to assimilate to US society with uneven results. In Ichaso's personal case, crossing over meant being able to work in U.S. television and Hollywood.

After *Crossover Dreams*, Ichaso found a niche working as a director in action series such as *Miami Vice*, *Crime Story* and *The Equalizer*, as well as in television films like *The Fear Inside* (1992). Later on, he directed a 10 million budget Hollywood film titled *Sugar Hill* (1994), starring Wesley Snipes. By then, he had established himself as a successful director in the United States, but soon enough he returned to his previous interest in rescuing the Latino voices in New York City with *Piñero* (2001), an independent feature film about the Nuyorican poet and playwright Miguel Piñero, and with a more recent big budget biopic titled *El cantante* (2006), about the famous Puerto Rican singer Héctor Lavoe, who became a huge success in NYC during the years of the salsa “craze” in the heyday of the Fania Records label. This 2006 film exemplified Ichaso's artistic blend of Hollywood's biopic formulas with Latino content. Although

the filmography discussed above does not deal overtly with Castro's Cuba, Ichaso has followed the political trend of the first generation of exiled filmmakers in two of his other features: *Azúcar Amarga (Bitter Sugar, 1996)* and *Paraíso (Paradise, 2008)*. Like the documentaries of the 1980s previously mentioned, both of these films address the “evils” of the Cuban Revolution.

Another filmmaker of second generation that followed the political trail paved by the first one was Jorge Ulla, who, as previously said, later collaborated with Jiménez Leal and Almendros in the 1980s. Before these collaborations, however, he directed in the Dominican Republic his first feature film *Guaguasí (1978)*, about a Cuban *guajiro* who joined Castro's 26 of July rebels and later became an executioner of his own friends. Through this protagonist, Ulla launched his critique of the Cuban government, which became prevalent in his films from that moment on. Two years later, he co-directed with Lawrence Ott Jr. the 30-minute documentary *In Their Own Words (1980)*, sponsored by the U.S. Information Agency; it featured the testimonies of the Cuban exiles that arrived at Key West in the United States from the Mariel port in Cuba in the 1980 exodus. This film served as evidence of the difficulties— beatings and humiliations, among other things— faced by those who decided to flee the socialist revolution after the Peruvian Embassy incident.²¹⁰ Then he went on to work with both Jiménez Leal and Almendros in the documentaries *The Other Cuba* and *Nobody Listens*, respectively. Hence, in contrast to León Ichaso (who was attracted to mainstream films and Hollywood), Ulla decided to join the politically committed branch that built a “counter-archive” in exile. His films,

²¹⁰ In 1980 more than 10,000 Cubans occupied the Peruvian Embassy in Havana seeking a permit to leave the country. This created a crisis for the Cuban government that solved the problem by allowing them to leave from the Mariel port. President Jimmy Carter also allowed them to enter the United States. It is estimated that more than 125,000 Cubans left the island during this event. For more information on the historical background see: Marshall, *Cuba libre!: Breaking the Chains?* 248.

characterized by the denunciation of Cuban injustices perpetuated by the Castro government, add contestatory materials to the Cuban Revolutionary Archive from abroad.

Within the male-dominated world of the first and second generations in exile, it is also important to mention the only female director of this second group: Miñuca Villaverde. According to López, she is one of the most interesting filmmakers of this second generation, particularly because of her experimentation with the film medium. After working on several shorts in New York— in particular *A Girl in Love*, *Poor Cinderella*, and *Still Ironing Her Husband's Shirt*—, Villaverde moved to Miami and directed two documentaries: *To My Father* (1974) and *Tent City* (1984). Her first documentary portrayed a personal account of the death of her father and was filmed in Texas. *Tent City*, however, joined the other documentaries about the Mariel exodus, tracking this time those “marielitos” that could not find a place to stay and remained under military tents in downtown Miami for months. Villaverde interviewed Afro-Cubans, homosexuals, and ex-convicts for probing personal stories of how and why they left everything behind. As in Jiménez Leal's *The Other Cuba* and Ulla's *In Their Own Words*, the testimonies of Mariel are archived again in celluloid.

The third generation consists primarily of Cuban-American multimedia artists that have used camcorders and newer technologies for their own independent productions. Their films are less interested in commercial success and, like Villaverde, more into the experimental filmmaking networks in the United States. Some representatives of this third generation in exile, according to López, include: Enrique Oliver, director of *Photo Album* (1984); Tony Labat, director of *Ñ* (1982) and *Kikiriki* (1984); and Raúl Ferrera-Balanquet, director of *We Are Hablando* (1991) and *No me olvides* (1992).²¹¹ In *Photo*

²¹¹ For an extended version of the article “The Other Cuba” that includes more recent filmmakers see: Ana M. López, “Greater Cuba,” *The Ethnic Eye: Latino Media Arts*, eds. Chon A. Noriega and Ana M. López (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996) 38-58.

Album, just to provide one example, Oliver parodies the nostalgic view of his Cuban family that pretends to be living in Cuba even though they moved to the United States many years ago. He is the only one that seems to notice that they are not in Cuba any more. Concerned for their son's rebel attitude toward his Cuban identity, his parents send him to see a *santería* priest that will exorcise his skepticism.

Next to the issue of identity, other films of this generation, such as the ones by Labat and Ferrera-Balanquet, deal with the themes of *mestizaje* and homosexuality in the Latino context without tackling the overt political agenda of the first generation. Interestingly, this third group resembles the “boom” of young independent filmmakers living in Cuba—discussed in Chapter 3—, which in the 1990s and the 2000s used cheaper technologies to produce their own films outside of the ICAIC. Through independent means, these two groups, in exile and in Cuba, seemed to follow the same path, at least formally speaking. Thematically, however, independent filmmakers abroad focused on issues of identity, *mestizaje*, and homosexuality in their specific localities, while those in Cuba sought to portray the ruins of their Revolutionary society.

By focusing exclusively on the first generation of exiled filmmakers who made films both in Cuba and abroad, however, this chapter traces the evolution and transformation of the Cuban Revolutionary Archive as the site of production becomes mobile. Although Néstor Almendros studied film in New York City and in Rome during the 1950s, he started to work as a professional filmmaker later on thanks to the Cuban Revolution and the Cuban Film Institute. Because of his long friendship with Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, Alfredo Guevara—who knew Gutiérrez Alea from *Nuestro Tiempo* and the *El mécano* film production, as explained in Chapter 2—hired him as an ICAIC cameraman. Later on, Almendros even directed his own short films at ICAIC. As he explains in his autobiography:

We began to produce films with political and educational themes, a normal step for a country that had just undergone a revolution. There were films about agrarian reform, the government's achievements and projects in the realms of hygiene, agriculture, and education. We did a lot of filming in the countryside, little in Havana. I worked mainly as a cameraman with young directors who later made a name for themselves, for example, Fausto Canel in *El tomate* and *Cooperativas agropecuarias*, with Manuel Octavio Gómez (who later made *La primera carga al machete*) in *El agua*. [. . .] I also directed some shorts, including *Ritmo de Cuba* and *Escuela rural*.²¹²

Soon enough, however, Almendros started working on his own independent project with film stock that was left over at ICAIC. The project was *Gente en la playa* (*People at the Beach*), one of the first few films produced outside of the ICAIC in the early 1960s. The film was censored²¹³ and after other tumultuous encounters with the new revolutionary government, Almendros decided to continue his film career abroad.

The other film produced outside the purview of the ICAIC was Sabá Cabrera Infante and Jiménez Leal's *P.M.* (1961), to be analyzed in detail below. The new government also censored *P.M.*— the Cuban Film Institute confiscated the film and decided to prohibit its exhibition— forcing Jiménez Leal to seek a film career in exile after 1962. Just like Almendros, Jiménez Leal's first site of production was in Cuba. Later on he continued his career in France and in Italy. Rather than focus on a novel and a film, as in the previous chapters, in Chapter 4 we will pay a closer look to two film productions by Jiménez Leal that represent two different and important periods in post-ICAIC Cuban cinema: the early 1960s and the early 1990s. By comparing *P.M.* (1961) and *8-A* (1992), this chapter seeks to reveal the evolution of the Cuban Revolutionary Archive as a space that, from the beginning, could never be exclusively defined by the Cuban Film Institute despite all its institutional efforts. As Miguel Coyula's *Memories of Overdevelopment*

²¹² Almendros, *A Man with a Camera* 34-35.

²¹³ As seen in Chapter 3, Almendros recounts how his film was censored by the ICAIC in his autobiography *A Man with a Camera*.

demonstrated in Chapter 3, the definition of this Cuban Filmic Archive is rather complex. But before examining these two films in depth, it is important to set the context and pay a closer look to Jiménez Leal's film career.

ORLANDO JIMÉNEZ LEAL'S FILM CAREER

Jiménez Leal's first contact with the film medium was a 16mm projector that he used to view Chaplin's silent films in the late 1940s. A few years later, his mother bought him a Keystone 16mm camera with which he filmed his surroundings in Regla, the city where he grew up on the other side of the Havana bay. Formally speaking, he learned to make films by reading how-to books and putting theory into practice with his 16mm. He learned how to master the film medium, however, from his experience while working at the newsreel *Cineperiódico* in the 1950s.²¹⁴ After being recommended by director José Guerra Alemán to form part of his crew at *Cineperiódico*, Jiménez Leal started as a lighting technician; in 1955, moved to work as a cameraman. This experience paved the way for his professional career as a cinematographer. Years later, drawn by his passion for film, he also attended the conferences on the history of cinema by professor and film critic José Manuel Valdés Rodríguez at the University of Havana. In 1957, he joined the crew at Channel 12, one of the national channels in the Cuba of the time, where he met other cameramen such as Sabá Cabrera Infante, Plácido González Gómez, and Jaime Soriano. He discovered all shared his passion for film, especially for the Cuban "underground" films made by González Gómez.

With the arrival of the revolutionary government, Jiménez Leal kept working at *Cineperiódico* and did not join the Cuban Film Institute because of a dispute in early

²¹⁴ For one of the best account on the early years of Jiménez Leal's career see his interview with Canel in: Fausto Canel, "Orlando Jiménez Leal y el 'affaire P.M.,'" *Linden Lane Magazine* 6.2-3 (1987): 14-17.

1959 with José Massip and the head of the Cine Rebelde initiative,²¹⁵ Julio García Espinosa, Both directors contacted Jiménez Leal to ask him to take over the Sindicato de Técnicos Cinematográficos (Union of Film Technicians), which had been accused of maintaining a close alliances with the recently deposed Batista regime. Jiménez Leal agreed and took the headquarters by force; when García Espinosa and Massip tried to take over the organization's archives, he refused, thus creating a friction that closed the doors for future collaborations. When these two directors became important figures at the ICAIC, they made sure to leave no space for Jiménez Leal in the recently founded institution. Another detail that prevented him from joining ICAIC was the fact that Jiménez Leal worked as a photographer for the supplement *Lunes de Revolución* and as a director of its TV program *Lunes de Televisión*. During the first few years of the revolutionary government, two groups dominated the cultural scene: those under ICAIC, and those under *Lunes*. Both groups would clash in what is known as the *P.M. Affair*.

Although Jiménez Leal was banned from ICAIC, with his previous experience in television he was able to work in Channel 2 (CMBF TV)—one of the local channels then—after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution. There he worked with Néstor Almendros, who was head of the Film Department at the channel; their passion for film made them really close friends.²¹⁶ They shared many experiences together watching film classics from the film archive at Channel 2. While working at the channel, both of them shot *La tumba francesa*, about a dance/ritual brought to Santiago de Cuba in the XIX century by Haitian

²¹⁵ Cine Rebelde was the film branch of the rebels that was established right away after the triumph of the revolutionary forces. Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Julio García Espinosa started working there on the first documentaries of the Cuban Revolution, as discussed in the introduction to this dissertation.

²¹⁶ Jiménez Leal admits in his interviews that through Néstor Almendros he discovered the *free-cinema* movement in films like *58-59*, by Almendros himself, and *Primary* by Richard Leacock and Albert Maysles. See: Manuel Zayas, “Un baile de fantasmas: entrevista a Orlando Jiménez Leal,” *Encuentro de la cultura cubana* 50 (2008): 192.

immigrants. It is a dance inherited from descendants of Haitian slaves, and the film exemplifies Almendros and Jiménez Leal's intentions to record the Cuban African heritage and the history of music.²¹⁷ This was their first contribution to the Cuban Revolutionary Film Archive.

