

# Absolved by History: On the Aesthetics and Ideology of History in the Cuban Film Institute

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History has been a central pillar in the ideological project of the Cuban Film Institute throughout its existence.<sup>1</sup> Three months after the triumph of the revolution on January 1, 1959, the first cultural act of the new government was to create ICAIC (Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográficos). The law founding the film institute asserted -in its only reference to subject matter or genre forms -that, “Our history is a veritable goldmine of themes and heroes capable of cinematic incarnation, which will serve as a fountain of revolutionary inspiration, culture, and information.”<sup>2</sup> Twenty years later, a long essay celebrated ICAIC’s anniversary by extolling the various interconnections of film and history, and concluded that the latter was the emotional well-spring of Cuban cinema.<sup>3</sup> Shortly before the 20th-anniversary, the greatest of the Cuban directors, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea summed up the priority accorded history in the film institute by stating. “Every foot of film we shoot is marked, in the final instance, by a concern with history.”<sup>4</sup>

The decision to make films about the past is a serious one. Historical movies are a good deal more costly to produce than contemporary films, for they require elaborate and specific costumes, sets, and locations. Further, the reconstruction of past events, the resuscitation of historical figures, and the evocation of yesterday’s language and customs are arduous tasks which can -and often do -result in different sorts of failures: a dull, didactic, and positivist litany of only too-well-known facts; an escape into a world created at the whim of contemporary concerns which have nothing to do with the “otherness” of the past; an artless fiction not strong enough to stand on its own legs, which must call on historical myth and great men to buttress its credibility by asserting “this really happened.”

In spite of the dangers that an underdeveloped and besieged Third World country faced in working with a difficult and costly genre, historical films were the first fictional works to attract international attention to Cuban cinema. Directed by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea in 1967, *Memories of Underdevelopment* established the precedent, being named the best Third World film released during the decade 1968-1978.<sup>5</sup> Following on its heels, *Lucia* (1968, dir. Humberto Solás) and *The First Charge of the Machete* (1969, dir. M.O. Gómez) were the most lauded works produced during the celebration of “100 Years of Struggle”. In the early 1970s, movies on the Bay of Pigs invasion, *Girón* (1973, dir. Manuel Herrera), and slavery, *The Other Francisco* (1974, dir. Sergio Giral) and *The Last Supper* (1976, dir. Gutiérrez Alea), continued the high quality and formal experimentation that marks the most interesting Cuban films. In the 1970s and 1980s, fictional cinema turned increasingly toward contemporary concerns, with outstanding works by Sara Gómez, Manuel Octavio Gómez, Pastor Vega, and Rolando Díaz, among others

Perhaps that which most clearly defines the best historical (and contemporary) Cuban films is the search for ways to create a critical audience. Cuban cineastes see the struggle against didacticism and paternalism as important components of their work, and the Director of the Film Institute during many years (later Vice-Minister of Culture), Alfredo Guevara has argued that the first task of a revolutionary film movement is to develop the public’s consciousness of themselves as spectators.<sup>6</sup> Dissatisfied with making a spectacle for passive consumers, the cineastes believe that film must open the way so that the audience is constantly more critical, more rational, and more active.<sup>7</sup> Gutiérrez Alea defined the role of the filmmakers as the following:

To activate a critical spirit in the spectators about reality and themselves so that they cease being spectators and confront their daily reality, not only armed with certain information that helps

them understand better the process in which they are involved, but so that they also feel moved and stimulated to actively participate in that process- not just works which help to interpret the world, but those which contribute to changing it.<sup>8</sup>

Cuban cineastes have described film as a means of cognition which is predominantly visual -a conception of life and a way of seeing it.<sup>9</sup> Thus, in their more experimental works, they have often consciously created juxtapositions of different film forms within the same movie. I consider this to be their most original contribution to cinema, and utilize the concept of "dialectical resonance" to describe it. I use the word "resonance" to indicate that meaning in this cinematic form is derived from the "tone" struck by the percussion of the different filmic elements; I speak of "dialectical" in order to assert that these collisions result in the creation of higher aesthetic and historical truths than would be the case in a film utilizing only one form, for the most immediate effect is to take the audience to a more critical level by making them conscious of the fact that they are watching a movie. Contrast this to the attitude vocalized by Michael Cimino, the well-known Hollywood director of the historical dramas *The Deer Hunter* (1978) and *Heaven's Gate* (1980):

I never want people to feel that they have watched a movie, that they have looked at something, but rather that they have been somewhere. Everything we do is aimed at demolishing the barrier of the screen's two-dimensional plane. We have to remove the camera-erase the frame. We want to remove all the factors that threaten their belief that they are participating, that they are there.<sup>10</sup>

Some U.S. directors of historical films -for example, Robert Altman in *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (1971) or Alex Cox in *Walker* (1987)-have attempted to incorporate self-reflexive techniques in order to "distance" the audience and force it to see their reconstructions as discourses about the past rather than windows onto yesterday.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, Cimino's remarks embody the dominant tradition in the developed world, with its emphasis on the closed narrative and the illusion of reality. Historical films are crucial to this system, for it is probable that between 30-40 percent of all the films produced in Hollywood have belonged to this, the most prolific genre, which includes categories such as war and action movies, westerns, biographies of great men, epic costume dramas, and melodramas.<sup>12</sup> This elevated figure indicates that it is a genre whose "iconography, structure, theme, and repertoire of stock situations" are well-known; audiences identify with the genre through these conventions and proceed immediately to consume the "history" that is placed before them.<sup>13</sup>

The better Cuban films ride a razor's edge in stimulating/disrupting the audience's identification with genre conventions. For example, in discussing action movies, Gutiérrez Alea argued that, although action as an end in itself is alienating, it can be used to attract the spectator, creating an empathy with the objective of transcending it.<sup>14</sup> In this way, a filmmaker can provoke an emotional response to a familiar code while simultaneously criticizing it - a process which enables the audience to experience sensually, while understanding rationally the critique which is taking place.

One of the more interesting examples is *Girón*, which sets out to re-work the subgenre of war movies. Angel Luis Hueso has observed that there are an infinity of films in which war is all that we are offered as history; and the Cuban, Marisol Trujillo feels that these movies have habituated the public to enjoy the spectacle for its own sake, presenting itself as reality and retarding the development of a critical perspective.<sup>15</sup> *Girón* attempts to cut against the grain of this tradition through juxtaposing documentary material and filmed reenactments in order to draw attention to the cinematic discourse by heightening the difference between documentary and re-creation through alienation techniques. Deliberate anachronisms are so important, such as the presence of ICAIC trucks in the background of the filming.

The most important theorist of ICAIC, Julio García Espinosa co-scripted the film with director Manuel Herrera. He described one of the ways in which *Girón* critiques traditional war movies, and also referred to the profound relationship between aesthetics and the material base of production in ICAIC:

It's necessary to make films of the war genre, films about our history. These are themes that we're interested in taking on, but it's normally very expensive. So, the first concrete problem we faced was, how can we work in this genre less expensively? And, wanting to make it at low cost, we immediately faced the necessity to question the dramaturgy in which the traditional war genre is based. That's where we started to work, and we began to see the relationship it could have to Brecht.

