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Terra em Transe. A Marxist Poetics and Aesthetics as a Critique of Capitalist Development.

Terra em Transe. Una poética y una estética marxista como crítica del desarrollo capitalista.

Abstract:

This article examines the film *Terra em Transe* (Glauber Rocha, 1967), framed in the Brazilian "Cinema Novo" movement. The analysis revolves around the constitution of a cinematographic poetics linked to a Marxist aesthetic. The principle of movie montage is the essential component of his cinematographic poetics. The Marxist aesthetic falls on what Alberto Híjar Serrano called *rough communism*, and some techniques of the Brechtian theory of distancing can also be appreciated. These elements constitute the cinematographic formula that is configured in a kind of critique of capitalist development, that industrializing meta-narrative that became hegemonic from the second half of the twentieth century.

Keywords: capitalism; political cinema; Glauber Rocha; Cinema Novo; underdevelopment.

Resumen:

En este artículo se examina la película *Terra em Transe* (Glauber Rocha, 1967), enmarcada en la corriente del "Cinema Novo" brasileño. El análisis gira en torno a la constitución de una poética cinematográfica vinculada a una estética marxista. El principio del montaje es el componente esencial de su poética cinematográfica. La estética de corte marxista recae en lo que Alberto Híjar Serrano denominó *comunismo tosco*, e igualmente se aprecian algunas técnicas de la teoría del distanciamiento brechtiano. Estos elementos constituyen la formula cinematográfica que se configura en una suerte de crítica al desarrollo capitalista, aquel metarrelato industrializador que se hizo hegemónico a partir de la segunda mitad del siglo XX.

Palabras clave: capitalismo; cine político; Glauber Rocha; Cinema Novo; subdesarrollo.

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Diana Montes

Universidad Nacional Autónoma
de México

Ciudad de México

diana.antaka@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-4407-4984>

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1. Introduction

The New Latin American Cinema (NCL), which emerged in the sixties of the last century, is a complex cinematographic phenomenon of Latin American integration around the subcontinental conformation of a revolutionary counter-imperialist project, of which the Brazilian Cinema Novo is an essential component. Since 1950, with the incipient modernization of Brazil, leftist movements, including artistic ones, believed in the crystallization of a socialist revolution. In this sense, the poetic dimension that the cinemanovists presented in their films revolves around a mimetic process that puts in crisis the “representation” of reality; that is, it lies in the creative overflow as a reinvention of conventional cinematographic forms, in substance and form.

From the approaches of the so-called *cultural Marxism*, I have seen how the Marxist ideology was relevant for the filmmakers of the Third Cinema and the New Latin American Cinema; now, from Marx's works, it is interesting to observe the critique of *underdevelopment* and how this is related to several turning points that crossed the Cinema Novo films. Suppose we start from Marx's predictions about the idea that large-scale commodity production would take place globally, and thus, capital would be centralized. In that case, it is logical to think that, in the capitalist expansion with its modernizing projects, given at an increasingly frenetic pace, underdevelopment will spread, especially in the global south. Marx's critique of capital also includes the cultural industry and cinema.

At the beginning of the 1960s, Cinema Novo consolidated as a movement that developed from a multiplicity of visions and cinematographics promoted by a group of young filmmakers Directors such as Nelson Pereira dos Santos, Glauber Rocha, Carlos Diegues, Gustavo Dahl, Ruy Guerra, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, Leon Hirszman, Paulo Cezar Saraceni, were part of the first generation of filmmakers and founders of *Cinema Novo* and built what has been classified by some historians as “the first Latin American film movement, taking the word in the sense in which intellectual avant-garde movements use it throughout the twentieth century” (Paranagua, 2003, 232).