Jiménez Leal's next film, co-directed with Sabá Cabrera Infante, also dealt with the Afro-Cuban music scene, but this time capturing the voice of anonymous musicians that played at night bars in Havana. Interestingly, Jiménez Leal admitted that this film, called *P.M.*, owed a lot to Almendros. Not only was it directly linked to *La tumba francesa* in theme; Almendros's earlier shorts had an impact on the cinematographical style of both of these directors. Almendro's 58-59 film experiment in New York and his *Gente en la playa*, as *free cinema* examples, inspired the young directors to capture the Havana night scene using the same technique.²¹⁸ The changes in technology that allowed lighter film cameras for use outside the studio made possible the emergence of *free-cinema* and *cinéma-vérité* films in England and France, respectively. But such techniques created a commotion on an island in which avant-garde film techniques arrived too soon and too quickly, giving little time for both the public and the apparatchik to fully ponder and digest their implication. The result would create a scandal of major proportions, as we will discuss later on.

Less than a year after the commotion caused by his film *P.M.*, Jiménez Leal decided to abandon the island— in 1962— and moved to Miami and later New York City. In exile, he continued working in newsreels for a New York based news agency with

²¹⁷ This recent interview also provides detailed information on Jiménez Leal's earlier career: Carlos Espinosa Domínguez, "El cine como obsesión y diversión," *Cubaencuentro* 14 Feb. 2014 <<http://www.cubaencuentro.com/entrevistas/articulos/el-cine-como-obsesion-y-diversion-316740>>.

²¹⁸ Further details about the relationship between Jiménez Leal and Almendros appear in: Zayas, "Un baile de fantasmas: entrevista a Orlando Jiménez Leal," 195.

correspondents in Latin America. Later on, he got an offer to work for television commercials in Puerto Rico where he also served as cinematographer for Mexican co-productions directed by Martínez Solares and Julián Soler.²¹⁹ Back in New York City, he supported himself making commercials. From the profits of his work in advertisement—such as Goya commercials—, Jiménez Leal was able to raise funds to shot *El Súper* in 1978-79 with his brother-in-law, León Ichaso.²²⁰ The film was based on Ivan Acosta's homonymous play produced originally at the Cuban Cultural Center in New York in 1977. Like the play, it captured the experience of Cuban exiles that lived in New York City that were not able to adapt to the cold weather and North-American culture. It also dealt with issues of identity loss and the Americanization of the children of Cuban immigrants. Overall, the film was a huge success. It won first prize at the Mannheim Film Festival, in Germany, as well as the prize given by the *Association Francaise des Cinémas d'Art et d'Essai* in Paris, and it was the first Cuban film produced in exile to find distribution in the United States.²²¹

Later on, Jiménez Leal also worked within the mainstream sphere directing the Spanish musical *Me olvidé de vivir (I Forgot to Live, 1980)*, whose protagonist was the famous singer Julio Iglesias. After this brief incursion in big budget filmmaking, Jiménez Leal returned to the documentary genre and found a hub in television. He joined Carlos Franqui— another Cuban exile with friends that had connections in Italian television—, and directed *The Other Cuba* (1983), about the Mariel exodus and the experiences of the intellectuals that by then lived abroad. As Jiménez Leal explains:

²¹⁹ Zayas, “Un baile de fantasmas: entrevista a Orlando Jiménez Leal,” 196.

²²⁰ For a personal account on how the film was funded see *El Súper*'s website online. <<http://www.elsuperthefilm.com>>

²²¹ López, “Cuban Cinema in Exile: The ‘Other’ Island,” 54.

El Mariel fue el gran detonante para que la gente se volviera a interesarse en Cuba y la Revolución Cubana. Carlos Franqui, que era muy amigo del fallecido Valerio Riva, con conexiones en la Televisión Italiana, vino a mí para hacer una película sobre el exilio. [. . .] Nuestra idea era mostrar que había otra Cuba fuera de Cuba, y que esa Cuba no se correspondía con los ridículos estereotipos que había y que aún sigue creando la Revolución sobre los exiliados. Allí aparecen Lydia Cabrera, Enrique Labrador Ruiz, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Reinaldo Arenas; hay pintores, escultores, hay industriales, pero también gente humilde.²²²

[The Mariel exodus was the big trigger that got people interested again in Cuba and the Cuban Revolution. Carlos Franqui, who was a close friend of the deceased Valerio Riva, with connections in Italian Television, came to me to work on a film about exile. [. . .] Our idea was to show that there was another Cuba outside of Cuba, and that this Cuba did not match the ridiculous stereotypes that were created and are still created by the Revolution about exiles. Lydia Cabrera, Enrique Labrador Ruiz, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Reinaldo Arenas appear there; also painters, sculptors, industrialists, as well as people from the working class.]

The testimonies of luminaries such as Cabrera Infante, Labrador Ruiz, Cabrera Infante, and Arenas, as of “gente humilde,” serve as examples of the oral history that Jiménez Leal sought to recuperate and add to the Cuban Revolutionary Archive from abroad. To contest the official version of Cuban history, including that of the Mariel, this documentary recorded the life experiences of those that lived “another” Cuba. More importantly, it gave a voice to literary figures such as Arenas and Cabrera Infante whose names had been erased from Cuban dictionaries of literature and whose works were banned in the island. It also included footage from his *free cinema* short *P.M.*, censored in Cuba but rescued by his own documentary more than twenty years later. As in his future films, here the director used archival footage associated with the triumph of the Cuban Revolution— taken by the international and Italian news agencies— and subverted it with the testimonies of those that suffered torture and imprisonment under that same government. The “other” Cuba reveals itself in the testimonies and even in his film *P.M.*

²²² Zayas, “Un baile de fantasmas: entrevista a Orlando Jiménez Leal,” 198.

Jiménez Leal used the same technique for his second documentary abroad, made in France. *Mauvaise conduite (Improper Conduct, 1984)*– co-directed with Néstor Almendros and produced by French television (Antenne 2)– was a documentary about homophobia and the repression of homosexuals in Cuba. In it, Jiménez Leal followed the same filmic strategy and feature important testimonies by Cuban exiles such as Reinaldo Arenas, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Armando Valladares, Carlos Franqui, and Heberto Padilla, as well as international personalities like Susan Sontag and Juan Goytisolo. Along with the testimonies, Jiménez Leal include footage of the Cuban Revolution that carried an atmosphere of hope and glory, such as the one that recorded the rebels’ multitudinous entrance in Havana on January 8, 1959. By juxtaposing images of Castro to the testimonies of ex-prisoners now in exile, Jiménez Leal questioned the “heroic” aura of these images of the revolution by confronting them with the tragic testimonies by witnesses of revolutionary atrocities such as the torture at UMAPs and in prisons.²²³ Jiménez Leal’s juxtaposition works in a similar way in his next and last film: *8-A*.

Improper Conduct won various awards including the *Grand Prix* at the Human Rights International Film Festival in Strasbourg, France; the first prize for best documentary at the Film Festival in Barcelona, Spain; and Best Documentary Film at the London Film Festival in England. After its success, it also created a heated debate between Almendros and Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, published in the *Village Voice*.²²⁴ It was implicit in the debate that the Official Cuban Revolutionary Archive was not ready to allow their mistakes to be recorded in their films. Jiménez Leal and Almendros took it

²²³ For a testimony of the tortures in prison see: Huber Matos, *Cómo llegó la noche* (Barcelona: Tusquets Editores, 2002).

²²⁴ For the details on the dispute see: Richard Goldstein, “Cuba Sí, Macho No!,” *Village Voice* 4 July 1984: 43, and Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, “Cuba sí, Almendros no!,” *Village Voice* 2 Oct. 1984: 46. And for the final response to Gutiérrez Alea see: Néstor Almendros and Orlando Jiménez-Leal, “Letter to the Editor: Unfinished Business,” *Village Voice* 17 Oct. 1984: n.p.

upon their shoulders to do it from abroad. Jiménez Leal's next and last film, *8-A* (1992), also dealt with a tragic event— the Ochoa affair— but this time through a different mode of production: the docudrama.

8-A was based on the political scandal revolving around general and Angola war hero Arnaldo Ochoa Sánchez's execution in 1989 after being accused of taking advantage of his stature and influence in the military to engage in drug trafficking. This chapter will pay close attention to this last film, particularly, focusing on its use of the docudrama genre to contest the official history of the Cuban Revolutionary Archive. Interestingly, Jiménez Leal chose to build his story using the same mode of production that Gutiérrez Alea had canonized in the 1960s although in a different way. Instead of focusing on fiction as the main pillar of the film, Jiménez Leal will rely heavily on the documentary side of the docudrama for *8-A* to undermine the official discourse about what really happened to general Ochoa and his men.

Aside from his films, Jiménez Leal also published in book form the scripts of two of his projects— *Improper conduct* and *8-A*— along with important documents that served as evidence for the stories that were told. The script for *Improper Conduct*²²⁵ was published by Editorial Playor in 1984, and republished with a DVD in 2008 by Editorial Egales in Barcelona, Spain. *8-A: La realidad invisible* (1997)²²⁶ was published by Ediciones Universal in Miami and included the script of the *8-A* as well as interviews, reviews, and letters by speakers featured in the film: Rodolfo's letter— using a pseudonym— to a friend outside of Cuba, Amado Padrón's letter to a friend who works in Human Rights, and Patricio de la Guardia's letter to the top chiefs of the Cuban Communist Party.

²²⁵ Néstor Almendros and Orlando Jiménez Leal, *Conducta impropia* (Madrid: Playor, 1984).

²²⁶ Orlando Jiménez Leal, *8-A: la realidad invisible* (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1997).

Over all, Jiménez Leal's trajectory as an exile filmmaker is defined his insistence in recuperating key critical and tragic moments of the Cuban Revolution such as the UMAPs, the Mariel exodus, and the Ochoa affair. To understand this obsession with these Cuban tragedies one must go back to an early event that left a scar on his psyche and thus on his whole career. As explained above, this director encountered problems with the revolution from the beginning. His short titled *P.M.* (1961) and co-directed with Sabá Cabrera Infante, was censored by the Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC) and forever banned from the Official Cuban Revolutionary Archive. It also prompted Fidel Castro's famous speech "Palabras a los intelectuales," which delineated the future cultural policy implemented on the island. As discussed below, this first controversy served as a landmark that had deep repercussions in Jiménez Leal's future productions in exile.

PASADO MERIDIANO: THE FIRST FILM CENSORED BY ICAIC

In the midst of the revolutionary euphoria that characterized the first years of the new revolutionary government, many cultural changes took place. Not only did cultural institutions flourish such as the ICAIC and *Casa de las Américas*; newspapers and magazines gained access to a broader audience and aimed at a new goal: that of lifting up the decaying ashes of Cuban culture under Fulgencio Batista's regime. One of the important newspapers was *Revolución* which started as part of the underground propagandistic strategy of the rebels and which was directed by Carlos Franqui. *Revolución* continued its operations after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution becoming one of the official newspapers of the new government. It soon established a cultural supplement called *Lunes de Revolución*, under the leadership of the then well established film critic and copy editor of the news weekly *Carteles*, Guillermo Cabrera Infante.²²⁷

²²⁷ For a personal history of *Lunes* see: Cabrera Infante, "Un mes lleno de *Lunes*."

This cultural supplement, published every Monday, gained great popularity and expanded its enterprises to include a publishing branch (Ediciones R), a record company (Sonido R) and a weekly television program (*Lunes de Televisión*).

The supplement took advantage of the revolutionary upheaval taking place on the island to connect Cuban culture to the outside world. As Peter Marshall explains about *Lunes*: “Motivated by José Martí’s motto, ‘Culture brings Freedom’, [*Lunes*] issued huge editions with pictures and texts by Borges, Neruda, Marx, Faulkner, Lezama Lima, Martí, Breton, Picasso, Miró, Virginia Woolf, Trotsky and Brecht in its bold attempt to renew Cuban culture.”²²⁸ These examples show how *Lunes*’ inclusiveness had few to no ideological boundaries— it feature a spectrum of through ranging from Marxism to Existentialism to Surrealism— and set its eyes not only on Cuba (Martí, Lezama), but also on Latin America (Borges, Neruda), the United States (Faulkner), Europe (Marx, Breton, Picasso, Miró, Woolf, Brecht) and Russia (Trotsky, Mayakovsky), just to mention some examples. Trotsky’s inclusion in the supplement, however, began to cause frictions between those working in *Lunes* and those in the Popular Socialist Party (PSP) —which later became the Cuban Communist Party (PCC)—,²²⁹ since Leon Trotsky had been expelled and later branded a traitor by Stalin and other Russian counterparts.