It seems to me that *Girón* creates a new relationship between reality and fiction. The film opens with one of the pilots driving his car and describing what happened the day of the bombardment. He's narrating this to the camera, and at the same time you see a reconstruction of how it was. There are two levels: there's a concrete reality, which is this participant talking to the camera, revealing how he is in this moment in front of the camera narrating, simply, what he lived; and, there's the other level, which is the re-creation of that.

Immediately one sees that the re-creation is fiction. That is, we're not telling the public to look at this as if it were reality; because this already happened and what we're doing is a fictional reconstruction. The two levels of fiction and reality are sharply defined, and that seems to us to create a much more productive and honest relationship.<sup>16</sup>

*Girón* not only discloses the fact that it is itself a mediation of an historical event, it also calls into question the conventional artifices of battle films by juxtaposing movie clips, with stars like John Wayne, to documentary interviews and reconstructions by actual participants in the battle. The participants' testimonies are a crucial part of the re-working, for they describe their own personal confrontations with the falsehoods of typical war films. One, for instance, recounts what happened when he was going to throw his first grenade: "I tried to pull out the pin with my teeth, because I was trying to copy what they did in movies, and I almost ended up without a jaw. I saw then that this thing with the mouth was just something out of picture shows." The reconstructed sequence where a couple walks along the beach to deliver a letter also critiques traditional structures, for the ambience created by the photography and the music suggest the possibility of a romantic interlude, reminiscent of the way war films frequently contain a romantic anecdote parallel to the battle theme. However, the interview immediately subverts those expectations, as the couple describes what they tried to do with the letter when they feared they had been discovered by the enemy: "In that moment, all the movies I'd seen came to mind- the letter had to be eaten. Well, I tore it into bits and tried to choke it down as fast as possible, but it was a little long"<sup>17</sup>

*Girón* also dealt effectively with the mythical courage attributed to the typical movie hero by having one participant describe his reaction on entering combat:

At *Girón* I had the opportunity to prove myself under fire. But when I heard the first shots, I started to sweat- a lot- and I had a tremendous desire to urinate, but couldn't. I felt my bladder swell and I thought, if it bursts here...<sup>18</sup>

The traditional movie hero is the main protagonist of the historical genre; Gutiérrez Alea feels that he "raises spirits but lowers reason," and is thus the element which stands most in need of re-interpretation.<sup>19</sup> Cuban cineastes have objected to the filmic presentation of "Superman stood on his head" -whether these heroes are the "yellow supermen" of Vietnam or the "Apostle" of independence, José Martí, who was killed in the 1895 war against Spain -because the uncritical portrayal of such a character simply reproduces the typical presentation in bourgeois mass culture.<sup>20</sup> For example, during the 1960s the supreme paladin of Cubans was the guerrilla, so García Espinosa made his film *Juan Quinquín* (1966) with the intention of puncturing the aura which surrounded this figure in order to make him more human.<sup>21</sup> Such an instance makes clear that Cuban filmmakers recognize that an unreflective depiction of even a revolutionary hero runs the risk of being converted into a reactionary message. In the words of Gutiérrez Alea:

There are those who think, with the best of intentions, that if we substitute a revolutionary hero for Tarzan we will succeed in producing a greater adherence to the revolutionary cause. They haven't taken account of the fact that creating an *absolute* identification or empathy with the hero puts the spectators in a spot where the only thing they can distinguish are the "bad guys" and the "good guys", and they naturally identify with the latter, without considering what the person- age really represents. The result is intrinsically reactionary, because rather than addressing the spectator's consciousness, it puts it to sleep. When you create absolute identification, you close the path to rational communication.<sup>22</sup>

A very interesting, if ultimately flawed, example of how to portray revolutionary heroes can be found in *Mella*, directed by Enrique Pineda Barnet in 1975. Julio Antonio Mella was one of the most important leftist intellectuals in Latin America during the 1920s, a political activist and organizer who wrote prolifically until he was assassinated in Mexico at the age of 24. Extraordinarily handsome and a marvelous athlete, his untimely death in 1929 made him a prime candidate for a celluloid "revolutionary

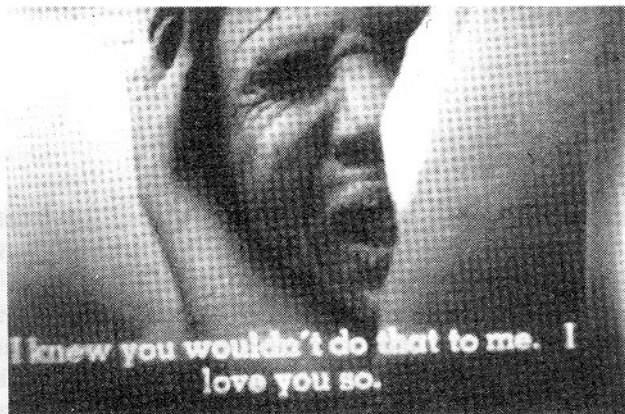
martyr". However, rather than plug into such obvious pamphlet, Pineda Barnet chose to incorporate extreme alienation effects in this film on Mella's life. For example, in the beginning of the movie, the actor who is playing Mella, Sergio Corrieri talks directly into the camera and openly questions his role in representing a historical figure. Throughout the film, the narrative is interrupted at crucial points, above all during fighting and other action elements which encourage identification, while Corrieri and other characters reflect on the fact that they are participating in a reconstruction. Although the alienation effects are awkwardly employed, never allowing the audience to really experience identification, the film is an important instance of how Cubans treat historical heroes in their more experimental works.

Of course, dead heroes are one thing, and living ones another: for example, how would a director go about portraying Fidel Castro in a fiction film? In *Memories of Underdevelopment*, a film situated in 1961-62, Gutiérrez Alea gives a masterful lesson on the presentation of living historical heroes in the short excerpt where Castro appears during the Missile Crisis. In contrast to traditional historical films, where the private lives and amorous adventures of famous individuals are the focus, Castro enters -in documentary footage -at the precise moment when he is most fully the leader of the Cuban revolution, and solely in order to fulfill his historic mission.<sup>23</sup>

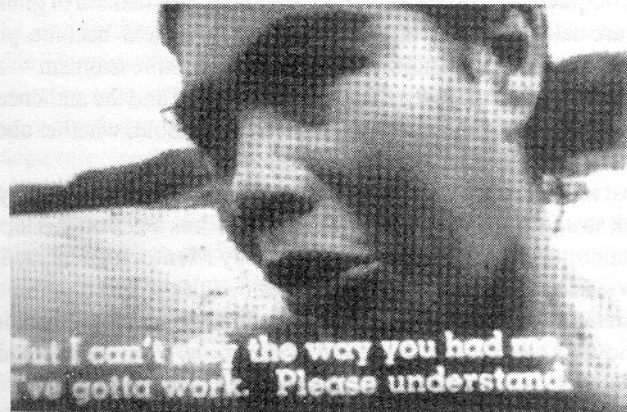
The documentary footage used in this sequence is part of the filmic strategy that Gutiérrez Alea employs to contextualize the monologue of Sergio, the fictional protagonist whose voice-over musings and on-screen interactions are the nucleus of the film. The brilliance of *Memories* lies in the way that Gutiérrez Alea effects an identification with Sergio -a familiar "outsider" figure in Western culture -and then slowly alienates viewers from him. The "fact of history" in *Memories* is demonstrated through the contradiction between Sergio's psychology -formed in the pre-revolutionary period -and the new forms of perception the revolution is making possible. Gutiérrez Alea's tactic of identification/alienation forces the audience to see the film as a film and the history he is recounting as a discourse.