The context in which the NCL and Cinema Novo emerged is due to *Capitalist Modernity*, and, therefore, it is worth mentioning its most important critics, Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin, Adorno, and Bolívar Echeverría. In this sense, in this Modernity, new views and ways of seeing, understanding, and making art do not represent a unified vision or a uniform aesthetic practice. The relationship between the left and culture, including artistic production, constitutes an almost inexhaustible field of questions and theoretical and political debates. Marcos Napolitano states that after World War II, so-called “Western Marxism,” beginning with the Frankfurt School, took the cultural question as the central axis of its reflections on advanced capitalist societies, moving towards a critical revision of the relations between culture and revolution throughout the second half of the 20th century. “To some extent, both advanced capitalism and its powerful cultural industry, as well as the effects of the traumatic relationship between the Stalinist Soviet Union and the artistic-cultural field, constituted the central problems to be debated and criticized, pointing to another possible relationship between political engagement and cultural action.” (Napolitano, 2014a, 37).

The central axes configured in the debate of the European Marxist left will also be present in the Brazilian cultural environment, many times without the theoretical density that marks the European context but always configured in a dramatic and dilemmatic way, the rich historicity of the period, marked by the affirmation of a mass politics aimed at overcoming historical underdevelopment (Napolitano, 2014a, 37). Ronaldo Munck also highlighted the notion of

modernization as the essence of Marx's conception of development: "As the bourgeoisie rose onto the world stage, it would eliminate all old orders and transform them in its own image. The most developed country was a mirror in which the less developed could glimpse their own future" (Munck, 2010).

In this context, cinema positioned itself as a tool to legitimize the discourses of central power or, on the other hand, counter-related those discourses, giving voice to those who have never had a place within the "modern forms" in the relatively young nation-states. In the case of the Brazilian Cinema Novo, Rocha's militant position as an unorthodox Marxist was evidenced by Alberto Híjar. Along with our analysis of the *Terra em Transe* film, we will elucidate the Marxian aesthetic elements present in the construction of this cinema novo poetics that develop with the framework of Brazilian dictatorial depression.

2. Cinema Novo as a function of poetics

Poetics can be science from a gnoseological point of view. In this sense, *poetics* incorporates the obverse of history, a myriad of elements that the latter does not consider, in casual lines of biographical trajectories. These elements are ascribed to ethics in terms of the concern for human life beyond a sociological group or distributive totalities because, in history, individuals always appear classified into groups (Hueriga, 2015, 17).

Poetics in cinema establishes a particular type of relationship, a kind of demand on the viewer because *the form* of what is filmed demands a response from the said viewer. In this way, the poetic resides in that which intensifies the sensorial experience, in that which concerns the inventiveness of the filmmaker through an operative deployment of elements in the composition of the image and narrative forms to shake up our usual way of seeing the world. "The cinematic poetic could be found in a cinema of fireflies, as opposed to the blinding clarity of the spotlights through which *everything must be seen*." (Martins, 2019, 4). That is to say, the cinematic poetic moves away from the obvious, the literal, even from what might be "logical," formally speaking; it may well break with traditional narrative principles and the representation of facts.

For the poet, the substratum of *his/her work is how it is made*. Eisenstein said that the totalization process through montage constantly incorporates new elements articulated in a unity whose truth cannot be beyond verisimilitude. The poetics of Cinema Novo, roughly speaking, are framed in narratives of individuals from underprivileged and/or subjugated social classes, narratives of the peripheries or places outside the perimeter of the modern State, in the most oppressed groups within the capitalist mode of production, *Terra em transe* is not only an example of this but a sample of the deep contradictions that have been seen within the historical class struggle.

From the poetics point of view, what is most relevant is not that the film presents a direct truth about certain events; what is important is how the plot is woven from an operational deployment with non-traditional narrative devices, within which the principle of montage is fundamental to build a work in a processual unity-totality. In this sense, *Terra em Transe* is a field of poetic constructions because it sets in motion a process of pure creation that puts Aristotelian mimesis in crisis (Aristotle, 2008), articulating, through a series of material and formal elements, a totality (the film) with its own language.

The principle of montage in the poetic constructions used by Glauber Rocha in *Terra em transe* is fundamental to understanding, for example, the disruptions and "an apparent" lack of cohesion. Therefore, verisimilitude is

the maximumgnoseological truth that a film can reach within the different forms of filmmaking, a truth that is potentiated through poetic exercise. From the formal dimension of cinema, poetic cinematography does not consist of designating or defining things. Still, in bursting in like a flash, producing resonances, disruptions, or luminescence that allow us a sensory game, exalting the different, the forgotten, the unforeseen, or some detail never before perceived, Glauber Rocha achieves it in this film, pointing to an essential historical-political process in Brazil during a dictatorial period.

