

Brazilian Landscape in the Misplaced Modernism of Glauber Rocha's *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* (1963)

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The landscape of Brazil has been instrumental in the historical attempts to construct its national representations of cultural identity. From the exotic flora and palm trees in lavish colors presented by Tarsila do Amaral in the *Semana de Arte Moderna* of 1922 to Hélio Oiticica's *Tropicália* (1967) and its international expansion with Caetano Veloso's homonymous album in the late 1960s, the warmth of the Brazilian landscape has been the synonym of the appealing *promesse du bonheur* that never actually reached the country. Contrary to those representations of colorful idealism, filmmaker Glauber Rocha attempted a different visual strategy by framing the narrative of *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* (*Black God, White Devil*, 1963) in the black and white concreteness of the *sertão*, the vast, arid region in the country's northeast dominated by desolate sceneries associated with Brazilian backwardness.

In the dawn of global postmodernism, the *Cinema Novo* conveyed the revolutionary ideals of Latin America in the 1960s and, like many other Brazilian artistic movements, it sought to present cultural identity as an element of resistance against cultural imperialism. However, the revolutionary "aesthetics of hunger" and violence that Rocha defended in his 1965 manifesto¹ also failed to accomplish the *promesse du bonheur*, due to what Roberto Schwarz identified as incongruences resulting from "misplaced ideas".

This paper examines the role of the landscape in Rocha's film as the contextual actor within which all action takes place. My analysis questions the teleological history of the narrative, moving from the struggle to define national identity to an open end of universal modernism, and discusses the dialectical relationship between three elements: the Brechtian relevance in the expressive acting (ultimately a parody of estrangement), the fragmentary temporality (in a non-linear construction of time), and the ambiguous modernism at play in the discontinuous representation of space (wandering in the concrete landscape between utopia, the local and the universal).

The main argument holds that *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* is not a teleological allegory of history, as Ismail Xavier has suggested,² but a modernist narrative inscribed in the formal treatment of the landscape: the experimental framing of the binary *sertão*/sea appears symbolically as an abstract representation of the conundrum of national identity. In contrast with Xavier's thesis in which the film is an allegory of underdevelopment, this paper thinks of interpretative possibilities in the materiality of space. Rocha's revolutionary narrative is not based on universal reason but has an anarchist impulse following the political lead of the romanticized

guerrilla warfare so influential in the region after the Cuban Revolution in 1959. Fidel Castro's military victory in the different landscape of the Cuban Sierra Maestra had an unquestionable impact in Latin America. The triumph of the Revolution over the US-sponsored capitalism embraced by Fulgencio Batista set in motion a wave of unstable regional attempts for socialism, reflected through claims for artistic independence and cultural decolonization.

Brazilian cultural production orbited around national identity in the 1960s, but this was not caused by the 1964 coup d'état that ended the left government of João Goulart. Rather, political and cultural events responded to the same atmosphere that led to the armed revolt and was palpable in the years before. Experimental art conveyed the tensions of late modernism on the margins that had not experienced the benefits of modernization. How did Brazilian culture during this decade solve the aesthetic-political conflict? Is it possible to detach those artworks, films, or literary works from national identity? Can Brazilian formalist experiments in the 1960s still reflect upon interiority, depth or abstraction, while searching for revitalizing social forms that are all-inclusive? What could remain after these works abandoned nationalism? Is there still a meaning for a modernism—or postmodernism—at large beyond national identity?