*Lucia* is a trilogy of three different women in three historical periods: the 1895 struggle against Spain, the 1932 revolt against the dictator Gerardo Machado, and the 1961 literacy campaign. Although the characters' personal crises are mediated by larger events -their inner lives are interwoven with and structured by their concrete circumstances- this element of historicity is perhaps less important in *Lucia* than is the visual portrayal of the historical transformation of gender, class, and race relations.<sup>24</sup> Solás utilizes a very expressive camera style to indicate the ways in which personal relations among women, between men and women, and of blacks and whites have differed during the eras depicted in the film. However, he is not content to assert that the revolution has been able to transform individual psychologies by fiat. At the end of the film, he uses a wide-angle lenses to distort the faces of Lucía III and her *macho* husband, Tomás, in order to indicate that they both remain trapped in an antiquated and deformed relationship. (Frame enlargements # 1 and # 2). In the next, and last, cut of the movie, Solás changes to a normal lenses, visually asserting that the coming generations, embodied in the little girl, will not suffer from such psychological distortions. (Frame enlargement # 3). Although the narratives of the individual "chapters" are closed in the traditional sense, the juxtaposition of three very different film styles in the three sections serves to distance the audience and confront it with the fact that it is seeing a reconstruction.

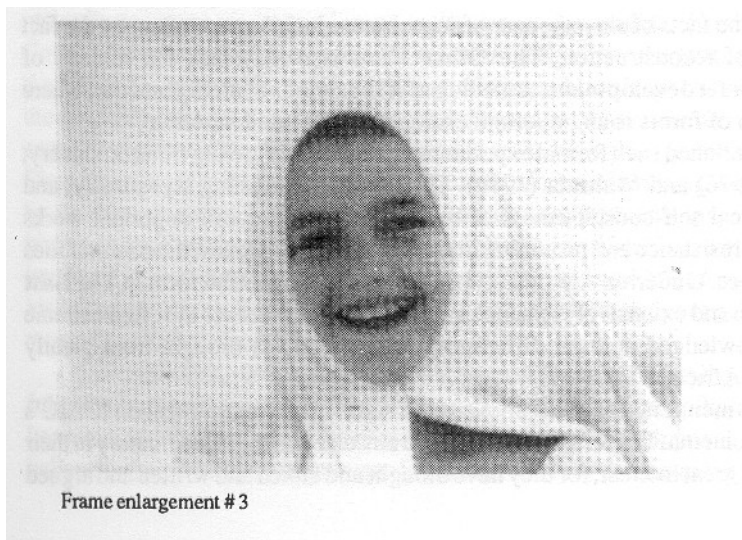
Manuel Octavio Gómez chose deliberate visual anachronism as an alienation tactic in *The First Charge of the Machete*. This film is designed to appear as if the technological capabilities (and resultant aesthetic) of cinema vérité had been available in 1868. Light hand-held cameras and portable sound equipment produce "on-the-spot" interviews and follow the Cuban rebels into the very center of hand-to-hand combat. This eminently modern "TV-documentary" style is complemented, moreover, by a high-contrast film which resembles primitive newsreel footage, as well as having individuals pose rigidly at the beginning of sequences so as to appear as if they were in old photographs. The clash of aesthetics at once so up-to-the-minute and archaic reminds viewers that they are seeing an interpretation of the historical event, not the event itself.



Frame enlargement # 1



Frame enlargement # 2



The director's fundamental interest was not that of imitating a window onto the real world through employing realist techniques from past and present, but of attempting to present the ultimate cinematic reality: cinema. The work's most convincing lesson in filmic self-reflexivity takes place in the final battle, where Jorge Herrera's hand-held camera swoops and darts among the soldiers. The

combination of the wildly-careening camera and the high-contrast film sometimes reduces the screen image to a swirling mass of abstract patterns. The photographic aesthetics of the 1960s documentary realism, with its participant camera, and the 1890s documentary realism of grainy, over-exposed footage are taken to their ultimate consequences and become pure expressive form. The extreme poles of visual style- realism and expressionism -are fused. Sacrosanct categories of cinematic structure are demolished and the audience is left with the knowledge that discourse -whether printed or celluloid, whether about the past or the present -is, before anything else, discourse.

Probably the most radical revision effected by Revolutionary historiography is the depiction of the black struggle against slavery. Among the films made on this topic, *The Other Francisco* continues the formal quest initiated by *Memories*, *Lucia*, and *First Charge*. The movie is constructed as a critique of the 19th-century abolitionist novel, *Francisco o las delicias del campo*, written by Anselmo Suárez Romero. Giral filmic ally captures the novel's picturesque rendering of slavery by using Hollywood's invisible editing, soft-focus lenses, and smooth pans, tracks, and zooms, which he accompanies with classical string music. He then proceeds to tell the "real story" of slavery, employing a documentary style of hand-held camera, grainy film, a voice-over which recounts the facts of slavery, and African drums. In failing to reflect on the fact of its own act of reconstruction, *The Other Francisco* may lack the subtlety of *Memories of Underdevelopment*; nonetheless it is a deft and intelligent film, where the juxtaposition of forms is an important critique of the closed narrative.

Giral abandoned such formal experimentation in his following films on slavery, *Ranchedor* (1976) and *Maluala* (1979). Though less interesting stylistically, and without the critical self-consciousness of *Francisco*, they are still important works portraying slave resistance and, providing images of life in *palenques*, the communities of run-away slaves. Gutiérrez Alea also chose to use traditional film form in *The Last Supper*, a superb and extensively researched movie that emphasizes the often extreme but rarely-acknowledged cultural differences between slaves brought from greatly varying parts of Africa.

The films mentioned above demonstrate a significant commitment on ICAIC's part to historical cinema. The reflections of Cuban cineastes on the role of history in their works are also of great interest, for they have thought and talked and written and argued about this from the beginnings of ICAIC. In fact, Cuban film may offer the richest example in world cinema of a movement combining the production of historical movies with reflections on the role of, and reasons for, such re-creations. These discussions have resulted in a wealth of printed material in interviews as well as in critical and theoretical essays, although the cineastes insist that they are filmmakers, not theoreticians.<sup>25</sup>

There are essentially four sources of the Cubans' interest in historical cinema: Marxist-Leninist ideology; the use of history as a way of legitimizing the present government; the fact of experiencing profound social, economic, political, and cultural transformations; and the necessity of looking to their roots in order to define their identity. The Cuban revolution has been avowedly Marxist-Leninist since December of 1961, and Gutiérrez Alea believes that the cineastes' focus on history is a direct result of the Marxist education received by Cuban and Latin American revolutionaries.<sup>26</sup> History as a dialectic is one of the defining characteristics of Marxism-Leninism; I believe that this world-view is articulated in the idea that "Every point of arrival is a point of departure", perhaps the closest thing to an "official" slogan among the Cuban cineastes.<sup>27</sup>