Another problem with the communist authorities was *Lunes*’ rejection of socialist realism as a model for cultural production and the lack of a defined political philosophy. As stated in its editorial statement:

We are not part of a group, neither literary nor artistic. We are simply friends and people more or less of the same age. We do not have a defined political philosophy, although we do not reject certain systems which approach reality—

²²⁸ Marshall, *Cuba libre!: Breaking the Chains?* 190.

²²⁹ Guillermo Cabrera Infante remembers the conflict created by Trotsky’s publication in his interview in *The Other Cuba* by Jiménez Leal.

and when we speak of systems we are referring, for example, to dialectical materialism or psychoanalysis, or existentialism. Nevertheless, we believe that literature—and art—of course, should approach reality more and to approach it more is, for us, to also approach the political, social, and economic phenomena of the society in which we live.²³⁰

This editorial— as well as translations of works by Ernest Hemingway, Graham Greene, Henry Miller, Albert Camus, among many others— demonstrated the admiration for European modernist movements considered decadent by “communist critics that championed critical or socialist realism, such as Karl Radek and George Lukács,” as Salgado explains.²³¹ During the 1961 *P.M.* “affair”—, the enemies of the supplement would target the group’s manifested “lack of defined political philosophy” as a position out of synchrony in a revolution that had been recently proclaimed as socialist.

The last straw in this confrontation was when *Lunes* sponsored a 15-minutes short in its television program about the Havana night scene. Orlando Jiménez Leal— head of *Lunes*’s film department— and Sabá Cabrera Infante— editor of the news on local Channel 2— were the masterminds behind this project called *P.M.*²³² As a *free-cinema* experiment in 16mm, this film attempted to record a typical night of Havana leisure near the harbor. To let the film roll “freely,” Jiménez Leal and Cabrera Infante used a hidden camera and captured mostly Afro-Cubans dancing, drinking and smoking at local bars, as well as anonymous musicians that played all night long. In an interview with Fausto Canel, Jiménez Leal mentioned that the original idea came from a newsreel for Channel 2.²³³ In

²³⁰ Translation cited in: Luis, “Exhuming *Lunes de Revolución*,” 255-56.

²³¹ Salgado, “Detranslating Joyce for the Cuban Revolution: Edmundo Desnoes’ 1964 Edition of *Retrato del artista adolescente*,” 5.

²³² Emilio Guede, “*PM*, un documental inesperado,” *Cuba: la revolución que no fue* (San Bernardino: Eriginal Books, 2013) 417-18.

²³³ Fausto Canel, “Revolución y censura: el affaire *PM*,” *El caso PM. Cine, poder y censura*, eds. Orlando Jiménez Leal and Manuel Zayas (Madrid: Editorial Colibrí, 2012) 124.

the atmosphere of an imminent U.S. invasion in 1961, right before the Bay of Pigs invasion, all local channels cancelled their cultural programs and started to transmit the news of the state of emergency. At Channel 2, Julio Fernández Reyes– then director of the news program for that channel– sent Jiménez Leal on a mission to record how the Cuban people were getting prepared for the intervention. Jiménez Leal came back with a 4-minute news report that included militiamen cleaning their weapons and getting ready for war as well as people drinking at their content at local bars. The leisurely section of part of the short did not get the approval of Fernández Reyes and never got transmitted on TV. Later on, Jiménez Leal convinced Sabá Cabrera Infante, who also worked in Channel 2, to shoot and put together a film using part of this footage. The end result was *P.M.*

To shoot it, they used a Bolex camera and filmed different locations from Regla to Havana: the boat that took passengers across Havana bay, the bars at Muelle de la Luz, the beach of Marianao, Chori's bar, and Café Raúl. It was shot during a period of two to three nights and using ambient light, creating an atmosphere mixing shots of pleasure, twilight, and darkness at the same time. As British travel writer Nicholas Wollaston explained, it showed people “drinking, arguing, loving, quarrelling, dreaming. . . . It falls on ecstasy and desperation, it peers blearily through the cigar smoke, singles out a glass of beer, lights for a moment on a smile, winces at a bright electric bulb, hovers over a shelf of bottles.”²³⁴ After its completion, *P.M.* was screened on *Lunes de Televisión* and received good reviews. Néstor Almendros, film critic of *Bohemia*, wrote a favorable notice where he recommended the film:

He aquí una película corta cubana que resulta una auténtica joya del cine experimental. Comencemos por recomendarla entusiasmados. Y, ¿qué es Pasado Meridiano? Pues sencillamente un pequeño film (dura unos quince minutos) que

²³⁴ Nicholas Wollaston, *Red Rumba: A Journey Through the Caribbean and Central America* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1962) 20.

recoge fielmente toda la atmósfera de la vida nocturna de los bares populares de una gran ciudad. [. . .] El procedimiento no ha podido ser más simple: es el cine espontáneo, el free-cinema de tanto auge ahora en el mundo. [. . .] *Pasado Meridiano* es documento visual y sonoro, pero documento donde ocurre también una transfiguración poética de hechos que son comunes, que vemos todos los días. *P.M.* es enormemente realista, pero es también enormemente poética.²³⁵

[Here is a Cuban short film that is a veritable jewel of experimental cinema. Let's start by recommending it with excitement. And what is *Pasado Meridiano*? Simply a very short film (fifteen minutes long) that faithfully captures the nightlife atmosphere of the popular bars in a big city. [. . .] The process could not be simpler: it is direct cinema, the free-cinema so popular nowadays in the world. [. . .] *Pasado Meridiano* is a visual and audio document, but a document where a poetic transfiguration of everyday life takes place. *P.M.* is extremely realistic, but it is also enormously poetic.]

Luis Orticón, another *Bohemia* critic, agreed with Almendro's positive review of the film.²³⁶

After the warm reception it received after the television screening, Jiménez Leal and Sabá Cabrera Infante decided to look for a theatre that would project their short for a film audience. Thanks to his work experience at *Cineperiódico*, Jiménez Leal knew the administrator of the Rex Cinema, one of the last private film venues during those days, and they went to see if he would be interested. After a test screening they agreed to screen the film for two weeks for 150 Cuban pesos but only if ICAIC approved it. Therefore, on May 12, 1961 Jiménez Leal solicited the approval of the censorship board at ICAIC. To his surprise, the film was confiscated and prohibited. The man behind the censorship was Alfredo Guevara, who saw it as antirevolutionary, and took advantage of the opportunity to launch an attack against Carlos Franqui, his newspaper *Revolución* and its literary supplement. In a 2009 interview, Guevara admitted his quarrel with the head

²³⁵ Néstor Almendros, "P.M.," *Cinemanía* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1992) 172. This film review appeared originally in *Bohemia* 53.21 (21 May 1961).

²³⁶ Luis Orticón, "Imagen y sonido," *Bohemia* 53.22 (28 May 1961): 96.

of *Revolución*: “Por eso te lo digo de una vez [Estupiñán]: no me enfrenté a *Lunes*, sino a Franqui.”²³⁷ [Let me tell you once and for all [Estupiñán]: I did not confront *Lunes*; I went after Franqui.] *P.M.*, as part of *Lunes*, ended on Franqui’s side of the confrontation.

The official document that censored the film stated:

La Comisión de Estudio y Clasificación de Películas reunida en sesión ordinaria acordó, después de estudiar la citada película [*P.M.*], prohibir su exhibición, por ofrecer una pintura parcial de la vida nocturna habanera, que empobrece, desfigura y desvirtúa la actitud que mantiene el pueblo cubano contra los ataques arteros de la contrarrevolución a las órdenes del imperialismo yanqui.²³⁸

[After meeting in an ordinary session, the Commission for the Study and Classification of Films agreed, after studying the quoted film [*P.M.*], to prohibit its exhibition, because it offers a partial portrait of the nocturnal life in Havana that impoverishes, deforms, and distorts the attitude that the Cuban people maintain against the treacherous attacks of the counterrevolution at the orders of U.S. imperialism.]

The verbs “impoverishes,” “deforms,” and “distorts” used in the prohibition reveal the critical moment in which the film was censored: less than a month after the Bay of Pigs invasion. The “treacherous attacks of the counterrevolution” were more than real, as they had already taken place. During those days, threats of other invasions stirred political passions and paranoia took over the island. That is why the ICAIC was concerned with the portrayal of the Cuban characters in the film because it contradicted the official discourse of the revolutionary government that proclaimed that everyone was committed to the revolutionary cause and prepared for war. Instead, *P.M.* portrayed people enjoying themselves. Here, it is important to note, that this 15-minute short already prefigured

²³⁷ Leandro Estupiñán Zaldívar, “El peor enemigo de la revolución es la ignorancia: entrevista con Alfredo Guevara,” *Calibán: revista cubana de pensamiento e historia* 5 (2009): n.p.

²³⁸ Orlando Jiménez Leal and Manuel Zayas, *El caso PM. Cine, poder y censura* (Madrid: Editorial Colibrí, 2012) 263.

Jiménez Leal's *modus operandi* in future films: subverting the official discourse of the Cuban Revolution through underground film production.

Another concern was implicit in ICAIC's prohibition: that counterrevolutionary forces outside the island could use the images in *P.M.* as propaganda against the revolution. Furthermore, the ICAIC did not like the metaphorical implications of *P.M.*'s nocturnal scene. The Cuban Revolution was for them an awakening— dawn, instead of dusk— and the implicit message in *P.M.* for them was of darkness and lust. In the eyes of the bureaucrats, Jiménez Leal's and Sabá Cabrera Infante were also arguing that nothing had changed from the 1950s to the present. People were enjoying themselves impervious to the politics of regime change just as they did under Batista. Hence, this view did not fit with the image that the Cuban Revolution wanted to portray of its people and that would later be known in Ernesto "Che" Guevara's own words as the "new man."²³⁹

After the prohibition, a series of events followed. The leadership at ICAIC, looking to ratify their verdict, decided to screen the film on May 31, 1961, at Casa de las Américas for Nicolás Guillén and the artists and writers that were going to participate at the Congress of Artists and Writers that summer. But in Casa, according to Jiménez Leal²⁴⁰ and Wollaston— cited above—, the film received a standing ovation, creating a problem for the Cuban Film Institute. The heated debate did not reach an amicable

²³⁹ Although Ernesto "Che" Guevara's definition of the "new man" appeared in 1965 with the publication of his book *El socialismo y el hombre en Cuba*, his ideas were present from the beginning in revolutionary Cuba. As Ana Serra notes in her book *The "New Man" in Cuba* previously cited, the ideas of the "new man" were already in the air. Guevara defined the term in the following way: "To build communism it is necessary, simultaneous with the new material foundations, to build the new man. That is why it is very important to choose the right instrument for mobilizing the masses. Basically, this mechanism must be moral in character. . . . In moments of great peril it is easy to muster a powerful response to incentives. Retaining their effect, however, requires the development of a consciousness in which there is a new scale of values. Society as a whole must be converted into a gigantic school." Excerpt taken from: Ernesto Guevara, "Socialism and Man in Cuba," trans. Anonymous, *Socialism and Man in Cuba* (New York: Pathfinder, 1989) 6.