3. *Terra em Transe* and Cinematic Poetics in the Dictatorial Context

The emergence of democratic order that occurred with the 1964 coup d'état in Brazil (which overthrew the government of President João Goulart and established a military dictatorship headed by Umberto de Alencar Castelo Branco) was the result of a process that had structural causes aggravated by a situation that added other specific ones. In the international context of the Cold War, the military regime crushed freedom of expression and severely repressed the political opposition, and massive human rights violations were committed. Trending nationalism, economic development, and anti-communism were formally adopted as official banners¹. In the 1960s and 1970s, Brazil received logistical and economic assistance from the United States government through Plan Condor, enabling the penetration of North American imperialism.

The beginning of the dictatorship in Brazil took place during a highly contradictory period, profoundly impacting the film industry. At the same time, it convulsed the perspective of independent filmmakers, sharpening their leftist political stance and reinventing the creative spirit embodied in multiple and novel forms within filmmaking. Marcos Napolitano, in his book "1964. *História do Regime Militar Brasileiro*" (2014b), offers us the most recent historiographical approaches, expanding his scope of analysis beyond the institutional, macroeconomic, and political dimensions and interweaving them with other social and cultural dimensions, tracing a network of the complex, contradictory relationships within these fields. He delineates the participation of actors who often transcend the upper echelons where the history of the dark dictatorial period has long seemed to unfold.

The coup d'état found its place in the prelude to the political instability of João Goulart's government and its inability to operate in a scenario of strong social polarization in which the class struggle intensified since neither the workers and other popular sectors nor the conservative and bourgeois sectors were able to consolidate their hegemony. The group of *Cinemanovist* directors put the contradictions arising from this struggle under the lens, giving light and voice to the former. For their part, the official media and think tanks such as the Institute for Research and Social Studies (IPES) and the Brazilian Institute for Democratic Action (IBAD) were the spaces in which a strongly anti-reformist discourse was created and disseminated, based on the French Counterinsurgency Doctrine, the American National Security Doctrine and Brazil's own authoritarian culture, which was able to appeal to important sectors of the middle class that supported the military intervention at the end of March 1964. The 1960s saw a highly irrational situation. Theotônio Dos Santos described it as follows:

¹ The idea of "development" is linked to the notion of "economic growth". Both terms became the global standard, defining universal characters based on "the conditions that characterized the world's most advanced countries: industrialization, high rates of urbanization and education, the technological advancement of agriculture, and the widespread adoption of the values and principles of modernity anchored in a western lifestyle and consumption" (Mendoza, 2021, 2).

A country that managed to establish an industrial base was unable to use it to improve the living conditions of its people as a consequence of the harshness of the laws of dependent capitalist development (with the defeat of the revolutionary) to increase its productive capacity solely for the benefit of the international big capital, with the country's dependent bourgeoisie dominating the country forced to decide its own faith (Dos Santos, 1994, 86)².

These turbulent years in Brazil marked the course that the group of independent film directors would take; "Artists and intellectuals played a significant role in the construction of the utopia of a revolutionary *Brasilianism* that would allow to shape the potentialities of a people and a nation" (Ridenti, 2006, 43). Filmmaker Gustavo Dahl stated that after 1964, the political theme in the films was enhanced; they were almost all self-critical, in a certain sense, and self-demystifying of what could be defined, roughly, as "left-wing intellectuals," which tragically showed their powerlessness with the situation of the moment. "I think I can identify in these films, with a political theme, fundamentally: *O Desafio*, *Terra em transe*, *O bravo guerreiro* and *Os herdeiros*, a kind of active pessimism" (León, 1979, 35). That's what Gustavo Dahl said in an interview. "They assumed in a somewhat idealistic way that they were the radical expression of the otherness of Latin American cinema in the face of the neo-colonialist cultural system" (King, 1994, 157).