History has also been used to legitimize the Castro regime, through asserting a continuity between the island's past and present. To some degree, this is a result of the necessity to demonstrate that the revolution is authentically Cuban, despite the importation of Marxist-Leninism. The most apparent manifestation of this posture was the celebration of "Cien años de lucha" ("One Hundred Years of Struggle") in 1968-70. This official concoction predicated the existence of an uninterrupted thread running between the "Ten Years War" (1868-1878), the 1895 movement for independence from Spain, the rebellion against Gerardo Machado (1930- 33), and the Castro revolution. Director Pastor Vega was carried away to the hyperbolic heights of asseverating that the Cuban personality was "formed on the machete's edge", but the general feeling was that the emphasis on historical cinema during this period was a spontaneous outgrowth of the revolutionary culture's search for and discovery of its national roots.<sup>28</sup> While the commemoration of the "100 años" resulted in authentic masterpieces such as *Lucia* and *First Charge of the Machete*-as well as several other interesting works- a later film by the documentarist

Santiago Alvarez indicated the problems inherent in employing history to legitimize political power. In *"Mi hermano Fidel"* (1979), Alvarez uses an implausible conversation between a 93-year old man and Fidel to affirm the mystical historical continuity Castro claims as the "brother" and thus direct heir of Cuba's most revered forefather, José Martí.<sup>29</sup>

Nonetheless, the effect of what Santiago Alvarez calls "living within history" is fully as important to this inclination as are the ideological influence of Marxism- Leninism and the necessity of legitimation.<sup>30</sup> Surrounded by dramatic changes, Cubans believe in the possibility of real transformation and they demonstrate that belief in their films. Of course, in some way we all live in the midst of historical permutations; but if the concept is to have any meaning, it must be about revolutionary transformations - about "differences which make a difference", as Gregory Bateson used to say. In telling us what history is, E.H. Carr used the example of Caesar and the Rubicon: millions crossed the Rubicon before and after Caesar, but we consider only Caesar's crossing to be historical, because that was what made a difference.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, the Cuban revolution has made enormous differences in the lives of millions of people inside and beyond the borders of the island, understandably leading to expressions such as that by one filmmaker who asserted -reversing Hollywood's standard formula -that "History is stronger than love."<sup>32</sup>

However, when all is said and done, perhaps that which most animates ICAIC's historical enterprise is the search for national identity. Cuba's colonial and neo-colonial experiences have created a distinct need for history, as is the rule of formerly colonized societies in the process of liberation. For example, in speaking of the African revolution, Frantz Fanon stated, "While the politicians situate their action in actual present-day events, men of culture take their stand in the field of history".<sup>33</sup> Cuban cineastes believe that history is a powerful force in the struggle against imperialism's distortions and the definition of their culture's identity.

According to Julio García Espinosa, anti-imperialism is the fundamental aspect of Cuban cinema: "The essence of our vision of reality".<sup>34</sup> He and other Cuban cineastes perceive the decolonization of the island's screens as vital in liberating both cinematic taste and consciousness in general.<sup>35</sup> Pastor Vega argued that culture had been a particularly efficient tool of imperialism, and that cinema had been a primary medium for falsifying and distorting Cuban history and national identity.<sup>36</sup> The revolution's filmmakers believe that they were formerly conditioned by a society which rejected Cuban art and history, but required a thorough knowledge of foreign culture; and director Jorge Fraga summed up the relationship of history, imperialism, and the revolution in this manner: "The frustration of memory by forgetting is the frustration of the revolution by imperialism -that's why the revolution is also the revindication of memory."<sup>37</sup>

Memory's frustration during the pre-revolutionary period took the form of what some of the cineastes describe as the systematic distortion of the Cuban past by bourgeois historiography; they feel that the production of historical films is one corrective. Humberto Solás, for example, addressed this issue with a filmmakers' metaphor:

Because our history has been filtered through a bourgeois lenses, we have been compelled to live with terrible distortions. We lacked a coherent, lucid, and dignified appreciation of our national past. This accounts in large part for our decision to take up historical themes.<sup>38</sup>

The cineastes believe that the principle deformations of Cuban history occur around the issues of their national struggles, heroes, and races. Manuel Pereira, Editor of *Cine cubano*, described the pre-revolutionary educational process in the following way:

They told us in school that the "Americans" (like that, Americans and not North Americans, as if they were the owners of the continent, not just the coldest pan of it) had intervened in the war between Cuba and Spain to help us- which was a lie. When they talked about Martí, they kept emphasizing "the poet with the little pink shoes", while they hid his anti-imperialism and Latin Americanism, the most important part of his political trajectory. They never taught us to admire the slave rebellions. They told us that Indians were lazy, blacks were *rumberos*, Spaniards were cruel, Chinese were sly; and that Cubans -the sum total of all those ethnicities -were only good for playing music or joking around.<sup>39</sup>

Sergio Giral's films on the slave experience in Cuba have offered a powerful revision of the pre-revolutionary histories of blacks. He outlined the stereotypes he had encountered in the older works:

During the period of the pseudo-republic (1902-1958), bourgeois historiography deformed everything related to slavery and to the presence and participation of blacks in our history. Just as the writers of the previous century had done, this history portrayed blacks as passive and submissive, which in no way corresponded to their true attitudes or to their participation in our nation's birth.<sup>40</sup>

What might be described as the “structuring absence” of crucial historical figures is yet another of the distortions. Solás offered the example of Julio Antonio Mella, and discussed the background of Enrique Pineda Barnet's film, *Mella*: “Even though Mella was an extremely important figure, there wasn't an adequate biography of him available anywhere. If this was the case with Mella, imagine how it is with historical figures and events of lesser importance.”<sup>41</sup>

Photographic history was also contorted, as Jorge Fraga noted in analyzing the re-interpretation effected by Alejandro Saderman's documentary “*Hombres de Mal Tiempo*” (1968). In the film, veterans of the independence struggle talked of how they entered combat semi-nude because of clothing shortages, while Saderman presents historical photos of soldiers in clean and orderly uniforms on the screen. Fraga outlined Saderman's purpose in creating such a filmic contradiction of sound and image:

Saderman tried to oppose the false vision which had been propagated by bourgeois historiography. Those images were taken after the war had ended, when everybody had uniforms; and there are very precise documents that indicate they were prepared especially for the photographs. Toward the end of the war there wasn't even anything to eat. The “scorched earth” policy used against the Spanish resulted in terrible hunger, and there was obviously no way to replace the scarce clothing of the rebels. The image of the Mambi with a clean uniform has nothing to do with reality.<sup>42</sup>

If the more serious forms of historical inquiry suffered from such deformations, one can well imagine the versions of Cuba's past presented in fictional films. Two Cuban critics, Enrique Colina and Daniel Díaz Torres, examined the ideology of melodrama in the “old” Latin American cinema, and concluded the following of historical films:

When the film is set in the past, the historical situation is but another alien graft onto the film's content, a basically ornamental backdrop which acquires an ideological significance as such. Thus *it's a historical in temporality, product of that dichotomy between social and personal life*, offers an idealized reproduction of the past in accordance with its sedentary desire for social immobility.<sup>43</sup>

The most important example of traditional historical cinema in pre-revolutionary Cuba is *La rosa blanca (Momentos de la vida de Martí)* (dir. Emilio Fernández. 1953). One of the few instances in which a film was subsidized by the government prior to the revolution, this movie was produced by the Comisión Nacional del Centenario de José Martí. The Comisión hired a Mexican filmmaker, Emilio “El Indio” Fernández, to direct this biography of José Martí, Cuba's most important political and cultural hero! Film critic Emilio García Riera has described the film as an “orthodox Mexican melodrama” in which Martí is preoccupied “more by his problems with the ‘girl from Guatemala’ than by patriotic ardor”.<sup>44</sup> The movie apparently follows the common formula for such costume dramas, dwelling on Martí's love life rather than on his prolific writings and revolutionary engagement; thus pandering to *machismo's* predilection for sexual conquests in place of social activism or cultural creation.