²⁴⁰ Canel, "Revolución y censura: el affaire *PM*," 134.

solution and after hours of discussion the ICAIC proposed screening the film to an audience of revolutionary organizations that would have the final saying, the *Central de Trabajadores de Cuba* (CTC), the *Federación Estudiantil Universitaria* (FEU), the *Asociación de Jóvenes Rebeldes*, and the *Federación Democrática de Mujeres*, among others.²⁴¹ The supporters of *P.M.* refused, arguing that those organizations were controlled by the PSC. After the meeting came to an end, they decided to continue the debate at the National Congress. A day later, however, the Cuban Film Institute published an official statement in the newspaper *Hoy* that declared: “El público, reunido en La Casa de las Américas, formado por artistas intelectuales, después de un extenso debate sobre dicho film, estuvo de acuerdo por abrumadora mayoría, -especialmente por los defensores, o por lo que simpatizaban con la película, en prohibir la exhibición del film y dar por concluido este incidente.”²⁴² [The audience that met at La Casa de las Americas, consisting of intellectuals from the arts scene, after an extensive discussion of this film, agreed overwhelmingly, especially its advocates, or those that sympathized with the film, to prohibit exhibition of the film and declare the matter closed.] This publication created such a commotion that it led to a letter addressed to Nicolás Guillén in protest by more than 200 artists who supported the film. Fidel Castro convened instead a series of meetings at the National Library in June 16, 23, and 30, 1961, in which the artistic and intellectual community expressed their concerns about the prohibition of the film and about the new cultural policy to be put in place by the revolutionary government. The meetings concluded with Castro’s famous speech known as “Palabras a los intelectuales” (“A Word to Intellectuals”) in which he defined the new policy with the famous dictum

²⁴¹ A copy of the original documents can be found online published by *Cubaencuentro*: <http://www.cubaencuentro.com/revista/revista-encuentro/archivo/50-otono-2008/entrevista-a-orlando-jimenez-leal-127024>

²⁴² Jiménez Leal and Zayas, *El caso PM. Cine, poder y censura* 265.

“Within the Revolution, everything; against the Revolution, nothing.”²⁴³ In that same speech, Castro stipulated that the problem was not with form but rather with content. Hence, there was no problem with *P.M.*'s *free cinema* experimentation. The problem came with the content of the images that it captured. Castro explained:

You have been worrying about whether the Revolution will choke this freedom, whether the Revolution will stifle the creative spirit of writers and artists. // Freedom of form has been spoken of here. *Everyone agrees that freedom of form must be respected.* I believe there is no doubt in regards to this point. // The question is more delicate, and actually becomes the essential point of discussion, when one deals with freedom of content. This is a subtle matter, as it is open to the most diverse interpretations. The most controversial point of this question is: should we or should we not have absolute freedom of content in artistic expression? (emphasis mine)²⁴⁴

His own dictum answered this question negatively: if content was against the revolution, it would not be tolerated, that is, absolute freedom was not possible. And that served as the fundamental argument to prohibit *P.M.*

One of *P.M.*'s scenes considered “against the revolution” takes place at a bar where people were enjoying themselves, drinking, smoking, and dancing (Figure 31). We see an Afro-Cuban woman with a beer in her hand dancing to a Cuban son and a drunken man dancing with her with his eyes closed. We see a bar full of people and bartenders serving alcoholic drinks. None of those characters represented true revolutionary heroes or people committed to the revolution. They did not sport a revolutionary spirit but rather a festive one. The image that the Cuban government wanted to portray was that of soldiers, fighters, combatants, not of people drinking and

²⁴³ Fidel Castro, “Words to the Intellectuals,” *Radical Perspectives in the Arts*, ed. Lee Baxandall (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972) 276.

²⁴⁴ Castro, “Words to the Intellectuals,” 272.

enjoying themselves. In that sense it was considered counterrevolutionary.²⁴⁵ As critic Dylan Robbins points out:

The period polemic sparked by this film's prohibition, for example, called attention to its partiality in representing a popular, marginal space engaged in play and not reflecting the recent efforts of Revolutionary policies, such as social and military mobilization or campaigns to transform an urban, leisure-industry economy into one of sustained material production.²⁴⁶

But the racial portrayal in *P.M.* also appeared to be problematic, as other critics have noticed. Karol, for example, summarized some of the complaints: "Some said it was too sexy, others that it featured too many Negroes."²⁴⁷ The predominance of Afro-Cuban culture in the short seemed to provoke racist reactions. Although Guevara denied these accusations of institutional racism,²⁴⁸ Linda Howe argues that the "film's suppression confirmed authorities' ever-increasing censorship of expression" and that implicit racism motivated the censorship of *P.M.*²⁴⁹

²⁴⁵ For a transcription of Alfredo Guevara's opinion about the film see: Jiménez Leal and Zayas, *El caso P.M. Cine, poder y censura* 202-13.

²⁴⁶ Robbins, "On the Margins of Reality: Fiction, Documentary, and Marginal Subjectivity in Three Early Cuban Revolutionary Films," 29.

²⁴⁷ K. S. Karol, *Guerrillas in Power: The Course of the Cuban Revolution* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1970) 241.

²⁴⁸ Chanan, *Cuban Cinema* 133.

²⁴⁹ Linda S. Howe, *Transgression and Conformity: Cuban Writers and Artists after the Revolution* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 2004) 24-25.



Figure 31: Scenes from a Bar in Havana

Interestingly, similar to *Memorias del subdesarrollo* examined in Chapter 2, *P.M.* also tried to explore the condition and sociability of the Cuban street scene through the use of a hidden camera. Gutiérrez Alea used it in his *El Encanto* scene, among others; Sabá Cabrera Infante and Jiménez Leal within a night in Havana. At the nightclubs in Cuba's capital, both of these directors depicted a Cuban identity through music (Figure 32A) and dance (Figure 32B), also anchored in its Afro-Cuban heritage. That is why Afro-Cuban songs served as diegetic and non-diegetic music throughout the film. Almendros underlined this trait in his critique reading it as a tribute to the musicians: "También la película recoge [. . .] la música de algunos artistas anónimos del pueblo. [. . .] Había que hacer algún día también un homenaje a estos heroicos músicos anónimos de café. Cabrera y Jiménez, los autores de *P.M.*, han cumplido cabalmente con la deuda que se tenía con ellos."²⁵⁰ [The film also captures [. . .] the music of some anonymous artists of our Cuban society [. . .] A tribute to these heroic musicians had to be paid some day. Cabrera and Jiménez, the directors of *P.M.*, have perfectly repaid the debt that we owed them.] One of these anonymous artists was El Chori (Silvano Chueg Echevarría), an Afro-Cuban percussionist immortalized in *P.M.* Jiménez Leal and Cabrera Infante took

²⁵⁰ Almendros, "P.M.," 173.

their camera to the Chori Club, where this underground Cuban artist was playing with his band.²⁵¹

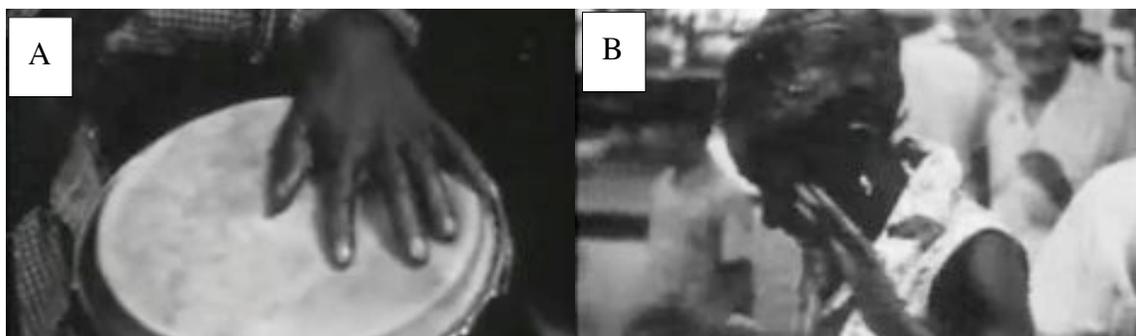


Figure 32: Music and Musicians in *P.M.*

In *P.M.*, El Chori serves as a figure equivalent to *Pello* in *Memorias del subdesarrollo*. But 1961, however, the veneration of popular musicians on the big screen was less important than the official discourse that proclaimed that Cubans were engaged in a revolutionary transformation. Later on, the bars in *P.M.* were closed as part of a campaign to “clean” the city of Havana and, as Antonio José Ponte explains, the censorship of *P.M.* was only a warning to the future prohibition of all festivities: “*Memorias del subdesarrollo* fue terminado el mismo año en que bares, clubes, y otros centros nocturnos eran tapiados como parte de una campaña de saneamiento moral. ‘Gran Ofensiva Revolucionaria’, titularon las autoridades a tal campaña. [. . .] La censura de *P.M.* había sido un aviso, la condena en efigie de la fiesta.”²⁵² [*Memories of Underdevelopment* was finished the same year that bars, clubs and other nocturnal centers were permanently closed as part of a campaign of moral cleansing. The

²⁵¹ The writer Antonio José Ponte pays tribute to El Chori in: Antonio José Ponte, *La fiesta vigilada* (Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama, 2007) 99-100.

²⁵² Ponte, *La fiesta vigilada* 108.

authorities called it “Great Revolutionary Offensive.” [. . .] *P.M.*’s censorship was a warning, the summary execution of all festivities.”]

The censorship of *P.M.* also announced the future closure of *Lunes* in November, 1961, and many people related to this supplement, including the directors of the short, later went into exile. But this first film already contained many of the traits that characterize Jiménez Leal’s cinematic project abroad. Looking closely at this director’s early work in the island such as *P.M.* enables us to understand the technical and content choices he makes in later films that challenge the official discourse in exile such as the documentaries *The Other Cuba* and *Improper Conduct* as well as *8-A*.

This last film deserves closer attention since in it Jiménez Leal followed a different mode of production: the docudrama. Jiménez Leal’s purpose here is to debunk the official story about another affair: General Arnaldo Ochoa’s military trial. And he will rely almost completely on footage provided by the Cuban government, as the trial was broadcast on television. To that footage he adds or interjects scripted fictional scenes based on historical events. But more importantly, he will reveal in the contradictions of the reedited TV footage, that there are more unanswered questions than answers in what happened to Ochoa. In *8-A* Jiménez Leal demonstrates how the official version of the Cuban Revolutionary Archive already contains within itself the tools to deny that which it is arguing, as we will see below.

8-A: DOCUDRAMA PRODUCED IN EXILE

Jiménez Leal’s last film, the docudrama *8-A* (1992), also dealt with a scandal: the *Ochoa Affair* in 1989. For this film, this director used twenty eight hours of footage transmitted in Cuban television of what was called “Causa 1/1989: Consejo de Guerra

contra el General Ochoa y 13 militares.” [Case 1 of 1989].²⁵³ This footage captured the military trial of one of the most important men in the Cuban army: General Arnaldo Ochoa Sánchez. But he was not the only one to be tried. In total there were fourteen subjects accused. Jiménez Leal gained access to this footage thanks to a friend in Florida who was able to tune in and tape Cuban TV; Radiotelevisione Italiana (RAI), a national broadcasting company in Italy, agreed to produce *8-A* based on this “pirated” footage. To this footage Jiménez Leal added several acted scenes, to be discussed later on. The film was dedicated to the memory of Néstor Almendros, who had passed away on that same year, and it was in the words of the director “una metáfora del totalitarismo; es un cuento de brujas” [“a metaphor of totalitarianism; the story of a witch hunt”].²⁵⁴

Looking at the protagonists accused in this trial reveals the significance and implications of this event. On one hand, General Arnaldo Ochoa Sánchez was a veteran of the Sierra Maestra and the wars in Ethiopia and Angola, among other missions. He became one of the most important generals of the Cuban Revolution recognized with the Ministry of Revolutionary Armed Forces’ (MINFAR) highest decoration, that of Hero of the Republic of Cuba. Right before he was arrested on June 12, 1989, he was about to be designated as Chief of the Western Division, the most important branch of the Cuban Army. Colonel Antonio “Tony” de la Guardia, on the other hand, was one of the top officials at the Ministry of Interior and head of the Moneda Convertible (MC) Department,²⁵⁵ in charge of seeking ways to evade the U.S. embargo. This Department

²⁵³ *Case 1/1989: End of the Cuban Connection* (Havana: José Martí, 1989).

²⁵⁴ Agustín Tamargo, “Programa ‘Mesa Revuelta,’” *8-A: la realidad invisible*, ed. Orlando Jiménez Leal (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1997) 139.