In the context of repression in the various institutional, cultural, and artistic fields, the *realist poetics* that erected the Cinema Novo at its inception (with the influence of Italian neorealism) developed with an innovative force. There was among the filmmakers, even more so, a desire to continue along the line of building reality in a faithful way. However, the operational deployments due to dictatorial repression were forced to change; the film language needed a formal reinvention.

Within its own historical process, the production of meanings through a symbolic *character* became present in Brazilian cinema. New forms of creation in terms of *disruptive* and *alienating* elements were explored, formal structures were cracked open, and the political act of the film was strengthened through new narrative devices; its creators showed their militancy and ideology, articulated to these criticisms of capitalist Modernity and its Marxist analytical principle of criticism of political economy. The plausibility of films was altered through these new narrative forms.

To delve into the universe of Marxist aesthetics as a substantial component of that verisimilitude present in art, it is necessary to take Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez as a reference, who stated the following: "Marx's aesthetic thought does not constitute an organic body of doctrine, an aesthetic in itself, but this does not diminish, in any way, its importance

2 Considering these words by Theotônio Dos Santos, it is important to distinguish between the fact that, although the ideas of "dependentist" Marxists were beginning to emerge, the critique of the notion of development is a distinct issue; both are framed within the critique of *modernity* as phenomena resulting from the expansion of the capitalist production system. However, the developmentalist metanarrative created by ECLAC began en masse with US President Truman's 1949 speech, delimiting the relevance and necessity of industrializing Latin America, while the dependency ideologists sharpened their critique of the generation of sui generis capitalisms, as Ruy Mauro Marini called them, dependent on a central capitalism, hence the dominance of hegemonic forces from central countries over peripheral ones. Marini goes beyond the development-underdevelopment dichotomy, within the limits developed by emblematic authors from the early days of ECLAC. His masterpiece, *Dialectics of Dependency*, was necessary in the midst of the crisis of "developmentalism" in the 1970s, not only as an internal debate among activists, but as a real way of overcoming these theoretical approaches to *development*. In this way, he proposes a historical reference to the subordination of Latin America to voracious capitalist economies, in which the oligarchic interpretation of development is the specialization of southern nations in the production of their raw materials.

as an essential aspect of his conception of man and society" (1979, 14). In that sense, Marx did not separate art from ideology; on the contrary, he pointed to art as a substantial form of the ideological superstructure, granting preponderance to society and work as the essence of aesthetics. His doctrine cannot be reduced to a mere interpreted political and economic doctrine; therefore, his artistic ideas cannot be separated from human and artistic practice, nor can the understanding of his philosophy as a philosophy of praxis, whose *telos* is to transform human reality, be underestimate

In this review of Marx's studies on the artistic sphere, specifically in reference to an aesthetic where the principles of the critique of political economy are present in the aesthetic dimension of art, it is worth highlighting the fundamental role of Alberto Híjar Serrano in the study of the genealogies of unorthodox Marxisms in this aesthetic dimension, genealogies delimited by the author in the exact course of his itineraries as a Marxist. In his corollary of studies on revolutionary art, he has pointed out the massive recourse to the construction of the subject-people. This process significantly impacts the aesthetic extensions of Marxism, emerging from the early decades of the 20th century. Agustín Cueva emphasizes that "it was from the 1930s onward that Latin America became *Marxistized*".

Marxism is indissolubly fused with the national and the popular to the extent that: (a) it recovers the underlying popular roots of oppressed ethnic groups: Indians, blacks, mulattos, mestizos, etc. (b) our history and traditions are reinterpreted; (c) a new symbolic repertoire and even a new language are created from the above; and this (d) without falling into folklorism and placing these images and representations in the perspective of the construction of a national culture that did not exist until then, or at least atrophied by the stereotyped character of the oligarchic society and by imperial domination; and (e) highlighting the multiple tensions and contradictions, including those of class, that furrow the life of our nations (Híjar, 2021, 64-65).