Of course, advertising for *La rosa blanca* explicitly announced: “This is not an historical picture, it is the history of the great poet's loves”.<sup>45</sup> But the choice of such a focus serves as an example of Colina and Díaz Torres' argument about the “a historical temporality” which results from the “dichotomy between social and personal life”. By emphasizing the amorous aspects of Martí's personal life as independent from his political or cultural concerns, the film removes him from history. Love –eternal, timeless, universal- is the structure through which he is presented to us, a common strategy in the developed world's cinema to deny -or refuse to take seriously -the existence of history.

The historical distortions promulgated by imperialism are seen to be one of the main instruments used to deprive Cubans of their sense of nationality. In replying to a question as to why Cuban cinema



was so insistent in dealing with themes about the past -and whether this couldn't be seen as a way of avoiding the present- Pastor Vega replied by describing the relationship he sees between history, national identity, and imperialism:

Trying to understand the present by itself is, frankly, absurd and preposterous; but that is exactly what the North American imperialists proposed during the 56 years of the neo-colonial Republic. They were most interested that every Cuban remained separated from the rest of his countrymen -that everybody thought only of himself, and that nobody thought as a nation or a people. Our best revolutionary traditions were denied, twisted, and stripped of all their reaffirming and de-alienating capacities. The Cuban that they were trying to create was a being without continuity, without a real presence, without an organic or authentic character- a submissive, dependent, and defeated being. The imperialists and the oligarchy proposed to make of us an individualistic consciousness without a past.<sup>46</sup>

For the Cuban cineastes, history is crucial to the rescue of the national culture and the corresponding sense of identity: "We needed (and are going to continue to need for some time) to know how we were, how we lived, and how we fought in order to recover the broken temporal thread of our traditions, and to enrich it in this new historical epoch."<sup>47</sup>

The question of who Cubans are (and were) has largely been discussed in relation to the relative importance accorded to race mixture or to the tradition of armed struggle. The major contributions of revolutionary historians combine both elements: important revisionists such as Manuel Moreno Fraginals and Jorge Ibarra argue that the black participation in the combat against colonialism and neo-colonialism is a significant element of Cuban nationalism.<sup>48</sup> For black director Sergio Giral, the discovery of his race's struggle is one example of the ways that the enriched histories of the post- revolution have consciously created a coherence between the present and the origins of Cuban identity.<sup>49</sup> García Espinosa places more emphasis on *mestizaje*, the blending of ethnic strains, which he feels has always been the key in defining Cuban identity and culture.<sup>50</sup> Pastor Vega took the opposite tack: writing in the context of "100 Years of Struggle", he proposed that the Cuban personality was less a result of ethnic mixture than it was of the island's history of combat.<sup>51</sup> The declarations celebrating the 10th and 20th anniversaries of ICAIC also emphasized this aspect, asserting that the Cuban cultural tradition was essentially an expression of the constant battle to form a national identity -an identity which was itself a product of this struggle.<sup>52</sup>

Nationalism has been a crucial ideological structure of Cuba's revolutionary cinema from its origin. In the first issue of *Cine cubano*, ICAIC's founding Director, Alfredo Guevara, outlined the six premises which were to guide the new project. The second of these spoke to the importance accorded nationalism, as well as indicating the breadth of expression which would exist:

It will be a national cinema. We have no intention of restricting ourselves to the narrow nationalism of songs, rumbas, picturesque characters, or regional slang; but we must find a way to come ever closer to our national physiognomy and our authentic nature. This is what gives a cinematography its own recognizable personality. It's not a question of imposing a style or fixing certain general lines; to the degree to which our country and psychology are singular, they must find a thousand ways to bloom as works of art, without limiting the forms of expression.<sup>53</sup>

In an article published soon after Alfredo Guevara's declaration of ICAIC's principles, García Espinosa maintained that the revolution had converted the island's screens from a bourgeois dream factory into a medium of national definition.<sup>54</sup> In the intervening years, the filmmakers have insistently asserted that their cinema reflects and affirms their nation's identity.<sup>55</sup> Movie themes emphasizing their historical reality are only the most obvious manifestation of this focus, for the search into Cuban forms of expression proceeds from both behind and in front of the camera. The revolution's film - makers have been concerned to find a national cinematic language and, reflecting on the first 10 years of ICAIC production, Alfredo Guevara saw one of its main accomplishments as precisely that of having forged a Cuban style of filmmaking.<sup>56</sup> However, the creation of an autochthonous idiom for the screen extended beyond the camera and editing table. While shooting "*Manuela*" in 1965, Solás worked very hard with the actors in order to achieve a more genuinely Cuban dramatic style, something he thought had been lacking up to that point in ICAIC's works.<sup>57</sup> Marisol Trujillo perceived this same concern in Girón, a film in which she felt that the idiosyncratic Cuban fashion of recounting stories had been effectively employed.<sup>51</sup>

Although the national past has been a linchpin in forging an authentic identity, the cineastes have explicitly rejected a populist history. For example, Alfredo Guevara reacted against a campaign in the early 1960s to place busts of Martí throughout Havana as an example of populism that would routinize and mummify this national hero. Gutiérrez Alea gave filmic form to Guevara's criticisms in the hilarious opening of *The Death of a Bureaucrat* (1966), where he has a machine which mass-produces Martí busts swallow up its proletarian artist-inventor.

A much-debated issue has been how to make films which foment national identity but are still capable of speaking to sophisticated audiences both inside and outside the island due to the assimilation of avant-garde international artistic influences. Reflecting on the difficulties posed for a cinema dedicated to decolonization, Alfredo Guevara provided the most comprehensive statement on this problem. He saw one of the risks resulting from the colonial and neo-colonial experience as that of offering an apparently schizophrenic choice between two alternatives: historicism or developmentalism.

Along this route one always falls, in one way or another, into one of two historical directions: to retake tradition only to repeat it *ad infinitum* with the illusion of reaffirming one's own personality; or to break with it only to be submerged in quests inspired by the levels reached by other, more developed cultures.

The repetitive reaffirmation of tradition is nothing but the substitution of a sickly, a historical mimicking which makes a permanent *raison d' être* out of old residue (though not of their results) in place of the necessary effort to *discover and construct* the self-image in deliberate and contemporary terms. And the dazzling encounter with the cultural structures and dynamics of developed countries can also lead to the same abandonment of the historical task: the formation of a new, particular vision of the world.<sup>60</sup>

History is conceived as one of the pivotal components of Cuba's internationalism. The revolution's cineastes have pointed to the common need of Latin Americans –and other Third World peoples- to revise the previously distorted and alien image of their past in order to convert it into a source of resistance; though they have also cautioned against the isolation which could result from relying too heavily on yesterday's traditions.<sup>61</sup> Asked about the differences between historical films made in Cuba and those produced by the New Latin American Cinema, Jorge Fraga indicated how this mutual necessity to reconstruct the past has expressed itself despite variations in the context of production:

The role of historical thought in one or the other is always fundamental. In fact, one of the things we have tried to keep in mind is that in Cuba we live in two time periods, simultaneously -because we cannot see Cuba apart from the continent. For us, Cuba is the liberated province of Latin America. We do not conceive of our country as separate from Latin America: we have the same history, the same language, the same traditions, the same struggle; there is a cultural identity and an historical identity. The role of historical thought is the same, and I think this has to do with the fact of colonization and neo-colonialism. The struggle against colonialism is inseparable from the struggle to recover history.<sup>62</sup>

Neatly summing up this relationship of Cuba and Latin America in fewer words, Manuel Pereira used the following equation: "History unites us, imperialism divides us".<sup>63</sup>

ICAIC's ideology of history is utilitarian, and the cineastes are adamant in their opposition to what we might call "history for history's sake". Although Alfredo Guevara criticized the simplistic pragmatism of learning from historical examples, there are didactic tendencies in some works dealing with recent Cuban history.<sup>64</sup> For example, actress Alina Sánchez underlined the importance in making the recent past available to those who had not lived it:

For the new generations, regardless of whether or not they have access to history by other means, it is very important for cinema to fulfill an educational function, so that they always keep in mind our history, especially more recent history, the difficult years, the most difficult years of the revolutionary reality -they should always be fresh in our memory. As reality changes, the perspective those generations have on an earlier reality changes in a concrete way.<sup>65</sup>

It is evident from Sánchez's closing sentence that Cubans are conscious of the ways in which present circumstances mediate historical interpretation. Manuel Octavio Gómez explored the relationship

of past and present in *First Charge of the Machete*, and he spoke to that issue while reflecting on the pragmatic vision that Cuba's cineastes have of history's uses:

I refuse to establish fundamental differences based on the classification of one cinema called "historical" and another called "present-day" when we are talking about revolutionary cinema. What's more, I would refuse to make that differentiation about cinema in general, even the most reactionary. In reactionary cinema the historical themes are about the "past" without any link whatsoever to the present. Now, it happens that contemporary themes within reactionary cinema also have very little relation to present reality; if the historical is treated like a dead thing -a museum object, mythified and idealized -the "present" suffers a similar fate.

A revolutionary cinema penetrates into history looking for the present in search of the future; it situates itself within a present context, leaping over it like something alive, in all its force and continuity. Only in this way can history be valid, to the degree to which it cuts into and contributes to a problematic of the present. True revolutionary cinema approaches historical themes exactly as it does a contemporary theme, in a critical and objective way within a revolutionary militancy; moreover, without obviating the differences or the analogies, the parallels, and the continuities between past and present.<sup>66</sup>

The films on slavery provide examples of the relationship of past and present, with particular reference to neo-colonialism and Africa. For example, Gutiérrez Alea pointed out the immediate connection of works such as *The Other Francisco* and *Rancheador* to events in Angola which were then resonating in Cuban society.<sup>67</sup> The director of these films, Sergio Giral stated,

The theme of the two films derives its force from the fact that conditions of exploitation equal or similar to those of slavery still exist in large parts of the un-liberated underdeveloped world, where neo-colonialism has replaced colonialism without having produced substantial changes in the forms of life and work of the oppressed classes. In this way, an historical theme reflects and denounces a present situation.<sup>68</sup>

Events in Latin America are also crucial in mediating historical themes, for example, both Solás' *Cantata de Chile* (1975) and Gutiérrez Alea's *The Last Supper* were strongly influenced by the Pinochet coup d'état in Chile during 1973.<sup>69</sup> Gutiérrez Alea discussed how that counter-revolution served as an inspiration for his examination of class consciousness in *The Last Supper*:

The fascist coup in Chile and the aid it received from the "Christian Democrats" revealed how a class cannot transcend its interests; in spite of all the "humanist" pretensions they ostentatiously demonstrate, they always respond to those interests in the final instance. The emotional impact the coup had on us made us see clearly that this, and not anything else, is what is evidenced by the Count's conduct in the film. Therefore, we feel that the film touches in one way or another on an important aspect of contemporary reality.<sup>70</sup>

Gutiérrez Alea defended the present-mindedness of that work, and articulated the cineastes' opposition to "disinterested" history:

It is clear -based on our ideological positions- that the criterion we have about historical cinema isn't limited to a desire to "reconstruct" particular moments from the past. For us, this cinema's importance exists in direct relation to the repercussion it has over our present -beginning with a correct (scientific) interpretation of the historical event and the degree to which it furthers the comprehension and affirmation of revolutionary development.<sup>71</sup>

The director's comments would seem to indicate that the cineastes espouse the superficial pragmatism of a history at the service of the revolutionary present. But, while such works might be immediately useful for propaganda purposes, they would teach Cubans little about either their past or their present. Thus, it is crucial to note that Gutiérrez Alea's remarks were made in relation to *The Last Supper*. Though the film was inspired in part by the Chilean coup, the historical analysis and reconstruction which accompanied the production can be appreciated in the following description:

The storyline was constructed beginning with a very simple paragraph that appears in *El ingenio* (*The Sugarmill*) by Moreno Fraguas. Fortunately the book offered a suggestive vision, rich in data, and superbly elaborated in relation to the moment which the anecdote recounts.

We then had to engage in a more detailed investigation of the epoch, that is, provide ourselves with sufficient details and documentary information in order to arrive at a more concrete image of the reality we wished to depict. In this aspect

we counted on the help of María Eugenia Haya, who also collaborated on the script. She efficiently researched documents and organized a file which was extremely useful not only in constructing the script, but in the later phases of production as well (wardrobe, machinery and work tools, scenery, characters, working with the actors, etc.). Moreover, Moreno Friginals provided us with much additional information and made himself continually available for consultation. It was a collective work, undertaken with great rigor.

The most difficult aspect to research was the world of the slaves since, obviously, there aren't many first, hand accounts. Nonetheless, we undertook an exhaustive and rigorous study here as well, so that our imaginations would be sufficiently motivated without overflowing. In this particular aspect we were aided by Martínez Furé, whose research makes continual valuable contributions to understanding our culture's African component.<sup>72</sup>

While *The Last Supper* probably offers the best example of historical investigation in ICAIC's cinema, the film on slavery by Sergio Giral also demonstrate concern with research and analysis. For instance, *Rancheador* is based on the diary of a slave hunted who dictated it to his daughter; it was transcribed by Cirilo Villaverde in the 19th century. Giral adapted the diary, "enriching" it with fictional characters and events which he felt were nonetheless faithful to the period.<sup>73</sup> In preparing the ground for his adaptation, the director studied Chroniclers of the epoch, such as Anselmo Suárez Romero and Cirilo Villaverde, as well as a wide range of both pre and post-revolutionary historians; José Antonio Saco, Fernando Ortiz, Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, José Luciano Franco, Elías Entralgo, Grinan Peralta, Rogelio Martínez Furé, Manuel Moreno Friginals, Romulo Lachatanere, and others. He also used engravings from the period in order to recreate a rural village of the nineteenth century.