²⁵⁵ Moneda Convertible (MC) was established in Cuba as a second official Cuban currency with a similar value to US Dollars in the 1990s. CUC, as they are known, are equal to 25 CUP, or Cuban pesos. Recently the government has announced a gradual unification of both currencies.

was created in 1986 and was in charge of collecting money in Moneda Convertible (MC) for the Cuban government. Over all, Tony was— without a doubt— one of Fidel Castro’s right-hand men. Two of their aids had also important positions in the government: Ochoa’s assistant, Captain Jorge Martínez, and Major Amado Padrón, second-in-command in the MC Department and member of the Cuban Secret Service since 1963. Tony de la Guardia’s twin brother, Patricio de la Guardia, was also tried along with other officials of the MC: Antonio Sánchez Lima, Eduardo Díaz Izquierdo, Alexis Lago Arocha, Miguel Ruiz Poo, Rosa María Abierno, Willye Pineda, Gabriel Prendes, and Leonel Estévez. All of them were accused of drug trafficking; Ochoa, Tony de la Guardia, Padrón, and Martínez were also tried for committing hostile acts against third countries whose maximum sentence was the death penalty.²⁵⁶

To understand Jiménez Leal’s film, we must also discuss the context that led to this military trial. Although drug trafficking in Cuba had been prevalent under Batista’s regime in the 1950s, as analyzed by Eduardo Sáenz Rovner in *The Cuban Connection*,²⁵⁷ some eventualities suggest that the drug trade continued later on under the Cuban Revolution. In the 1980s, a series of events suggested that the top levels of the Cuban government knew and allowed the use of Cuba as a bridge to export drugs from South America to the United States and Europe. When the Cuban agent Mario Estévez González was captured near the Florida coast with 2,500 pounds of marihuana on November 29, 1981, new insights were gained about these illegal operations. According to this agent, the Cuban government had infiltrated 3,000 agents like him into the United

²⁵⁶ The official accusations were published in: *Causa 1/89: fin de la conexión cubana* (La Habana: Editorial José Martí, 1989).

²⁵⁷ For a detailed analysis of the drug world in pre-revolutionary Cuba and the first years of the Cuban Revolution see: Eduardo Sáenz Rovner, *The Cuban Connection: Drug Trafficking, Smuggling, and Gambling in Cuba from the 1920s to the Revolution* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2008).

States during the Mariel exodus;²⁵⁸ he confessed being on a mission on behalf of the Cuban authorities to distribute cocaine, marihuana and methaqualone in New York, New Jersey and Florida. Later on, Estévez González also collaborated with U.S. authorities to indict Colombian trafficker Jaime Guillot Lara in Miami. Then the latter served as a witness to indict four important Cuban officials in absentia in a Miami Federal Court trail: René Rodríguez Cruz, President of the Instituto Cubano de Amistad con los Pueblos; Vice Admiral Aldo Santamaría Cuadrado, Head of the Cuban Navy; Fernando Ravelo Renedo, Cuban Ambassador in Colombia; and Gonzalo Bassols Suárez, First Secretary of the Cuban Embassy in Colombia.²⁵⁹ This was one of the first major Cuban drug scandals of the 1980s and that the list of top officials the top Cuban Navy officer suggested that drugs were being escorted through Cuba with the full assistance of the authorities.

Another Cuban drug scandal exploded in February 1988, when drug trafficking middleman Reinaldo Ruiz was arrested and later indicted— along with his son Rubén Ruiz and fifteen others— for smuggling cocaine through Cuba. Months before, both Reinaldo and Rubén Ruiz had been followed by the Drug Enforcement Administration in the United States with the help of a former National Chinese Air Force pilot, named Hu Chang, who was then a DEA informant. Originally, Chang had been contacted by Reinaldo Ruiz to fly a shipment of cocaine from Colombia to Cuba in 1987. They proceeded with this first mission in May; for their second, one month later, the DEA was able to install a hidden camera in Chang’s office to obtain evidence of illegal activity.

²⁵⁸ For the press coverage of the 1981-82 Cuban drug scandal see: Associated Press, “Four Cuban Officials Indicted in Drug Smuggling,” *The Washington Post* 6 Nov. 1982: A2, and Selwyn Raab, “A Defector Tells of Drug Dealing by Cuba Agents,” *The New York Times* 4 Apr. 1983: B1.

²⁵⁹ Further details are given in: William L. Marcy, *The Politics of Cocaine: How U.S. Policy Has Created a Thriving Drug Industry in Central and South America* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2010) 91-101.

There they were able to record Reinaldo Ruiz and his son Rubén over a period of months in which they confessed how the Cuban government was facilitating their missions.

Although Fidel Castro had successfully dismissed drug trafficking accusations in the past by labeling them as mere propaganda against his government, some say that this time the DEA had “dangerous” proof that linked the smuggle of cocaine to high officials of the Cuban government. Videos taken at Chang’s office and a key witness in custody (Reinaldo Ruiz himself who pleaded guilty in March 1989) served as more than enough evidence to prove that Cuba was involved in such crimes.²⁶⁰ Furthermore, General Rafael del Pino, one of the top officers of the Air Force who defected in 1987, also provided information regarding orders from the Head of the Armed Forces (MINFAR), Raúl Castro, to allow drug trafficking airplanes to fly and land in Varadero, Cuba.²⁶¹ The evidence was mounting and the Cuban government had to react. It was then that the accusations of Ochoa, Tony de la Guardia and the others, served as a way to exonerate top officials in the Cuban government of any culpability– including the Castro brothers– by blaming this group for the trafficking and sentencing them to prison or death by firing squad.²⁶² Rumor had it that Castro also had the intention to get rid of those key figures

²⁶⁰ The details about Cuban drug trafficking are also summarized in: Andrés Oppenheimer, *Castro's Final Hour: The Secret Story Behind the Coming Downfall of Communist Cuba* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992).

²⁶¹ In an interview for the PBS documentary “Cuba and Cocaine”– directed by Stephanie Tepper and William Cran in 1991– General Rafael del Pino admitted: “The permission to overfly Cuba has to come from the Ministry of Defense. Several times I received orders from Raul Castro’s office and also from General Abrantes’s office to let the airplanes cross over Cuba.”

²⁶² The investigative reporter Andres Oppenheimer argued: “Castro could not possibly have been shocked to find out that his top aides had been engaged in cocaine smuggling.” Oppenheimer interviewed more than half a dozen former Interior Ministry intelligence officers as well as Ochoa’s widow, Tony de la Guardia’s daughter and Patricio de la Guardia’s wife. All coincided that Castro knew about the drug trafficking operations. This excerpt is taken from: Oppenheimer, *Castro's Final Hour: The Secret Story Behind the Coming Downfall of Communist Cuba* 128.

that could lead a successful *coup d'état* against him. Jiménez Leal's film tries to fill in the gaps and test all these different theories.

Just as Miguel Coyula does in *Memories of Development*, Jiménez Leal restores to the Cuban Revolutionary Archive several dark moments of failure in Cuban revolutionary history. The Ochoa Affair was nothing more than the “the beginning of the end,” as the Argentine journalist Andrés Oppenheimer calls it, that is, the evidence that the totalitarian regime was clinging to its survival. As explained above, this “Other” neglected or silenced Cuba is a recurrent theme in Jimenez Leal's filmography, mainly in documentaries that captured other infamous, under reported events in Cuba: the histories of the UMAPs and the Mariel exodus. All of this work intended to record what the Official Revolutionary Archive tried to omit. In this case, the scandal and execution of General Ochoa also demanded to be consigned a space in the archive.

Originally, the trial aimed to analyze the charges brought against Arnaldo Ochoa Sánchez for his “independent participation and joint participation with Interior Ministry officers in contacts with international drug traffickers-planning, reaching agreements, and other events related to this activity.”²⁶³ The connections between Ochoa and the Colombian drug trade, however, were hard to prove²⁶⁴ since he spent many years in Africa fighting in Ethiopia and Angola. Norberto Fuentes argued²⁶⁵ that Ochoa did engage in illegal transactions with ivory there, but not with drugs from Colombia. The

²⁶³ An English transcription of the trial appears in: Joint Publications Research Service, *JPRS Report on Cuba: Cuban Government Proceedings Against Arnaldo Ochoa Sanchez and Other Official* (Arlington, VA: 25 July 1989).

²⁶⁴ Even the Cuba Annual Report of 1989 by the US Information Agency explicitly said: “There is no evidence from other sources [other than Martínez's testimony at the trial], as there is on the MININT officials and Cuban diplomats, linking Ochoa in drug or money laundering activities. Nor is there a logical explanation why a military man like Ochoa would be concerned with the development of Cuba's tourist industry, particularly when he was involved in a war in Angola” (49).

²⁶⁵ Norberto Fuentes, *Dulces guerreros cubanos* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1999).

only evidence presented at the trial was a meeting between Martínez, his assistant, and Pablo Escobar. Tony de la Guardia's involvement with drugs, on the other hand, was easier to prove since many testimonies could incriminate him.²⁶⁶ Now different theories exist about why Ochoa was indicted for the same charges. First, there seemed to be friction between Ochoa and the Castro brothers. Orestes Lorenzo, an Ex-Major of the Cuban Air Force who later defected, argued²⁶⁷ that one possible explanation was Ochoa's sympathy for Mijail Gorbachev's policy of *perestroika* and his knowledge of Russian. During a visit of the leader of the Soviet Union to Havana in April 1989, Ochoa spoke in Russian with Gorbachev in front of Fidel Castro. The rumor in the military was, according to Lorenzo, that the Commander-in-Chief felt humiliated. Other theories suggest that Ochoa was seen as a figure that was becoming too powerful, with the strength enough to overthrow the government with the support of the Soviet Union.

To analyze these theories Jiménez Leal shot *8-A* (1992) as a film produced in exile that revised the Cuban revolutionary archival record. Although it followed the docudrama mode of production (mixing or alternating documentary footage with scripted scenes done with movie actors), structurally speaking, the director decided to use a classical three-act structure— an introduction, a climax, and an ending— because the television footage was already staged. He wanted to recreate the atmosphere of a detective “who-done-it” drama, adapting Raymond Chandler's technique to film and at the same time paying tribute to the history of film noir, as the audience would become the

²⁶⁶ Reinaldo Ruiz implicated Tony de la Guardia in court (see U.S. District Court, Southern District of Florida, Miami Division, *Proceedings before the Honorable Thomas E. Scott of Case No. 88-127-Cr against Reinaldo Ruiz and Ruben J. Ruiz*, 3 March 1989, Miami, Florida) and in his last interview published in: Valerio Riva, “La última entrevista a Reinaldo Ruiz,” *8-A: la realidad invisible*, ed. Orlando Jiménez Leal (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1997) 184-98.

²⁶⁷ Orlando Jiménez Leal, ed., “Mesa redonda: programa que siguió a la presentación en televisión de *8-A*,” *8-A: la realidad invisible* (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1997) 113-15.

“detectives” of Ochoa’s trial and draw their own conclusions. Was he being tried for drug trafficking or for sedition? Jiménez Leal explained his intentions in one of his interviews:

[E]l reto para mí más grande era cómo llevar al cine lo que ya era una farsa, y convertir en una película de ficción una realidad que, a su vez, era una farsa en sí misma. Ése fue el reto. Y se me ocurrió que la mejor manera de hacerlo era darle una estructura de ficción clásica, la estructura de la narrativa tradicional con una introducción, un nudo y un desenlace. Y escogí a Raymond Chandler como modelo, y en este caso, Phillip Marlowe nuestro investigador, es el espectador que, de cierta manera, se convierte en un investigador invisible que forma parte de esta trama.²⁶⁸

[The biggest challenge for me was how to film what was already a farce, and turn into a feature film a reality that, in turn, was a farce in itself. That was the challenge. And it occurred to me that the best way to do this was to give it a structure of classic fiction, the structure of traditional narratives with a beginning, climax and end. And I chose Raymond Chandler as a model, and in this case, investigator Phillip Marlowe is our viewer that, in a way, becomes an invisible researcher who is part of the plot.]

Besides the classic structure, the plot would be simple: Arnaldo Ochoa, Tony de la Guardia, Amado Padrón and Jorge Martínez are invited to a party by the Minister of Transportation, Diocles Torralba, in which counterintelligence agents secretly record the supposed evidence for the drug-trafficking accusations. Later on Ochoa, Tony, Amado and Jorge are arrested and taken to military trial where they admit being guilty. A week and a half later they are sentenced to the death penalty by firing squad and they are executed. The others tried received sentences of 20 to 30 years in prison.

As part of the docudrama architecture, Jiménez Leal used the Cuban television footage of the trial and later shot fictional recreations of Diocles Torralba’s party and the execution. This docudrama preference is made explicit at the beginning of the film, when his voice— as the narrator— says: “Reality has been portrayed as fiction, and any coincidence between fiction and reality is pure coincidence.” Distancing himself from

²⁶⁸ Jiménez Leal, “Mesa redonda: programa que siguió a la presentación en televisión de 8-A,” 106.