In his work *La praxis estética. Dimensión estética libertaria* (2016), Alberto Híjar develops the notion of *rough communism* and explains how Marx and Engels distanced themselves from it due to its instinctive impulses absent from political economy since it rejected private property in general at all costs. However, it was useful for the construction of a radical proletarian communist tendency that was convincing due to its emotional force and pragmatic character. "Eduard Bernstein's slogan of exalting the social movement above principles seemed to them a good synthesis of *rough communism*" (Híjar, 2016, 161). If communism is supported by the workers' movement and the emancipation of the working class can only be born from within itself, when vindicating communism, Engels pointed out the demarcation of communism in order to work with the "a little rough" ones because they are radical. In this sense, rough reading is a slogan opposed to theoretical work for historical and dialectical criticism. "The notion of people demands historical and social precisions to distinguish its demagogic uses from those commonly used in the names of organizations of *rough communism*" (Híjar, 2016, 165). "Rough communism" would be communitarian poetics, but not the romanticization of a state of poverty, literacy, or savagery, as *Western civilizationists* suggest. "This impoverishment of humanity characteristic of *rough communism* required Lenin, so respectful of the autonomy of intellectuals and artists, to propose to the *Proletkult* in 1918 a resolution guided by the need to liberate the productive forces, including the mass of traditions, signs, and symbols produced under bourgeois rule" (Híjar, 2016, 167).

Rough communists repudiate theoretical criticism party construction; they repudiate theoretical radicalism. *Rough communism* becomes a powerful tool, like anthropology, for example, with which the colonized devoured the colonizer, appropriating their qualities to create human beings in further powerful development, and not only

assumed their status as underdeveloped, but they reversed it to get out of the historical negation of their own ontology. Something similar happens with Gross Communism; “the ideology of the noble savage implies opposition to rationalism to legitimize anti-colonial, anti-imperialist and national liberation resistance (Híjar, 2016, 168).

The cinematographic work *Terra em Transe* illustrates the construction of a poetics around that Marxist aesthetic of *rough communism* by presenting the essence of the subject-people, the communitarian power in its frames and sequences, by exalting the contradictions and nooks and crannies of capitalist development, through the presence of the collective subject framed in the working class. *Terra em Transe* places the action in the fictitious republic *El Dorado*, Rocha’s representation of *modern Brazil*. Pablo Martins is a poet, journalist, and follower of Porfirio Díaz’s conservative politics. As he experiences the contradictions and problems of his people, his social conscience leads him to break the ideological relationship with Díaz and join the progressive politics of his opponent, Felipe Viera. Still, the latter falters when he is pressured by the revolutionary climate of the proletariat, which causes Paulo’s disenchantment, who sees how realizing his ideals must go through active struggle and not only through discursive struggle.

To establish the construction of cinematic poetics, attention must be focused on editing. Pablo Martins immerses us in his world of ideological artistic crisis, political disenchantment, and the factual fifth power of the official media, against which he swims against the tide. In a psychological back-and-forth, the film places us inside Paulo’s ideological conflict, his internal struggles, and the chaos of his political self-confrontations in a convulsive country is reflected in Rocha’s disruptive editing, with vertiginous moments in the splicing of images, where the autonomy of each frame is the cause of a visual shock. In Figure 1, we can observe a sequence that shows the highly theatrical expressions of the protagonist, Pablo Martins, which is essential to witness one of the components of the Brechtian distancing theory within a materialistic aesthetic.



Figure 1. A frame of Pablo Martins is an act with high theatricality that unveils his gaze at afixed point, expressing the coldness and disenchantment of his self-confrontation (own elaboration, 2023; source: Mubi).

Glauber Rocha placed the emphasis on political violence, pain, despair, and death as the foundations of reality. Life is understood as poetry that appeals to a theory of sensibility. His opinion is communion with what the most human emerges amidst the agony of violence; that is why *Terra em transe* is an absolute truth of feeling, a truth achieved through montage. "From his personal experience, Roca composed in this film the chronicle of an official tragedy based on the anguish and shock of so many insurgent poets, morally defeated or, in other cases, directly eliminated the State[...]. It is about placing the violence in *poetic immortality* (Elena & Díaz, 1999, 195-196).