A revised analysis of Rocha's film may help answer some questions. Despite the film's flaws to represent a realist social being through its formal fragmentation and multiple temporalities, *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* hangs on to a late modernism pregnant with utopian ideas in a land that reached cultural postmodernity, as García Canclini suggested, before any modernization was in place.³ In fact, Brazil exemplifies the tensions of a whole region where cultural postmodernism arrived before the social advances of modernization. The slogan "*Ordem e Progresso*" that appears in the national flag since 1889 has been manifested only partially: order has been imposed through military force or police brutality; progress arrived at least a century late and only for some. More recently, the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Games of Rio 2016 have placed the Latin American "economic miracle" on the international stage—but the differences remain considerable between those playing Monopoly on the side of Petrobras and those playing death on the side of the favelas. The lack of modernization in technology and social infrastructures was even clearer in the first half of the twentieth century. By 1940, the literacy rate was under fifty percent of the population in a nation with fifty percent descendants of slaves. By the time slavery was officially abolished in 1888, it had been practically eradicated by what literary critic Roberto Schwarz named an "ideology of favor" resulting from the adoption of capitalism. Since waged labor was cheaper than maintenance of slaves, the slave became an "*agregado*," a free citizen who, nonetheless, needed the favor of the landowner to survive. The consequences of this model based on symbolic, unforgivable debt are predictable.

Like many fronts of our own war today, Rocha's battle for the left utopia was driven by revolutionary violence against the right utopia imposed by military power. Hereafter, this analysis will locate the film historically at the inflection point between late modernism and postmodernism; between the critical nationalism for intellectuals and populist nationalism for a mass audience; between the Brazilian national left and the military-imposed national right. Most interpretations, including Rocha's intention towards a dialectical montage, claim critical distance to national identity, but the film is also the result of experimental modernism and its impulse toward autonomy and immanent abstraction. A formalist, aesthetic account can salvage this important film from the ideological contradictions that this paper will explain below.

It may not be superfluous to remind us that the same concept of modernity in European cultural history interrelates with modernization, modernism, and construction of national identity. However, the discussion of the terminology loses all simplicity when placed outside the European or American historical margins. For instance, Paul Schroeder's analysis of Rocha's film avoids the term *modernism* due to its multiple meanings and uses instead *experimental* or *avant-garde*, also complex terms.⁴ The nominal problem has a difficult resolution and is perhaps inherent to modernism in the margins at large.

These conflicts are apparent in Brazil. The contrast of the theoretical frameworks of Luis Camnitzer and Roberto Schwarz illustrates two conflicting positions in the broader analysis of Brazilian culture. Camnitzer thinks of Latin American art as constituent of a whole cultural identity, an anti-imperialist perspective centered in the visual arts as militant, focused on notions of political identity, and where authentic aesthetics that define an alternative modernity in the margins is extrapolative within the Latin American geographic margins. Schwarz considers the misplacements that occurred in Brazilian culture through the dialectical study of its literature and film; nationalism errs and the incorporation of foreign influences creates maladjustments in culture. We may call these two perspectives *Latin Americanist* and *critical*.

Camnitzer is interested in identifying tropes that can point to crucial directions as examples indicative of the rest of Latin America. To identify these topics, Latin Americanist critics refer often to notions of hybridized identity to place it in contrast with Euro-American hegemony to create a new form of identity — no longer Brazilian but Latin American. In *Conceptualism in Latin American Art*, Camnitzer discusses new Latin American cinema at large, and identifies its influence in the development of questions of identity; the militancy of new Latin American cinema was part of a process of resistance directed at political concerns. This account dismisses considerations of class; yet another problem is the indistinct treatments of cinema in Colombia, Brazil, Cuba or Bolivia without attending to their strong social and political differences. In contrast, class—one of the crucial issues in Brazilian and Latin American societies—is at the core of Roberto Schwarz's cultural criticisms.

In the influential essay "Misplaced Ideas," Schwarz points to the causes of Brazilian modernist failure: the ideas imported from European Enlightenment were misplaced due to the different social structures developed in Brazil since colonialism. The existences of slavery and later abolition, and the resulting ideology of favor, were incompatible factors, based on wage labor, with the development of European capitalism. Ideological life in Brazil was governed by favor, or the relationship between landowner and the *agregado*, exemplified in Rocha's film by Manoel, a free man who, nonetheless, depends on those with private property and power. Unlike the European ancient regime of feudalism, this new ideological pattern had its roots in colonial capitalism. The European model of rational production made no sense in Brazil, where liberal ideologies derailed and misplaced, producing an ideology of a secondary degree: the culture of favor substituted wage labor for symbolic compensation. The arts expressed the falsehood of liberal ideas, and Brazilian Modernism suffered aesthetic distortions: anachronism, disproportion, nonsense, unmanageable contrasts, and finally, *tropicalism*.⁵