Manuel Octavio Gómez also showed respect for the past in the extensive historical study which he undertook for the film, *First Charge of the Machete*. Cuban and Spanish archives were mined for materials dealing with the struggle, and historical photographs, etchings, and documentary footage were examined in depth. The film's dialogues were constructed entirely from documents, books, speeches, reports, letters, and anecdotes from the period and although Gómez's intention to reconstruct 1868 language patterns couldn't be carried out, the actors were require to immerse them, selves in the historical material.<sup>74</sup>

Gómez was also forced to make a concession with the film's music. Afraid that viewers would have difficulty understanding songs from the period, Gómez decided to allow creative latitude to the well-known Pablo Milanés, who composed the songs he sings in the film as a troubadour. When we compare the power of Milanés' interpretation to, for example, the ineffective use of period songs in the nostalgic melodrama. *En tiempos de Don Porfirio* (dir. Juan Bustillo Oro, Mexico, 1939). It appears that Gómez may have made a wise decision. Of course, the director's dogged insistence on reality's intervention was also evident here, for Milanés' music was inspired by his thorough knowledge of the period's *décimas*-some of which make specific references to the machete.<sup>75</sup>

Even the film form which Gómez utilized was inspired in historical research, for the juxtaposition of cinema verite techniques and archaic aesthetics resulted from his experiences while preparing to shoot the movie. Once involved in the research, I was amazed to discover a kind of journalism in the archival sources which seemed remarkably contemporary, based on interviews and direct reportage. Suddenly, the right approach came to me full blown: *información directa*, a very contemporary, news-oriented reportage similar to what we now associate with televised documentary.<sup>76</sup>

The above examples demonstrate that ICAIC's cineastes conscientiously approach the task of historical reconstruction. They evidence a good acquaintance with primary and secondary sources, and at least one (Humberto Solás) has received his *licenciatura* in History.<sup>77</sup> They utilize professionally trained historians as consultants, and Alfredo Guevara has described their role as one of the most important in ICAIC.<sup>78</sup> They study available historical visual materials, and they have required their actors to steep themselves in the period they are to re-create.<sup>79</sup> In sum, despite -or perhaps because of- their recognition of the way they are influenced by contemporary events, they manifest a respect-one has gone so far as to say a "love"- for history, and insist that they reject the idea of utilizing the past in function of preconceived ideas.<sup>80</sup>

Of course, these are filmmakers, not historians, so they play out the issue of historical reality in filmic terms. As I have argued above, the dialectical resonance created by the juxtaposition of different film forms within the same work is their most effective strategy for pointing to the reality of cinematic discourse. But, the Cuban filmmakers are not post-modern: they neither reify discourse nor reject the realities of history. Their materialist stance is clear in the fact that they have characteristically created this resonance through the percussion of fiction and documentary; and the inclusion of documentary has clear ideological connotations, for it is the filmic equivalent of materialism in insisting on the fact of a reality other than discourse, a world which really exists aside from our descriptions of it. Thus, the documentary is seen to impart certain qualities to the fiction film: for example, Manuel Octavio Gómez stated on different occasions his belief that the documentary could make fiction richer and more powerful by providing it with dynamism, spontaneity, and veracity. However, he cautioned that such veracity ought not be confused with realism.<sup>81</sup>

This issue of reality is pivotal, for what the Cubans seek is not an aesthetic of realism, but a realistic attitude. For example, Gutiérrez Alea has argued that if the illusionism of fiction films is to go beyond aesthetic pleasure in order to teach and stimulate, these works must be constructed in such a way that the “paintings give way to the painted”- quoting Brecht to the effect that, “Our representations must surrender the foreground to the reality which they represent: the life of people in society”.<sup>82</sup> Solás talked of how this concept had functioned in “*Manuela*”. There, although the documentary genre has never interested him, he nonetheless utilized a documentary style in certain sequences of the film in order to be faithful to a particular reality.<sup>83</sup>

However, Cubans have explicitly criticized the use of a documentary style as a way to hide the subjectivity of fiction films. García Espinosa felt that employing hand-held cameras and direct sound in order to make movies appear objective was unacceptable and, in place of such subterfuge, he called for films which clearly demarcated the two forms:

It's not a question of continuing to disguise fiction as if it were reality or of treating reality through filming or montage so that you arrive at a confusion in which one can't differentiate what is reality and what is fiction, but of trying to maintain the two categories as clearly as possible and knowing that both serve to understand reality. They are definitely two cinematic conventions, and we think that it's necessary to understand that fiction is a category that can serve perfectly to understand reality -but not to disguise it as if it were reality itself.<sup>84</sup>

Though I would argue that Cubans have achieved a truly dialectical film form through the formal confrontation of fiction and documentary, they do not fetishize this technique, refusing to call it a style and preferring to describe it as “a characteristic feature” or a “procedure”<sup>85</sup>. Nonetheless, Gutiérrez Alea indicated its importance for them when he stated:

We find in the integration of the two styles a way of approaching reality. It has therefore become a very natural and organic fact of Cuban revolutionary cinema. One can play with various levels of approach to reality within the same film. And the confrontation between those levels, the relationships between them, is very productive, and throws much light on the analysis one wishes to do. We think that this cannot be treated as a formula, nor as a style, but simply as an attitude. It is not a question of a realistic style based on formula, but of a realistic attitude towards film.<sup>86</sup>

The more recent origin of this aesthetic is the revolutionary rejection of traditional genre separations, but it may also be traced as far back as Martí. In one interview, García Espinosa declared that the division between documentary and fiction films was becoming obsolete.<sup>87</sup> At another point, Fraga confirmed this perspective, stating that ICAIC's cineastes don't believe in that traditional opposition, which they argue is historically relative. Fraga also indicated that this mixing of genres may have its roots in Cuba's yesterdays:

Perhaps it has something to do with a Cuban tradition. In Cuba, journalism - which could be considered as the literary equivalent of the documentary -has a past very closely linked with literature as art. Ninety-five percent of Martí's work is journalistic, very much attached to circumstances and to the direct observation of reality, and nevertheless it has a highly artistic elaboration.<sup>88</sup>

The function of this aesthetic in the historical films proceeds from ICAIC's quest for an approach to reality and the re-working of traditional film forms. For example, Sergio Giral stated of *The Other Francisco* that,

Many sequences were filmed with the expressive resources of documentary cinema in order to get nearer to a historically authentic fact and in order to provide a more general panorama than would have been possible with a conventional structure and style of fiction.<sup>89</sup>

For Manuel Octavio Gómez, the impetus to utilize documentary treatment in *The First Charge of the Machete* came from his reaction to traditional historical cinema, which he finds "unbearable".<sup>90</sup> This director may also have pointed to the most important reason for the inclusion of documentary forms in historical fiction films when he summed up the issue in this way:

I believe that, even without using them directly, the means of documentary cinema constitute one of the most efficient roads to the comprehension and, therefore, the transmission of a problem; to put into practice that art should not only reflect reality, but should be one of the conscious factors which helps to transform it.<sup>91</sup>

\* \* \*

In sum, history is clearly a centerpiece of ICAIC's creative project and a pivotal factor in the creation of critical and active audiences. An expression of the culture's Marxist-Leninism and of the government's need to legitimize itself, the emphasis on history is also a demonstration of the effects of living profound transformations. However, perhaps it is most important as a weapon in the struggle against imperialism and a tool to forge a national identity. Cuba's cineastes accept, even revindicate, the effect of contemporary concerns on depictions of the past, and they reject the idea of "history for history's sake". However, they also demonstrate a concern for historical truth by making extensive use of professional historians and their research.

The most innovative form of ICAIC's expressionism is the juxtaposition of fiction and documentary, a technique which results in a dialectical resonance where truth is not embodied in one or the other form, but is arrived at through their collision, a conflict whose purpose is to produce a realistic attitude toward cinema and the world. In both their films and their writings, ICAIC's cineastes have attempted to develop a conscious, critical, and active perspective towards film and towards history.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES:

(Note: the first entry of items appearing in *Cine cubano* will carry the entire reference; subsequent citations will use *CC* and the issue number. Dates for the issues are taken from *Indice de la revista Cine cubano, 1960-1974*, Havana, 1979.)