Terra em transe is a theory developed in images. When it transgresses the formalism of language and creates disruptive techniques in film, it is theorizing. The images Rocha offers are very clear regarding the aesthetic sense in the montage; they are images given to time because they have no conclusion and are not due to any plot; they are films open to the power of images. The images are used as devices of thought, which, through different instrumentations, belong to a theoretical and academic instance. In *Terra em Transe*, there is not only a story, a plot, and a mise-en-scène; here, montage is the central axis of creation, as it gives his films their *poetic character*. This character resides in the constant displacement of images that lack the Aristotelian dramatic structure; this phenomenon can be seen in Figure 2. Each frame has its own force and is presented as flashes that pass in seconds.



Figure 2. Pablo Martins and the curator Porfirio Díaz in a disruptive montage sequence (own elaboration, 2023; source: Mubi).

Rocha vindicates the epic Eisenstein montage, understanding it as the driving force of ideas in motion and as the impulse of the poetry of a discontinuous mode that forms a signifier. As a non-capitalist approach, it explains what economic theories cannot explain solely based on static data. Cinema addresses these topics from a non-rational, sensitive dimension through the primary analytical categories of hunger and sleep. Regarding his admiration for Luis Buñuel shows us in *Terra em Transe* the deployment of a dreamlike aesthetic of surrealism, which we perceive as the dialect of the unconscious³.

The theatricality of the characters is one of the components of the distancing in the materialist aesthetics that the Marxist playwright Bertolt Brecht used in his *Epic Theater* to generate precisely a distancing between the play and the spectator. In *Terra em transe*, this component is present. The constant tension of the characters creates ideological emotion; the weight of the performance is in the character's theatrical character, and the contrasts of light on the faces in the manner of expressionist lighting create that dramatic theatrical tension. The abolition of time and narrative configures an aesthetic form that, in turn, is a revolutionary event from an artistic and cultural point of view. This film acquires a performative character, in which the vigor is in the life experience provided by the contingency to which this performative character is due (the figuration that accompanies it in the creation itself). In Figure 3, we can observe the theatrical character of both the characters and the staging; the "overacted" expressions and the expressionist lighting exhibit the presence of a materialistic aesthetic.



Figure 3 Frame of Pablo Martins and the politician Viera in a theatrical performance act
(own elaboration, 2023; source: Mubi).

4. A Marxist aesthetic of Rough communism

Glauber Rocha's "unorthodox" character lies in the fact that he does not come from a formal Marxism because his Marxism is not epistemological; rather, it rests on the praxis of *Rough Communism*, which, as noted above, is the communism of the subject-people, therefore, of the popular and even of the pamphleteer—the collective subject as the engine of change in the class struggle. The aesthetic of the pamphleteer lies in its recipient, the public, who has no idea of material-dialectical Marxism. Rather, it sustains the crudeness of the non-literate community; it has its

³ See Glauber's Rocha *Los doce mandamientos of our lord Buñuel*, de Glauber Rocha; and Arnold Hauser's *Dialéctica en el arte no racional*.

⁴ See Yessir Calderón's work performance as an art that responds to the dimensions of the artistic, aesthetic and political fields

own sense of class through alienation. The worker does not conceive of himself as a social class but inclines toward communism unconsciously.

Rocha focuses on the collective subject, the roughness of the people in a state almost of “brute and immaculate purity.” He finds the power of mysticism in the popular and sees it as a magic scorned by theorists and sectarians who view hunger as mere primitivism or tropical surrealism. In Figure 4, we can observe the representation of the collective subject, of the sense of community of a people deemed savage by those who seek to civilize, which Híjar sees in the aesthetics of *rough communism*.



Figure 4. Frame of the collective-community subject in political action (own elaboration, 2023; source: Mubi).

In *Terra em transe*, we find the construction of a Marxist poetics reflected not only within a discourse or an ideology but also in a number of aesthetic elements that appeal to a *theory of sensibility*: ignorance, unconsciousness, mysticism, and illiteracy comprise this poetics. The notions of “uncivilized” and “savage” run counter to the *white*-Western images reproduced by Hollywood. These elements represent a *rough communism* articulated with disruptive narrative techniques to pave the way for a historical process anchored in Marxist thought and practice. In this way, the aesthetics of violence that Rocha proposes is that rough communism that emerges at a specific moment in Marxist work, that of showing the people in their pure State, which has not yet culminated in their separation from nature since they have not yet fully adhered to the civilizing project that the Ecuadorian philosopher Bolívar Echeverría called whiteness, an issue that goes beyond ethnicity or race but rather consists of a whole series of behaviors derived from the internalization of capitalism.