Interpretations of Latin American culture are typically polarized: *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* defines *Cinema Novo* in the militant phase of Latin American cinema, as a paradigm of resistance to capitalism and imperialist colonization; the film is also the failure of revolutionary strategies that appropriated foreign culture and reproduced it without generating a consistent, unitary identity. Most Latin Americanist accounts subscribe to the former. Still, critical interpretations can be fruitful.

The Film

Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol illustrates the conflicts of Brazilian modernism, and the irresolvable struggle between three possible directions: one, holding onto a modernism; two, proposing an impossible postmodern rupture with tradition; and three, driving the utopian march towards modernization. The film's political and cultural problems are apparent in the formal poetics of art cinema, the dialectics of copy and *antropofagia*, and national identity.

The plot is relatively simple. Manoel and Rosa incarnate the life of poverty in the *sertão* [Figure 1] under the social injustice of what Schwarz called the ideology of favor. Manoel is unable to stand his boss's behavior and kills his patron. The couple escapes to join a religious group under the radical messianic leader Sebastião. After Rosa puts Sebastião to death, they become followers of the revolutionary *cangaceiro* Corisco. Paid by the institutional church and landowners, the mercenary Antonio das Mortes terminates Corisco, and Manoel and Rosa run to an uncertain future that concludes with Manoel, alone, reaching the sea [Figure 2].

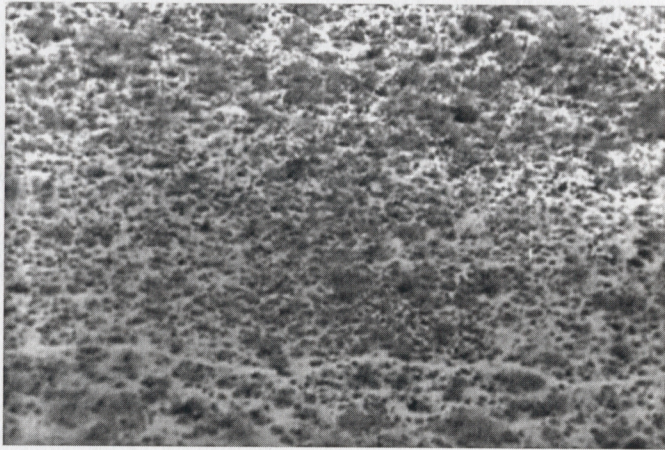


Figure 1. The *sertão* in *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* (1963), Directed by Glauber Rocha. Produced by Copacabana Filmes. Distributed by RioFilme.

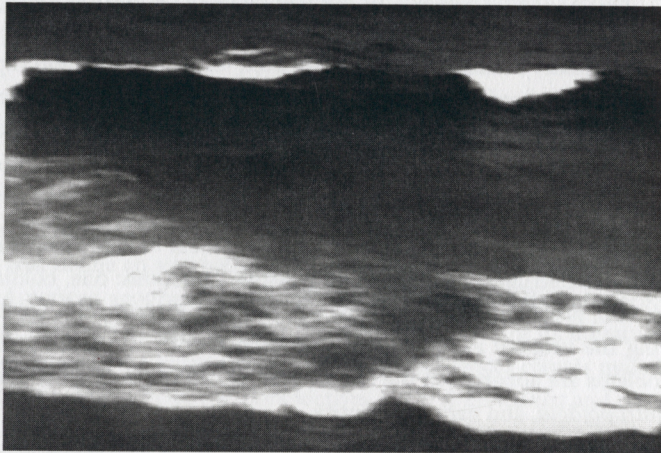


Figure 2. The sea in *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* (1963). Directed by Glauber Rocha. Produced by Copacabana Filmes. Distributed by RioFilme.

Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol is not an action movie, however, but a filmic experiment of intentional errors, juxtaposed frames and *intellectual montage* that expose the filmmaking process. It connects with Eisenstein's techniques and Benjamin's modernist faith in mechanical reproduction. As Schwarz often recalls, Brazil in the 1960s is not Russia or Germany in the 1920s, and this evocation of an early form of avant-garde film is subject to the maladjustments that also appear in Hélio Oiticica's *Tropicália* and Caetano Veloso's *tropicalismo*.

Montage, Violence, Revolution

The Brazilian culture of *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* appears in a symbolic, multilayered, dialectical relationship. The ideology of favor produces the primordial crime of the plot: class struggle can only be fought through revolutionary violence. Violence is reactionary (when inflicted by the colonizer) or revolutionary (when inflicted by the colonized). Horror marks this difference and separates each narrative fragment in the film. Rocha's aesthetics of violence are best explained in his manifesto "An Esthetics of Hunger." His proposal contrasts the opulence of the West: "... the hunger of Latin America is not simply an alarming symptom: it is the essence of our society."⁶ Hunger is not primitive, but violent and revolutionary: "Cinema Novo shows that the normal behavior of the starving is violence; and the violence of the starving is not primitive." He adds later: "an esthetic [sic] of violence, before being primitive, is revolutionary," and remarks: "Only when confronted with violence does the colonizer understand, through horror, the strength of the culture he exploits."⁷

In revolutionary terms, violence leads towards utopia. Whether the utopia is possible or not, or any ontological interpretations of this utopia, remains open ended in Rocha's film: in the last sequence, Manoel runs from left to right, towards the known inevitable exit, and he reaches the end. The sea, where Manoel ends, appears as a symbolic liberation and is dialectical to the *sertão*, the dry wilderness in which the full length of the narrative has been taking place. This sea cannot be any other than the Atlantic Ocean, however, the bridge to Europe. Or is it a bridge to Africa? Is this end a liberation or a cul-de-sac? Is it a door to progress or a return to primitive origins? Either way, the cultural conundrum of Brazil's culture is dialectically negated and unresolved. In *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol*, Corisco and Sebastião are also the symmetrical confrontations of the *Black God* and the *White Devil*. The characters are reflections of the landscape, which is omnipresent in its dialectical relationship between the concreteness of the *sertão* and the utopia that takes form in the image of the sea – or, the concrete backwardness confronted with the *promesse du bonheur*. According to Rocha's manifesto, the characters are not primitive but the unique and violent expression of the aesthetics of hunger. This violence is mirrored, moreover (and always metaphorically), in the juxtaposition of *sertão* and the sea as two facets of the natural landscape of Brazilian identity.

Paul Schroeder's brilliant analysis of *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* underscores Eisenstein's influence stylistically and narratively.⁸ The film is divided through Marxist historiographies, dialectical montage and metanarrative where "several relatively independent episodes are combined into a coherent whole by placing them in successive and dialectical relationships to one another, and in such a way that each semi-independent episode may be read allegorically as a stage in the dialectical development of national history."⁹

Defining Eisenstein's influence in the development of Latin American film serves anti-imperialist strategies. It also contradicts original aesthetics in the region. The ideological fracture of the whole of Latin America is noteworthy: Eisenstein's influence was especially relevant on the Atlantic shore of Central and South America, in countries that were politically aligned with the Marxist tradition initiated with Cuba's Revolution of 1959. Meanwhile, other countries such as Argentina or Mexico, with governments in proximity to US politics, followed a Hollywood model of production. Similarly to the struggle between abstraction and social realism during the Cold War, film in Latin America experienced the radical division between two political ideologies: capitalism and socialism—the first led by Hollywood dictates and the latter influenced by avant-garde cinema.¹⁰ Eisenstein's impact on Rocha is unquestionable but, recalling Schwarz's thesis on the misplacements in Brazilian culture, Brazil's 1960s were not Russia's 1920s.