Gutiérrez Alea, though, he relied more on documentary than on a fictitious character like Sergio to question the “veracity” of these documentary images. In his film, Jiménez Leal will underline the contradictions within the documentary footage that reveal that this genre is as fictional as any other. In this way the work of this filmmaker echoes the ideas of Bill Nichols when he says:

Documentaries are fictions with plots, characters, situations, and events like any other. They offer introductory lacks, challenges, or dilemmas; they build heightened tensions and dramatically rising conflicts, and they terminate with resolution and closure. They do all this with reference to a “reality” that is a construct, the product of signifying systems, like the documentary film itself.²⁶⁹

Hence, by focusing on the contradictions hidden in the images Jiménez Leal will highlight the Ochoa affair as a prefabricated construct. And, paradoxically, he will use the footage provided by the Cuban State to do so. Jiménez Leal explained this procedure in a roundtable on Miami television: “La paradoja es que 8-A está hecha con materiales de ellos mismos.”²⁷⁰ [“The paradox is that 8-A is made with source materials from the trial itself.”]

8-A, however, is not free of an ideological agenda. Figure 33A shows a panoramic view of the entrance to Havana in the film, rounded by the Malecón, the capital where the military trials took place. Like *P.M.*, Havana is depicted with a somber character. This idea is confirmed by another image (Figure 33B) in which the moon arises from a cloudy night. The director moved away from the “objective” portrayal in *P.M.* and thirty years later had an overt ideological agenda in his 1992 film. Three decades have passed in Cuban history, and the revolution, in Jiménez Leal’s view, has fallen into disgrace.

²⁶⁹ Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1991) 107.

²⁷⁰ Jiménez Leal, “Mesa redonda: programa que siguió a la presentación en televisión de 8-A,” 126.

Hence, comparing both films not only helps us trace the evolution of this filmmaker but also of the revolution itself.



Figure 33: Images of Havana and the Moon

Jiménez Leal also relies on newsreels and the Cuban press to create his own narrative. In 8-A, we see the coverage of Ochoa's case in the local channels of Cuban television (Figure 34). These clips set the context of the film as they cover the news about the execution of the four members of the military: Arnaldo Ochoa Sánchez, Jorge Martínez Valdés, Antonio de la Guardia Font, and Amado Padrón Trujillo. The date of the news program, July 13, 1989 (Figure 34A), marks the day when the executions took place. Instead of covering the crucial dates of the 1960s such as de Bay of Pigs invasion and the Cuban Missile Crisis— which concerned Desnoes and Gutiérrez Alea— Jiménez Leal aims to add Ochoa's case to the chronology of the Cuban Revolutionary Archive. Next to the 1980 massive exodus known as El Mariel captured in *The Other Cuba* (1983), and the UMAPs prosecution of homosexuals in his film *Improper Conduct* (1984). The newsreel (Figure 34A, B) also serves to record how the execution was covered in the official media side by side to the *Granma* newspapers (Figure 34C, D), the official publication of the Cuban Communist Party.

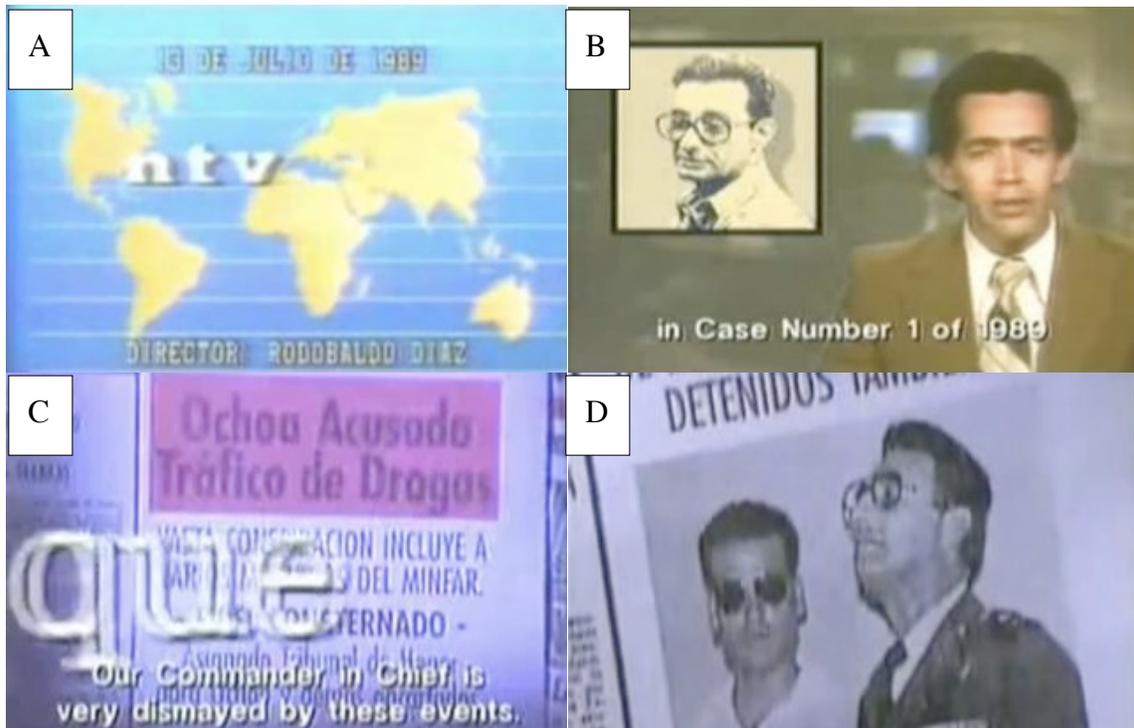


Figure 34: Images of Cuban National Television and the Granma Newspaper

Another documentary footage included in 8-A is that of the military trial. Not only do we see the prosecutor asking the accused questions in live television but also hear their response, as the trial becomes a spectacle. Jiménez Leal includes many contradictory moments of the trial and leaves it to the audience to decide what really happened. During the proceedings, one strategy that Jiménez Leal uses to contest the official version is to rely on oral history. Similar to the way that *The Other Cuba* and *Improper Conduct* were built, 8-A uses multiple testimonies to support its argument. On one hand it uses the testimonies of the accused televised during the military trials, and on the other, it relies on two important and revealing documents already mentioned: a letter by “Rodolfo,” an agent of the Cuban State Security, stating how Ochoa and his colleagues were secretly recorded by a counterintelligence team; and a letter from Amado Padrón Trujillo to Lázaro Torres Hernández in Panamá where he described the political

division in the Cuban government. Next to the images, the voiceover reads these important documents to supplement the testimonies at the trial. Today, Jiménez Leal would need to add new testimonies that have appeared by the daughter of Tony de la Guardia, Ileana de la Guardia, who lives in France, and from Patricio de la Guardia's son, Héctor de la Guardia Wong, who also lives in exile nowadays. Ileana's testimony also appeared as a book titled *Le nom de mon père*.²⁷¹

Within those testimonies broadcasted during the trial, Jiménez Leal searches for contradictions that subvert the theatrical farce that was being performed on national television. Although Ochoa and his followers were charged with drug trafficking, some details in the trial do not fit with this official accusation. There is a double discourse, for example, operating during the trial. This double discourse is succinctly summarized in one of the speeches that Raúl Castro gave in front of the Armed Forces, where he referred to the case against General Arnaldo Ochoa. In it he said: "Here, there is freedom of speech. I'm speaking here" (Figure 35). Jiménez Leal points out the cynical tone of this statement but also the double discourse that rules within the revolution. On one hand the leader of the Arm Forces claims that there is freedom of speech. However, only top officials like him have a voice. This example not only demonstrates the authoritarian character of the revolution but also the false claims of it being democratic. In the same speech Raúl Castro also asks his subordinates if there is democracy in the Arm Forces. Everyone responds with a loud yes. Then he asks: Are you saying this because the Minister is saying it? And the audience responds "No!" This interaction demonstrates the doublespeak operating in the island and Jiménez Leal will argue in his film that words in the trial have the opposite meaning.

²⁷¹ Ileana de la Guardia and Philippe Delaroche, *Le nom de mon père: récit* (Paris: Denoël, 2001).

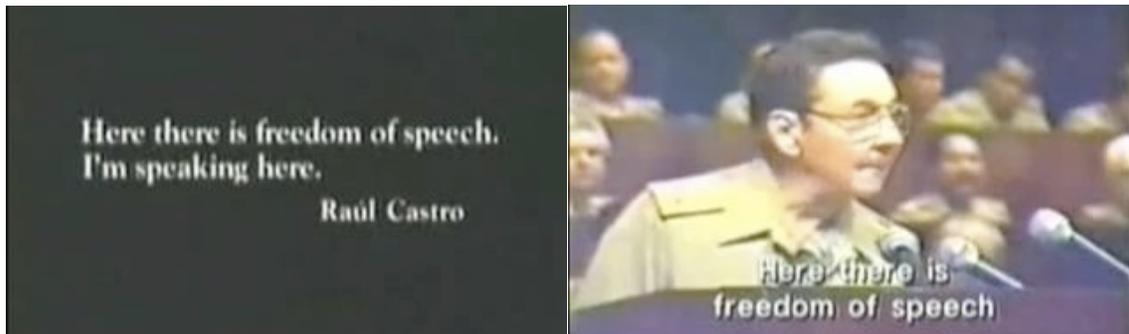


Figure 35: Raul Castro's Freedom of Speech Dictum

Even the testimonies by top officials presented as proof of the accusations backfire. Fernández Crespo's deposition as Head of Counterintelligence, for example, reveals that Fidel Castro knew everything from the beginning since the Commander-in-Chief was the one who ordered the investigation. The prosecutor asks him: "How did you start the investigation?" And Crespo responds: "Because Fidel Castro told me to." Jiménez Leal underlines this scene as one of the most important ones during the trial: "Para mí esa es la parte donde se revela de una manera muy directa la responsabilidad de Fidel Castro, que, por supuesto, lo sabía desde el comienzo."²⁷² [To me this is the part where it is revealed in a direct way Fidel Castro's responsibility, and that, of course, he knew it all from the beginning.] The other statements that proved that the trial was a farce were those by the defense attorneys who incriminated on purpose their own defendants. All of them served as prosecutors rather than defense attorney. And they were there as part of a piece of political theatre because a sentence had already been written. To take it a step further, some of the judges at the trial, such as Aldo Santamaría, had been previously accused of drug trafficking in Florida. That meant that a drug trafficker was judging one of his own.

²⁷² Jiménez Leal, "Mesa redonda: programa que siguió a la presentación en televisión de 8-A," 112.

To subvert the official discourse of the trial, Jiménez Leal also uses the testimonies of the accused in contraposition to statements by Raúl and Fidel Castro to reveal the gaps between them and destabilize the “absolute truth” that is trying to be portrayed on the television screen. Next to Raúl and Fidel Castro’s statements (Figure 36A, C), the director places together statements by Ochoa and Miguel Ruíz Poo (Figure 36B, D) that contradict the main arguments that the state was trying to build. The main concern that the top officials had was of getting caught in the drug trafficking scheme. They accused Ochoa and his close ties to drug traffickers, instead, and claimed zero knowledge of this illegal trade. To Raúl’s words “Fidel is our Dad,” Jiménez Leal responds with the irony of Arnaldo Ochoa: “If I face the firing squad, my last thoughts will be of Fidel and the great revolution he has given this country.” And to the apparent ignorance of Fidel Castro when Castro states: “Who could have imagined that Ochoa was involved in these kind of activities?” the director responds with Captain Miguel Ruíz Poo’s testimony at the trial where he says that Captain Jorge Martínez told him: “Fidel knows [about the drug trafficking]. The brilliance of our Commander in Chief has saved us from this trouble.” This is the climax of the film since Ruíz Poo is shown as the only one with the courage to incriminate Fidel. After an abrupt recess they end the session, and the next day other accused members soon deny Ruíz Poo’s implication of Fidel Castro. Among them were Jorge Martínez, Díaz Isquierdo and Antonio “Tony” de la Guardia. But their body language suggests that they are not telling the truth. And in fact, Ochoa, later on, argues that many people lied at the trial to save themselves. He asked the court, in his case, to judge him with the facts rather than the words: “I believe that there are many words, that there are many facts and I would prefer that you judge by the facts.”