The main category of analysis for the representation of violent aesthetics is *hunger*; Rocha deployed a series of aesthetic devices as part of his activism to address this category. The exaltation of this crude communism is linked to this notion of *hunger* within *underdevelopment*, denied in the developmental-progressive meta discourse with the civilizational telos embodied in whiteness as the identity of capitalist logic; hunger as a Marxist category empowering a revolutionary praxis, as Rocha expresses in his text “The Aesthetics of Hunger,” part of the work *The Revolution is an*

Aesthetic. In Figure 5, we observe scenes that confirm that the *savage* needs to be guided to the path of redemption and Western civilization, either by a monarchical redemptive figure or by a political leader who instructs him.



Figure 5. The Porfirio Díaz being crowned and repeating the words You will learn! Following the sequence under the title “The encounter of a leader with his own people,” to the politician Felipe Viera guiding the people (own elaboration, 2023; source: Mubi).

Through *Terra em Transe*, Rocha offers us a poetic approach built around a profound critique of colonization and imperialism. For example, *the close-up, low-angle shots* of the conservative Díaz denote power and authority; he holds a *monarchical-style crown*, and after an abrupt silence that puts an end to the sound shots and disruptive editing that precede it, he repeats: “You will learn, I will dominate this land, I will put those hysterical traditions in order, by the force of the universal harmony of hell we will reach civilization.” “You will learn!” is the message of the colonizer instructing the *savages*, the *underdeveloped*, represented by the *crude communism* that the ruling classes deny because they feel threatened by the revolutionary specter that would defeat imperialism in the context of the Cold War when capitalism was in a period of expansion, and the oligarchies were increasing their power. Therefore, it is necessary to highlight the Marxist value of *crude communism* in a jumble of images based on a totalizing montage that confronts us with the same class struggle and the processes of domination that have plagued the so-called “Third World.” Figure 6 shows the religious symbols used by the conservative character Porfirio Díaz; the “civilized” character repudiates the mystique of the people but embraces an evangelizing project as the supreme power of conquest and domination.

Rocha’s aesthetic theorization can be found in his texts *The Aesthetics of Hunger* and *The Aesthetics of Dream*; both writings represent contemporary aesthetics in Brazil. His cinema not only reflects the importance of context but also the theoretical modes of its enunciation. Rocha intervenes theoretically in a broad space of interlocution, in the particular bosom of an unorthodox Marxism; his militant aesthetic devices allude to the categories of hunger and violence linked to the aesthetics of *rough communism*. There is no correspondence of these elements with an orthodox level; therefore, it transcends the development-underdevelopment dichotomy, Marxism-Leninism, Soviet realism, etc. Before that, his primary theoretical instances are hunger and violence. For Rocha, the *brute* and *coarseness* of the worker’s alienation is the historical seal of his condition; in the case of the Indigenous, his fictional sighting is always perceived within mysticism.



Figura 6. El conservador Porfirio Díaz con la cruz y la corona como símbolos de dominio (elaboración propia, 2023; fuente: Mubi).

Rocha sees in *underdevelopment* a dimension of value that manifests itself in the context of making his films and the polemic they aroused; it was not an economic fact but a tragic and vivid symptom. Therefore, it is not reason but the condition of sensibility that brings about the transformation, and that is why one must appreciate *rough communism* in his images as a program and not as a utopia, lodged in the rough sensibility of the oppressed as an engine of change, as that Marxian philosophy anchored in the praxis of social transformation. In *Terra em Transe*, Glauber Rocha pays special attention to dialectics as a unit of reflection and exercise of criticism, as an abstract relational unit of moments of contradictions and synthesis. Glauber's dialectic contains elements: didactics, epic, and revolution. He recognizes dialectics in the dimension of its popular elements; he appropriates the colonizing devices to liberate himself and uses audiovisual shock as a disruptive element that has a didactic value in the popular component.