Brechtian Acting

Brechtian acting in the film is worthy of attention. Othon Bastos (Corisco) epitomizes the highly expressive theatricality in *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol*. As with intellectual montage, tactical dramaturgy intends to create a successful distance from the culture industry and against cultural imperialism.

One must ask: are these strategies successful? The answer is no, not entirely. Brechtian acting is, in fact, defective for the revolutionary purposes of the film. For Schwarz, Brecht's influence in Brazil since the late 1950s produced incongruities and maladjustments "bound to the [Brechtian] idea of estrangement itself."¹¹ Nationalist developmentalism during the years prior to the coup of 1964 required the "mystifying identification that Brechtian estrangement undid."¹² After the military uprising, however, theatre's involvement with popular music became directed to radical counter-elites in the name of freedom, and not to the consumer. Authors such as Caetano Veloso and Chico Buarque in music, or Glauber Rocha in film, "owed to the radiation of that moment when the processes of popular art, aesthetic experimentation and political theatre came together as a historical force."¹³ After 1964, Brechtian experimentation developed in unforeseen directions. Rocha transformed narrative procedures intended to foster critical distance into "a vehicle for rational emotions of epic propaganda to offset the political defeat."¹⁴ However, this emotional narrative would not appear yet in *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol*; the film marks an inflection point of cultural production right before the coup.

Brechtian experimentation through estrangement did not convey the revolutionary purposes of the film. Estrangement was a possible strategy in Germany's 1920s, but its Brazilian appropriation does not surpass the level of parody. As part of the first avant-garde, Brechtian acting and intellectual montage were never designed for audiences of popular culture; when appropriated on the margins for the Brazilian neo-avant-

garde, these strategies failed to connect with the masses and to revolutionary aims. If Lisa Shawn and Stephanie Dennison point correctly to the "failure of [*Cinema Novo's*] revolutionary project and its ultimate failure to engage with the Brazilian public,"¹⁵ Eisenstein's montage and Brechtian acting are causes of this double failure. They also evidence the fallacy in Latin Americanist appropriation of non-Western (non-European) and non-Latin American influences as precursors of Latin American identity.¹⁶ There is a dialectic between Latin Americanist attempts to decolonize the culture of the Americas and the fact that art is condemned to exist in relation to the materiality of form. The culture industry in the age of international enterprise is tied to the international languages that are staged in the mainstream circuits of international film festivals and exhibitions. Already in the 1960s, *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* was nominated for the *Palm d'Or* in Cannes in 1964 but received little to no attention in Brazil. The paradox that the utopia of a post-colonized multiplicity of identities is reduced to the theoretical study of disciplinary (or interdisciplinary) academia makes the praxis of decolonizing culture an oxymoron.

Teleological History vs. Abstraction

Ismael Xavier interprets the film as an unresolved representation of history. The nature of the distinct phases of the narrative is organized "within a certain teleology" where the horizon of history is not delineated by Manoel or Rosa, but "requires that the certainty of the end be affirmed through incompleteness."¹⁷ Xavier states correctly the diegetic action of the final sequence, where the song reasserts the hope of transformation by the refrain: "the *sertão* will become the sea, and the sea the *sertão*."¹⁸ In the resolution after Corisco's death, Manoel and Rosa run towards the sea in the "first straight-lined vector within a trajectory marked by a constant circling of glances, movements, and even thoughts."¹⁹ The "redemptive power of [the film's] teleology" is radical, with a story that "evolves as the fulfillment of destiny;" the heterogeneity of representation leaves the end unresolved in the tension between the "movements in which man and destiny struggle for primacy."²⁰

Two key concepts appear in Xavier's reading of the film's temporality: *teleology* and *horizon*. They relate inevitably to Hegel and Heidegger: respectively, the construction of national idealism through phenomenology of spirit and the view of an ontological realization that can be projected by the trinomial poet-philosopher-politician (that Heidegger exemplified in the controversial equation Hölderlin-Heidegger-Hitler). Can this perspective be of use to interpret national constructions in *Cinema Novo*? If so, what is the role of the landscape? Taking the idea of the Heideggerian landscape as constitutive of the timely horizon for the foundation of a people (or its more recent version in the Latourian new-materialism so influential nowadays), the Brazilian nationalism implied in the representation of a reified landscape appears derailed historically. It is just as doomed to reproduce maladjustments when brought to the peripheral construction of its modernism.