(1) I am grateful to Eli Bartra and Charles Churchill for their critical reading of this article, as well as to David Sweet, Julianne Burton, Carlos Cortés, and Paul Vanderwood for their comments on earlier versions. I would also like to express my appreciation to the Dirección General de Investigación Científica y Técnica of the Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia of Spain for their generosity in providing me with a Sabbatical-year fellowship, spent in the Department d 'Historia Contemporania, Universitat de Barcelona.

(2) "Ley que creó el ICAIC," *Cine cubano*, No. 23/24/25 (septiembre-diciembre, 1964): 22.

(3) LOPEZ PEGO, R. "Una imagen sobre sus propios pies," *Cine cubano*, No.95, p. 70.

(4) CHIJONA, G. "La última cena: entrevista a Tomás Gutiérrez Alea," *Cine cubano*, No.93, p. 88.

(5) According to a poll published by MONACO, J., "What's the Score? The Best of the Decade," *Take One*, Vol. 6, No.8 (July, 1978).

(6) "El cine revolucionario cubano, factor de educación permanente," *Cine cubano*, No. 66/67 (enero-marzo, 1971): 63; "¡Viva la República!: *Cine cubano* entrevista a Pastor Vega," *Cine cubano*, No. 76/77 (abril-mayo, 1972): 44; GUEVARA, A. "Reflexiones en torno a una experiencia cinematográfica II" *Cine cubano*, No. 54/55 (marzo-abril, 1969).

(7) PINEDA BARNET, E. "Notas sobre un cine militante, revolucionario, y su función social," ALVAREZ, S. et. al. *Cine y revolución en Cuba*. Barcelona: Fontamara, 1975, p. 57. ROLDAN, A.

"Entrevistas con directores de largometrajes" *Cine cubano*, No. 23/24/25 (septiembre-diciembre, 1964): 88. Statements about the necessity of creating a critical and active audience are continual in *Cine cubano*, ranging from GUEVARA, A. "Una nueva etapa del cine en Cuba," *Cine cubano*, No.3 (noviembre, 1963): 9; to HART, A. "El cine cubano: imagen múltiple, rica y diversa de la revolución," *Cine cubano*, No.95, p. 4.

(8) CHIJONA, G., *CC*, No.93, p. 88.

(9) ALVEAR, M. and BURTON, J. "Every point of arrival is a point of departure': An interview with Humberto Solás," *Jump Cut*, No.19 (December, 1978): 30; PEREZ, M. and GARCIA ESPINOSA, J. "El cine y la educación," *Cine cubano*, No.69/70 (mayo-julio, 1971): 7.

(10) BREITBART, E. "From the Panorama to the Docudrama: Notes on the Visualization of History," *Radical History Review*, No.25 (1981): 116.

(11) See, for example, ROSENSTONE, R. "Walker: The Dramatic Film as Historical Truth," *Film-Historia*, Vol. II, No.1 (1992): 3-12.

(12) JOWETT, G. "The Concept of History in American Produced Films: An Analysis of the Films Made in the Period 1951-1960," *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. III, No.4 (1970): 799.

(13) COLLINS, R. "Genre: A Reply to Ed Buscombe," in *Movies and Methods*, volume I, edited by NICHOLS, B. Berkeley: University of California, 1976, p. 162.

(14) "El cine cubano enfrenta el desafío industrial: entrevista con Jorge Praga y Tomás Gutiérrez Alea," *Cine al día*, No.19 (marzo 1975): 8.

(15) HUESO, A. L. "Planteamientos historiográficos en el cine histórico," *Film-Historia*, Vol. I, No.1 (1991): 16; TRUJILLO, M. "Girón: Propuesta de un método para abordar desde el cine nuestra historia contemporánea más reciente," *Cine cubano*, No. 86/87/88, (noviembre-diciembre, 1973): 18.

(16) "En busca de un cine popular: entrevista con Julio García Espinosa," *Cine al día*, No.17 (diciembre, 1973): 19.

(17) TRUJILLO, M., *CC*, No. 86/87/88, p.18.

(18) *Ibid.*, p. 20. For more critical view of *Girón*, see HESS, J. "Bay of Pigs: Bertolt Brecht Meets John Wayne," in *The Social Documentary in Latin America*, edited by BURTON, J. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990, pp. 351-361.

(19) GUTIERREZ ALEA, T. *Dialéctica del espectador*. Habana: Unión, 1982: 42.

(20) DIAZ, J. "Apuntes sobre cultura e ideología," *Cine cubano*, No.47 (enero, 1968): 10; DE CARDENAS, P. and PALA, J. M. "Julio García Espinosa en dos tiempos," *Hablemos de cine*, No.55/56 (septiembre-diciembre, 1970): 34; GUEVARA, A. "Informe y saludo ante el primero congreso nacional de cultura," *Cine cubano*, No.9 (enero, 1963): 3.

(21) DE CARDENAS, P. and PALA, J. M., *Ibid.*; "Entrevista con Humberto Solás, realizador de *Manuela*" *Cine cubano*, No. 36 (julio, 1966): 2; BURTON, J. "Theory and Practice of Film and Popular Culture in Cuba: A Conversation with Julio García Espinosa," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, Vol. VII, No.4 (Fall, 1982): 344; GARCIA ESPINOSA, J. "A propósito de *Aventuras de Juan Quin Quin*," *Cine y revolución en Cuba*, p. 160.

(22) GUTIERREZ ALEA, T. *Dialéctica del espectador*, p. 35.

(23) I have dealt with this work as a historical film at some length elsewhere. See, MRAZ, J. "Memories of Underdevelopment: Bourgeois Consciousness /Revolutionary Context," *Revisoning History: Filmmakers and the Construction of the Past*, edited by ROSENSTONE, R. Princeton: Princeton University Press, forthcoming.

(24) On *Lucía* as historical cinema see, MRAZ, J. "Lucía: Visual Style and Historical Portrayal," *Jump Cut*, No.19 (December, 1978); and MRAZ, J. "Lucía: History and Film in Revolutionary Cuba," *Film & History*, Vol. V, No.1 (1975). As a methodological note, it is important to point out that the study of visual style carried out in the *Jump Cut* article is based on an analysis of amplified frames from a 16mm print of the film; three of those enlargements are reproduced in the present essay. Obviously, this form of employing visual materials in cinema history differs significantly from the utilization of production stills (images taken on the set by a still photographer), which serve essentially illustrative purposes.

(25) See, for example, GUTIERREZ ALEA, "Entrevistas con directores de largometrajes," *CC*, No. 23/24/25, p. 68.

(26) Fidel Castro made his "I am a Marxist" speech on December 1, 1961. See Gutiérrez Alea's statement in PICK, Z. M. "Towards a Renewal of Cuban Revolutionary Cinema: A Discussion of Cuban Cinema today," *Cinetracts*, No.8 (1979): 27.

(27) GUEVARA, A. "El cine cubano, 1963," *Cine cubano*, No.14/15 (octubre-noviembre, 1963): 1; GUEVARA, A. "El cine cubano tiene 10 años," *Hablemos de cine*, No. 54 (julio-agosto 1970): 15;

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