5. Conclusions

Terra em Transe told through impossible times and reveries, is a political and theoretical intervention constructed in the form of a poetry of revolutionary praxis. Violence is captured on screen through discontinuous editing, creating the experience of this political and existential trance amidst instability; the actors' theatricality creates tense relationships between them and the camera, constructing an unconventional dramaturgy (influenced by Brecht). It creates a baroque blend in a performative tone, the characteristics of this baroque Modernity around the different forms of internalization of capitalism (Echeverría, 2010), constructing and expressing the aesthetic, discursive, and political dimensions. *Terra em Transe* is the power of a cinema that expresses a country with all its contradictions.

Glauber made cinema for the people, by the people, and with the people as the collective subject and aesthetic motor for *rough communism*. He speaks to generate them *self-awareness*; it dispels the opacity that supposes the category of free men offers them, confronting their own conscience, breaking with the alienation of plasticity and superficiality of the industrial cinema of the time.

We interpret Glauber Rocha through the gaze and theoretical proposal of Alberto Híjar, who placed Third Cinema Filmmakers within the aesthetics of unorthodox Marxism. Híjar's vindication of Glauber Rocha, as an unorthodox Marxist, is through his *aesthetics of violence* articulated with aesthetics of *rough communism*, based on the historical necessity of the emergence of other Marxisms, those present in arts. Rocha's Marxism is also inscribed in the core of his interlocutors. However, it has no place in art history or Marxist aesthetics due to the limited focus on his theoretical work.

Terra em Transe is an example of a film that transcends, through its autonomy, an enrichment of cinematic language through poetics focused on *disruption* and *discontinuity*, all of which is based on the principle of montage as a performative act that breaks with narrative tradition. This film's exploration of film grammar is that of a prodigy who creates a human world where he places capitalism at odds with his art. A constant in this work is the causal relationship between specific conflicts and external dynamics, conveyed through off-screen sound, signifying the country's predicament. The film's poetry flows around the force in each shot through the composition, ultimately achieving a complex arrangement of these in a montage that gives the sensation of navigating impossible times. We see images that evoke the dissonant disturbance of reality.

In *Terra em Transe*, a sort of aesthetic-political poetic construction emerges; this is the starting point for constructing a shrewd critique of capitalist *development* embedded in the lens of partisan politics with its liberal democracy within a modern state. At first glance, it might seem that Marxism would not provide answers to the problem of development within capitalist logic, given its very recent genealogy, and the debate regarding the emergence of developmental theses only arose with Truman's 1949 report and the creation of ECLAC. Or, as Ronaldo Munck (2010) warned, "Marxism has barely been on par with Western imperialism as an agent of development. However, orthodox Marxism was an integral part of the modernist paradigm, and in many ways, it is its epitome." In this sense, development can, in fact, be seen as a central axis of Marx's entire work and can also be understood in its own dialectic within the artistic-cinematographic dimension, which focuses on a whole series of contradictions that arise from the imposition of a single civilizing plan.

A fundamental part of Cinema Novo's revolutionary project was to shed light on the repercussions of the challenges posed by industrial development in backward social formations, where the bourgeoisie emerged late, drawing on Marx's critique. In the case of *Terra em Transe*, the critique through a Marxist aesthetic grounded in the *rough communism* of the people as a subject and engine of change points to the ahistoricism of the concepts used by theorists of *development* economics, playing with different narrative and aesthetic elements that also contradicted this ahistoricism of the hegemonic fictional narrative of cinema.

In this analysis of the film *Terra em Transe*, we have distinguished different elements that constitute a critique of the process of underdevelopment. Glauber Rocha understood that this underdevelopment depends on the nature of the global expansion of capitalism. However, he also saw the opportunity, like other filmmakers of this cinematic phenomenon, to carry out a poetic exercise of this underdevelopment, which went beyond and put into crisis the "representative" forms of reality and opted for an exercise of pure creation, unexplored in political cinema until then.

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Curricular Overview

Diana Montes has worked as a teacher and a researcher. She is currently a doctoral candidate in the Latin American Studies Program at UNAM. Her research interest focuses on Political Cinema in Latin America, particularly in films made in Mexico and Brazil.