Rather than time, we may want to look at space. Xavier considers the binomial *sertão* and sea as the central metaphor of the film, but interprets these places as allegories of time: the “presence of the sea connotes domination and fulfillment” but is a *telos* that “remains out of reach [and] strengthens the formula of hope.”²¹ This teleological conclusion of history that transforms the *sertão* in sea (by alleged means of modernization) is not only inconclusive, but also deceiving. Is Brazilian history condemned to the *telos* of modernization? Something must be at fault if the promised modernization never arrived.

In fact, the Heideggerian *horizon* never appears—either symbolically or formally. Instead of a horizon, (as in Heidegger’s ontology of a people) there is a space: the landscape does not constitute the reified flatness of the pictorial surface that was instrumental to Tarsila do Amaral. But the spatial terrain where a social being can be put into practice (whether this social being appears in Rocha is a different matter, but at least this material landscape is pregnant with possibilities). In the last sequence, the sea appears abruptly as a symbolic liberation and is dialectical to the *sertão*—the wilderness in which all the action has been taking place. The camera frames the sea and waves on the shoreline with a shot from a diagonal, almost vertical vantage point. The photographic frame does not respond to cinematic conventions and formal mechanics of travelling, panning, or tilting but creates an image of certain dissonance and relative aesthetic autonomy. As Xavier puts it, “the surf invades the screen; the *sertão* becomes the sea.”²² This *becoming* is not an allegory of history, but the broken utopia framed by abstraction. As the camera lens frames the sea, narration stops and becomes abstraction. The sea is a place, yet not a territory. It is the abstract space of consciousness and realization that the Brazilian people lost the shell of immunity that had been falsely projected by the ideology of nationalism.

Let us consider a different late modernist film from the Greek margins: *Ulysses’ Gaze* (1995) by Theo Angelopoulos that also explores national identity. Fredric Jameson has praised Angelopoulos’s modernist forms of collective narrative and underscored its materialism or “passion for the resistance of matter” and the use of sequence shot: “the traveling camera sets this materiality in motion.”²³ This road movie travels through modern locomotives (boat, bus, car, or train) where the camera becomes subjective and objective at one.²⁴ In *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol*, the formal treatment contrasts radically with Angelopoulos’s work. In Rocha’s *aesthetics of hunger*, modernization has not yet arrived and traveling happens by foot throughout the film²⁵—or even crawling, as during Manoel’s ascension to Monte Santo. Manoel’s foot-trip is not only an allegory of modernization’s absence. The journey itself is an allegory of national history that is not teleological, as Xavier has interpreted it, but immanent and cyclical. The resolution at the sea does not complete the journey from the *sertão* to the sea but closes a circle *starting* with abstraction and *arriving back* to abstraction. The foot-trip travels through four stages: social injustice, religion, rebellion, and anarchy: it begins at the *sertão* and concludes—or rather is reset every

time—at the sea. There is no history but a cyclical repetition. The abstraction of *sertão* and sea represent the dialectical unity of Brazilian immanent contradictions.

Long shots abound too in *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* (especially in Corisco’s sequences) but, unlike in Angelopoulos’s method, Rocha’s frequent jump-cuts and juxtaposed shots disrupt the shooting by creating a critical montage where the camera loses subjectivity. However, both films present a collective narrative (of national identity) where theatricality is omnipresent—albeit in different forms. The materialism of Angelopoulos exists in Rocha, although appears as a maladjustment. The Marxian “all that is solid melts into air” becomes unstable in *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol*. Xavier’s allegorical transition from *sertão* to sea is in reality transmuting dust into foam; from a desert of dispersed ground, volatile thinned earth, to a sea of bubbles of air and water. These places are erratic: the *sertão* is the no-man’s-land; the sea is the unstable surf in the shoreline, a border that is never defined. How to inscribe a state in a no-place? How to define a nation on a blurred map?