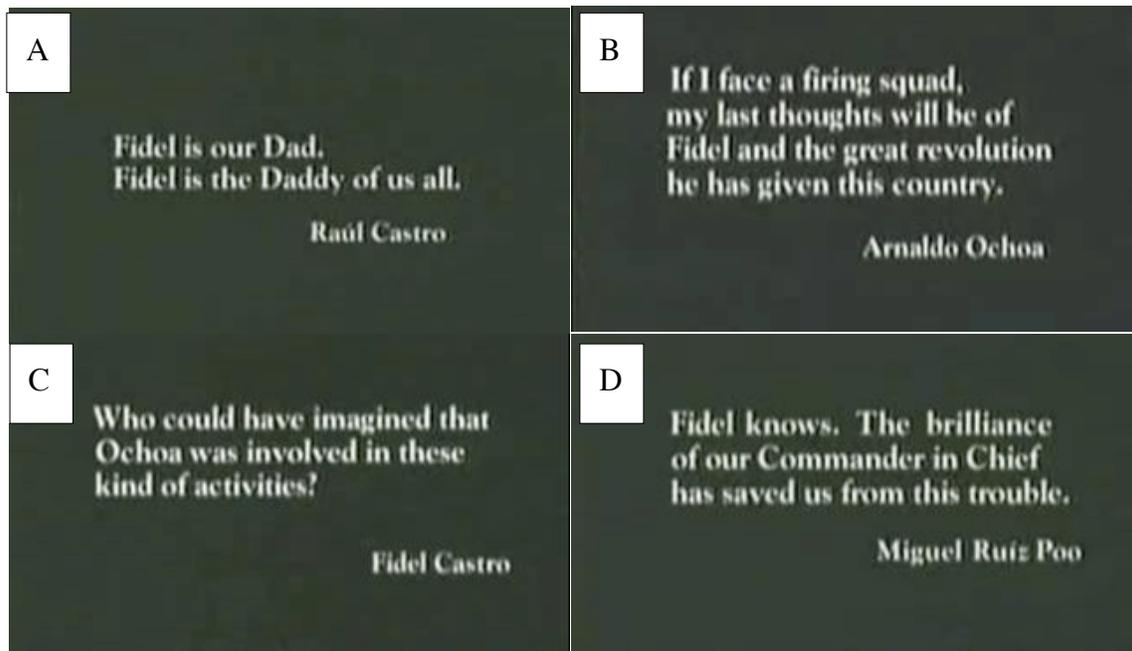


Figure 36: Quotes of Raúl Castro, Fidel Castro, Arnaldo Ochoa, and Miguel Ruíz Poo

Another revealing testimony appears when they interview General Arnaldo Ochoa, now deprived of his uniform and degraded. The court asks if he wants to testify and he responds affirmatively. Then, the prosecutor asks him “Has anyone told you what is being said in the press abroad about the problem we are facing in the trial?” And Ochoa responds:

I was waiting to ask permission of the President to speak about that. I have had the opportunity to see some newspapers that refer to what is occurring here. What do they say? That there is a political schism, that there is a military uprising in Cuba, that it is sedition, that in the Ministry of Armed Forces and in the Ministry of Interior there are rebellions, that there are internal division in the Party, that there is a fight between the young and the old and that, well, that Castro is doing a purge.

Now what is important to note is that all of the rumors that the press talked about abroad are becoming more and more credible as the film goes on. Not only because the contradictions in the film encourage us to question the images themselves but also

because testimonies go in different directions. It is obvious that the prosecutor and the judges tried to frame what the witness were going to say through their questions. Their responses, however, reveal more meant to be revealed. Far more evident are the images that evidence Ochoa's intoxication before being brought up to testify (Figure 37). While the images portray Ochoa with small eyes and abrupt head movements, he says: "Can you imagine what is to say to the Cuban people that they brought me drugged before the Court of Honor? And well, since they are busy broadcasting this to the world... I ask them to broadcast the truth, that they broadcast the truth." Ochoa's words are confirmed by the images that the audience sees, and the double discourse is revealed.



Figure 37: Ochoa Appears To Be Drugged

Jiménez Leal also questions the veracity of documentary images by retelling the same scene from different perspectives. In the style of a Cuban *Rashomon*,²⁷³ Jiménez Leal portrays the multiple perspectives of the scene of the “fiesta vigilada,” to use Antonio José Ponte’s term, hosted by Diocles Torralba as described by “Rodolfo” the Secret Agent of Counter-Intelligence, Amado Padrón, and Fidel Castro. This gathering is

²⁷³ *Rashomon* was a 1950 Japanese film directed by Akira Kurosawa in which various characters retell contradictory versions of the same incident. Jiménez Leal admits using this narrative strategy in one of his interviews. See: Tamargo, “Programa ‘Mesa Revuelta’,” 134.

portrayed in opposite ways depending on who narrates the story. By doing so, this director reflects on the process of recording memory and how memory is always personalized. Jiménez Leal uses as voiceovers the letters mentioned above by “Rodolfo” and Padrón, as well as the deposition of the Commander in Chief Fidel Castro at the State Council where he was to ratify the verdict of the military tribunal. Each voiceover transforms the same scene into a different one, as each one of them “remembers” what happened. “Rodolfo” recounts the incident as a meeting between top officials in which they referred to how Colonel Azpillaga and General Rafael del Pino defected (Figure 38A).²⁷⁴ Padrón’s voiceover implies that there was a complot to depose Fidel and Raul (Figure 38B). And Castro recounted the gathering as an immoral activity that involved sexual games with women (Figure 38C). This complex retelling of the event is summarized by Ochoa himself when he says that the process was like a war where each person has his own story of the front (Figure 38D). His trial will also be like a war.

²⁷⁴ Colonel Azpillaga and General Rafael del Pino were two top officials of the Cuban military that defected in 1987.

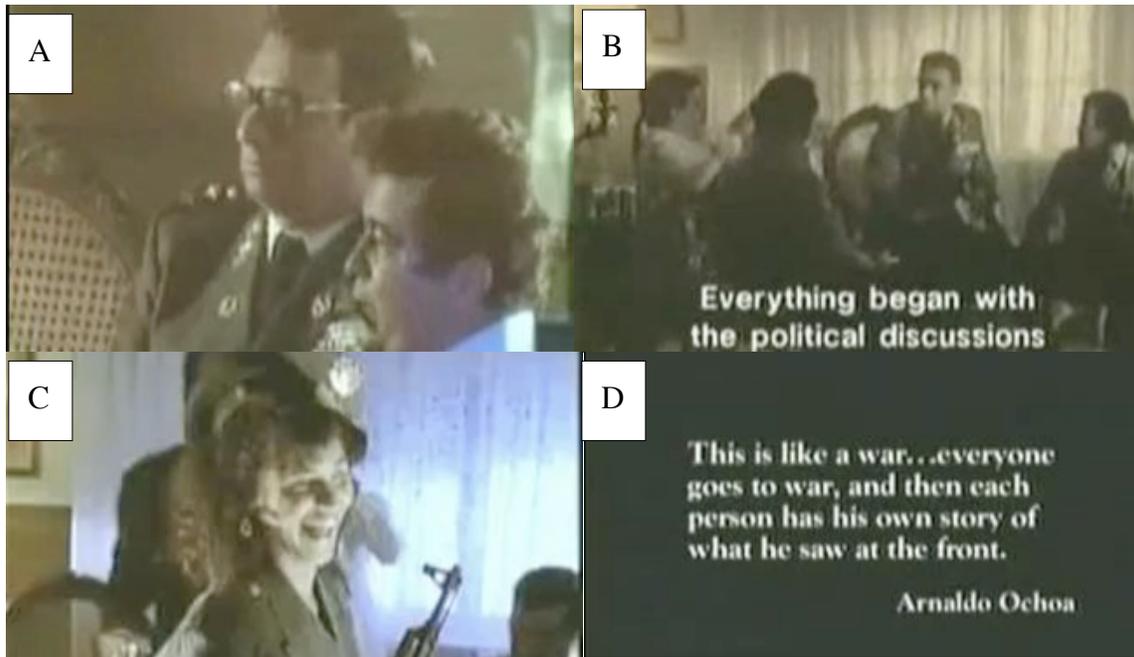


Figure 38: Multiple Versions of the “Fiesta Vigilada”

At the end of the film, Jiménez Leal’s *8-A* revisits an older archive of the Cuba of the 1930s as another example of the way that documentaries manipulate reality. Dream-like images of palm trees at the end of the film (Figure 39A) lead us to travel in time and revisit the pre-revolutionary past. Although these images induce nostalgia, Jiménez Leal seems to be ironic with how beautiful the island has turned out to be. The irony is confirmed by the song “Cubanakán” by the popular Cuban orchestra of that decade, the Lecuona Cuban Boys. While the audience listens to this song, Jiménez Leal presents video clips of the beach (Figure 39B), of the traffic through the entrance to Old Havana known as the Paseo del Prado (Figure 39C), and even of a sugar cane field (Figure 39D), among many others. The lyrics intensify the irony: “Cubanakán // maravilla de luz y calor // tu perfume despierta el ardor // con placer delicioso. // Cubanakán // guardaré tu recuerdo en mi ser // porque allí tengo yo a mi querer // y mi más loco afán.” [“Cubanakán // marvel of light and warmth // your perfume wakes up passion // with

sweet pleasure. // Cubanacán // I will keep your memories in me // because there I have my love // and my greatest desire.”] Like Coyula, Jiménez Leal added this ironic tone to the Cuban Revolutionary Archive, but as a way to the question documentaries images as vehicles of truth.

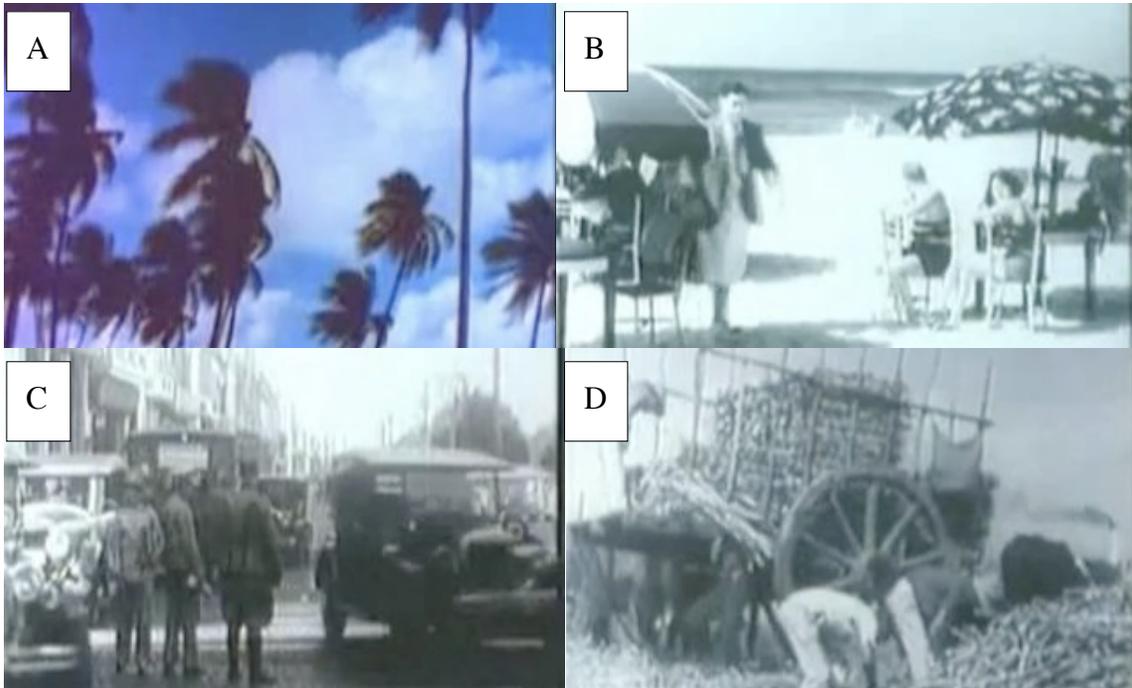


Figure 39: Credits Scene in 8-A

Over all, Jiménez Leal’s career serves as an excellent example of how the Cuban Revolutionary Archive was supplemented and contested from abroad. Oral history will be crucial for its construction and testimonies of those in exile will prove fundamental for the history of the “other” Cuba outside the boundaries of the island. In this case it was a history of the dark years of the Cuban Revolution, censored, erased and forgotten by the official archives on the island.