The last scene juxtaposes music of bells, jingles, and choirs of happiness to resolve a narrative that never showed hints to a *promesse du bonheur*. While this might be interpreted as Brazilian teleological history resolving in *Ordem e Progresso* (as the national flag states) it is difficult to think of order in the photographic plane of the sea. With symmetrical shots at beginning and end, the film reinforces the abstraction and untamable nature of sea and *sertão*, the no-places of Brazilian identity (the place of Brazilian corporative identity as a global touristic site is the beach, not the sea.) The oblique, tangential, almost vertical perspective of the surf is unnatural and eerie.

The different music used for *sertão* and the sea create a compositional fracture. Dissonance appears not in the photographic montage—which is harmonious—but in the allegorical undertones of the music in the closing scene. *Sertão* and sea close a circle of abstraction while the music of beginning and end follow a continuity that is narrated by the lyrical songs. Utopia is never achieved. The bells and jingles and jubilant chants tell us so.

Aesthetically, the composition of the shot and abstraction of the theme makes perfect sense in the whole allegory. But the music breaks the unity producing a dissonance with the whole theme that, while deliberate, does not adjust to the representation of teleological historicity in Xavier’s thesis. Rather, the result is a maladjustment of enlightened ideas (romantic, utopian, teleological, la *promesse du bonheur*) that are, in Schwarz’s terms, the result of an ideological misplacement.

We may speculate with Rocha’s intentions to this ending. Did he naively believe in Sebastião’s utopian allegory? Or is the music treatment a parodic wink to critical nationalism? At the time of production, Rocha was unaware of the imminent military coup of 1964. Or, was he? It is difficult to state what was Rocha’s political position.

Shaw and Dennison have referred to Rocha's political ambiguity and remarked that several films by Nelson Pereira dos Santos and Rocha (including *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol*) were financed by José de Magalhães, one of the civilian conspirators of the 1964 coup who appears on the credit scores of the film.²⁶ In any case, it seems obvious that Rocha did not want to conclude *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* by offering a resolved ending. As Xavier well argues, Rocha's resistance to interpretation is by no means incidental but structural.²⁷

But is the resolution of the film successful? It is perhaps no more or less successful than the photographic work of Mario de Andrade. Both use the mechanics of a modernist medium (photography and film) in travel from the metropolis to the rural land to find Brazilian identity. Rocha's use of the camera produces similar results as Andrade's intentional error, as put in Esther Gabara's account of Brazilian modernism.²⁸ While Rocha's montage is popularly seen as a deliberate rupture (postmodern), the experimental use of montage, and travel towards abstraction makes it hold onto a form of modernism. There are differences: unlike Andrade's photographs exploring the indigenous, *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* is an exploration of class: clergy and landowner, *agregado* and *cangaceiro*. Unlike Andrade's travel to the interior land, Rocha's photographic medium travels from the *sertão* to the sea—from and towards the interiority of abstraction.

Resolution

Latin Americanist and critical perspectives conflict in their readings of Brazilian culture. The first has brought our attention to the region since the 1980s. Now we should abandon discourses that simplify the constructions of identity and fail to explain difference. Most of these accounts cannot propose a more just, social and equalitarian world that is pragmatic instead of utopian. By contrast, a critical approach to Brazilian culture explains the misplacements and maladjustments, but sacrifices the understanding of a whole-globalized-world.

The aesthetics of hybridization seem to be *passé* since the turn of the millennium welcomed globalized aesthetics. After the postmodernist decay, grand narratives still claim a place in understanding the world. Latin American art in the 1960s broke with hegemonic Eurocentrism and tradition, but it still reveals a bipolar symptom: bouncing between modernism and a radical postmodernism. As much as Oiticica in the visual arts and Caetano Veloso in music, Glauber Rocha's films are paradigms of these problematics. The cultural left has not been able to produce strategies to counteract the progression of the neoliberal right. Our own moment demands an askew point of view to rethink these works in relation to universal categories — especially after the notions of identity that were traditionally embraced by the left have been successfully appropriated by a worldwide uprising of nationalism and the authoritarian right.

A modernist reading of the film through its abstraction may be against Rocha's intentions and Latin Americanist interpretations, but since *Cinema Novo* was a failure, new readings may salvage the film and make it meaningful to our present. This paper has explored the symbolic and formal representation of the *sertão* and the sea in *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* as actual places against accounts of temporality and allegorical teleologies of Brazilian history that exhausted the *promesse du bonheur*. Modernization always conflicted with modernism in the margins. But precariousness exists in permanent contradiction with globalized modernity in the whole of our technologized, technocratic world. The main analysis focused on formal aspects of Rocha's film to understand the failures of Brechtian acting, identify misplaced ideas and maladjustments, and understand Brazilian culture detached from questions of identity. The *sertão* and the sea framed the discussion by looking at these places as universal instead of Brazilian. It is by looking at spaces of interiority and abstraction that we may still find our modernist common good—social justice, equality, liberty, solidarity...—and think of it not as a promise, but as a demand.

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NOTES

¹ Glauber Rocha, "An Esthetic of Hunger," in *Brazilian Cinema*, ed. Randall Johnson and Robert Stam, 68-71.

² Ismail Xavier, *Allegories of Underdevelopment: Aesthetics and Politics in Modern Brazilian Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

³ Néstor García Canclini, "Modernity after Postmodernity," in *Beyond the Fantastic*, ed. Gerardo Mosquera, (The MIT Press, 1996) 20-51.

⁴ Paul Schroeder, *Latin American Cinema: A Comparative History* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 9.

⁵ Roberto Schwarz, *Misplaced Ideas*, (London: Verso, 1992), 19-32.

⁶ Rocha, "An Esthetics of Hunger," 68-71.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Schroeder, *Latin American Cinema*, 168-170.

⁹ Ibid., 198.

¹⁰ Eisenstein's influence in the region is complex, but it is worth recalling his visit to Hollywood, his brief Mexican period, and the influence that his film may have left in the region. How this influence played in the construction of national identity is a study beyond the scope of this essay.

¹¹ Schwarz, "Brecht's Relevance: Highs and Lows," 242.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 243.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Lisa Shawn and Stephanie Dennison, *Brazilian National Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 87.

¹⁶ A surprising case is Camnitzer's references to Italian writer Giovanni Papini as precursor of Latin American conceptualism. Papini was a known fascist and supporter of Mussolini—a fact that Camnitzer bluntly avoids or ignores. See Camnitzer's *Conceptualism in Latin American Art*.

¹⁷ Ismail Xavier, "Black God, White Devil: The Representation of History," in *Brazilian Cinema*, ed. Johnson and Stam, 144-145.

¹⁸ Ibid., 146.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 147.

²¹ Xavier, *Allegories of Underdevelopment*, 31-34.

²² Xavier, "Black God, White Devil: The Representation of History," 146.

²³ Fredric Jameson, "Angelopoulos and Collective Narrative," in *The Ancient and the Postmoderns: On the Historicity of Forms* (London: Verso, 2015), 138-139.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ The exception is Manoel riding a horse in the first sequences, but this occurs before the travel begins. Why Manoel and Rosa embark in their journey with "nothing to take with us but our destiny" responds to a poetic rather than narrative argument.

²⁶ Shaw and Dennison, *Brazilian National Cinema*, 85-86.

²⁷ Xavier, *Allegories of Underdevelopment*, 34.

²⁸ Esther Gabara, Errant Modernism: *The Ethos of Photography in Mexico and Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).