Conclusion: A New Cuban Literary and Filmic Archive to Come

This project examined how literature and film have been used both to manufacture and challenge the Filmic Archive of the Cuban Revolution since 1959. This construction involved a complex juxtaposition of multiple building blocks that went beyond national boundaries (Cuba) into a transnational matrix (exile). On one hand, established governmental institutions such as Casa de las Américas and the Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC) served– and still serve– as spaces to produce and store works of literature and film, and they provided– and provide– the infrastructure to support cultural productions for the official version of the archive, like in José Soler Puig’s *Bertillón 166* and Rebeca Chávez’s *Ciudad en rojo*. On the other hand, different directors and writers have challenged this official portrayal of the revolution from within– like Desnoes and Gutiérrez Alea–, from abroad– like Néstor Almendros and Orlando Jiménez Leal–, and through the use of new digital technologies exemplified by the work of Miguel Coyula.

Instead of looking exclusively at the texts and films stored in archival spaces, this project sought to argue in favor of a broader definition of the archive, which included the trajectories of the novelists and filmmakers active in collaborative film productions, as well as the intersections of these works with notions of memory and revolutionary identity. These intersections revealed a critical focus on the process of remembering the history of the Cuban Revolution– both in literature and film in Cuba and abroad– and a predominance of themes related to identity in defining these art forms as authentically Cuban. Following Foucault’s discussion of the archive, the reading of the primary sources as “monuments” also allowed us to identify how the official filmic and literary archive orchestrated a national discourse in order to dominate popular memory and how this discourse was challenged locally and abroad.

Within the Cuban revolutionary government, this building process of the archive entailed an institutionalization of both literature and film that delineated the rules and definitions that cultural productions had to follow. Fidel Castro's "Palabras a los intelectuales" ("A Word to Intellectuals") and the *P.M.* "affair" in 1961, established early on the rule that future art work needed to obey: "within the revolution everything, against the revolution nothing." The implementation of this rule, however, was put into practice through the institutions mentioned above— as well as others like the Cuban Book Institute— that set conventions and paradigms by creating literary prizes, publishing commissioned works of literature, funding films, and by hosting the Festival Internacional del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano (International Film Festival of New Latin American Cinema) with annual awards, among other practices. After examining these practices I demonstrated the government's preference for specific works of art that supported a glorification of revolutionary Cuba. However, the government took more than a decade to consolidate the institutionalization and absolute control of cultural productions. As I highlighted in Chapter 2, in those early years artists —such as Tomás Gutiérrez Alea— still enjoyed some freedom to launch critiques against the revolution from within.

Although the cultural institutions mentioned above were in place early on and demonstrated their power through the censorship of the film *P.M.*, some writers and filmmakers were able to push institutional control to the limit until the late 1960s when the poet Heberto Padilla was condemned, and the "eyes of the censor" began to pay a closer look to works of literature and film. In the beginning, ICAIC and Casa de las Américas operated independently from the Ministry of Culture of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC), a freedom that allowed some flexibility in the cultural productions sponsored by them. This earlier "openness" was enjoyed by writers like Edmundo

Desnoes and directors like Gutiérrez Alea, and was exemplified by their collaboration in *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (1968), a film that uses the eyes of a bourgeois character to portray a critique of the revolutionary moment after the Bay of Pigs invasion and Castro's official declaration of the revolution's socialist character. Among other techniques, by including documentary footage as examples of "truth," Desnoes and Gutiérrez Alea found a way to justify the criticism within their film.

Interestingly, other artists outside of these institutions also privileged literature and film to portray "another" Cuba, very different from the one recorded by Casa de las Américas and ICAIC. Edmundo Desnoes, nowadays writing in exile, and Miguel Coyula, through digital collages and the montage technique, substituted the official memories of the Cuban Revolution— such as the myth of Ernesto "Che" Guevara—, with other memories of underdevelopment from the land of overdevelopment— the UMAPs and the Mariel exodus. While writing and filming outside governmental sponsorship, they called forth "new" or "repressed" memories to encourage the Cuban public to deal with the traumas of the recent post-1959 past rather than perpetuate the glorification of the revolution. In *Memorias del desarrollo* (2010), Coyula responded to the Cuban government's "*¡Vamos bien!*" propaganda billboard with clips from the Ochoa trial as well as with artificiality and special effects rather than with realism. As we saw in Chapter 4, Orlando Jiménez Leal also invoked these traumatic moments in history in his documentaries *The Other Cuba* and *Improper Conduct*, as well as in his docudrama *8-A*. In his case, the oral history of Cuban exiles proved to be a crucial addition to the Cuban Revolutionary Filmic Archive since their testimonies foregrounded events that the Cuban cultural officialdom had labored to omit or erase from the archive. In his films, Jiménez Leal interviewed authors such as Reinaldo Arenas, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, and Heberto Padilla, demonstrating the importance of literature in the history of the "other"

Cuba. In addition, the documentary mode of production proved to be key within the construction of the archive in exile. The silences surrounding the failures of the Cuban Revolution needed to be voiced.

Nonetheless, fifty years later, the ICAIC is still concerned with the portrayal of the memories of the revolution and with supporting projects that recuperate the years of the revolutionary struggle in the 1950s such as in Chávez's *Ciudad en rojo* (2009). Following what *Bertillón 166* had done in the early 1960s in literature, this film demonstrated how cultural productions are still used as historical artifacts manipulated and monumentalized to support an official historical narrative of the Cuban Revolution today. *Ciudad en rojo* recorded the revolutionary struggle of 1956-58 in Santiago de Cuba for a generation that was born much after that decade and did not experience this major event. By doing so, it aimed to deposit in their memory images that enabled them to literally "imagine" the past. But new technologies are contesting that "imagination" with independent productions that are gaining momentum today. Now the question about this archival project has become: In what direction is the Cuban Filmic Archive heading as it moves into the future?

Ciudad en rojo also demonstrated how and why ICAIC's filmic archive has served as a vault for "old" material to be used in contemporary films. In Rebeca Chávez's case, as discussed in Chapter 1, this "vault" proved useful as a source of footage from the Noticiero Latinoamericano ICAIC as well as from earlier documentaries from the 1960s. Chávez recuperated this archive from the past and revived it in the present in order to perpetuate the official discourse that sees the revolution as an event that does not grow old. While celebrating fifty years of the Cuban Revolution and the Cuban Film Institute, Chávez also "fought" for ICAIC's survival at a time when younger generations of filmmakers were managing to circumvent the government's monopoly. Films outside the

institute have gained momentum thanks to the introduction of digital cameras and cheaper editing equipment in Cuba.

With all these ongoing changes in Cuban cinema today a future analysis of the archive will have to deal with the renewal of cross-links between Hollywood and Cuban cinema as Cuban independent films begin to assimilate Hollywood formulas in order to secure foreign funding by targeting an international mass audience and box office success abroad. For example, Alejandro Brugués' recent film *Juan of the Dead* (2010), as the first zombie film ever to be filmed on the island, demonstrated wherefrom some young filmmakers are seeking inspiration. Based on the film *Shaun of the Dead* (2004) by Edgar Wright, *Juan of the Dead* followed the formulas of zombie films to launch a harsh critique of contemporary Cuba. The revolution has been infected by a virus and has become a revolution of zombies, a revolution of the dead, or a dead revolution. Additionally, ICAIC's first 3D animation film titled "Meñique" (2014), by Ernesto Padrón, represents another recent example of the trends being explored by the Cuban Film Institute far away from the "Imperfect Cinema" of the 1960s and 70s. Hollywood genres and stylized film techniques— including High Definition and 3D technology— seem to be dominating the spectrum of the future.

Furthermore, the move toward different modes of literature and film distribution, such as the use of USB drives to transfer ebooks and films from one computer to another or the Youtube, Vimeo, Wordpress and Blogger platforms must be taken into account as part of the future Cuban Revolutionary Archive. The complexity of this recently born digital archive has been analyzed by Cristina Venegas in her book *Digital Dilemmas: The State, the Individual, and Digital Media in Cuba* (2010).²⁷⁵ Venegas' work, however, is

²⁷⁵ Cristina Venegas, *Digital Dilemmas: The State, the Individual, and Digital Media in Cuba* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2010).

only an introduction to digital media in Cuba. Similarly, Antonio José Ponte has also examined this new archive in his book *Villa Marista en plata: arte, política, nuevas tecnologías* (2010), by paying close attention to the short film *Monte Rouge* (2004) by Eduardo del Llano as well as the blogs *Generación Y* by Yoani Sánchez and *Octavo Cerco* by Claudia Cadelo, among other works. Del Llano's film, particularly, allowed Ponte to study the emerging underground film movement in Cuba. In *Monte Rouge*, Del Llano parodied the Cuban Secret Service in a dark comedy about the absolute state of surveillance in the island. After being denied participation in the International Film Festival in Havana, the film became an underground hit— as everyone wanted to see it— and was distributed via memory flash drives. The film went viral on Youtube and even reached one television channel in Miami that screened the whole film for the exile community. Ponte explained the way that the digital archive operated as follows:

Ciertas facilidades tecnológicas habían permitido su realización y ciertas facilidades tecnológicas le propiciaron una difusión extensa. Era posible realizar una película con apenas presupuesto, actores amigos y una simple cámara, sin necesidad de laboratorios posteriores. Y no era necesario contar con una pantalla de cine o un espacio de televisión para que muchos espectadores alcanzaran a verla. Gracias a la digitalización de las imágenes, *Monte Rouge* pudo ser filmado. Gracias a las facilidades de su reproducción y a los dispositivos de memoria, circuló profusamente.²⁷⁶

[Certain technological facilities had allowed its production and certain technological facilities led its wide dissemination. It was possible to make a film with a low budget, actors who were friends, and a simple camera without the need for a post-production lab. And there was no need for a movie theatre or television space to reach many viewers. Thanks to the digitization of images, *Monte Rouge* could be filmed. Thanks to reproduction facilities and memory devices, it circulated widely.]

²⁷⁶ Antonio José Ponte, *Villa Marista en plata: arte, política, nuevas tecnologías* (Madrid: Editorial Colibrí, 2010) 22.

Ponte thus notes that Cuban cinema was and is undergoing not only a transition in modes of production but also a change in means of distribution thanks to the Internet, bootleg DVDs, and memory drives. Likewise, the technological revolution has also impacted literary production. Ebooks, blogs, and digital newspapers— among other media— have opened the door for publications on the island outside the state apparatus. Although heavily censored, the blogs *Generación Y* by Yoani Sánchez and *Octavo Cerco* by Claudia Cadelo, among many others, exemplify these types of publications. A future analysis of the Cuban Revolutionary Archive will need to include these new platforms as well as the poetry, narrative, essays, etc., published in personal blogs, webpages, and all over the Internet. The examination of these new modes of expression will also need to take into account the virtual identities created by Cubans on the web, another branch to be added as a future expansion of this project.

Ambrosio Fornet once said, referring to the New Latin American Cinema that began in the 1960s, that:

The “new” [in the New Latin American Cinema] alluded to two factors, one of aesthetic character (the complete rejection of the “old” cinema [. . .]) and the other a sociopolitical characteristic (the fact that all its participants were young and believed in the viability of utopia). [. . .] Because cinema was considered a mouthpiece of utopia, those young filmmakers, having decided to set the example, began to dynamite the schemes of narrative cinema and propose, in their films, a serious reflection on reality and on cinematic language itself.²⁷⁷

Today one has to question if these utopias are still in place or if a complete rejection of a now “old” revolutionary cinema will take place. Venegas argues that this may be the case when she writes: “Negation of neorealism and modernism, two aesthetic tendencies of the New Latin American Cinema Movement, may well characterize the newer

²⁷⁷ Cited and translated by Ann Marie Stock in: Stock, *On Location in Cuba: Street Filmmaking During Times of Transition* xi.

generations of filmmakers.”²⁷⁸ Others may argue the opposite, but only time will tell if in the future we may find that a New Cuban Literary and Filmic Archive is about to be born.

²⁷⁸ Venegas, *Digital Dilemmas: The State, the Individual, and Digital Media in Cuba* 150.

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