

# The Politics of the Trilogy Form: *Lucía*, the *Oresteia* and The *Godfather*

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For Ambrosio Fornet

I recall years ago reading an interview with Bertold Brecht in which the interviewer asked Brecht whether he thought his work would be read in a hundred years. Brecht's reply was something like, "That depends who wins." At an historical moment when the apparently triumphant voices of self-appointed pundits and mysteriously funded "think-tanks" are proclaiming both the cultural<sup>1</sup> and political failure of the Cuban Revolution, I think it is appropriate to recall one of the true masterpieces created by the Cuban Revolution, the film *Lucía*. I speak of the film as "created by the revolution" not in any disparagement of the extraordinary contributions of the director Humberto Solás and his collaborators, but because -as I hope will become clear from my analysis- I believe that many of the film's most striking formal features are unimaginable outside the context of a successful revolution.<sup>2</sup>

In this essay I wish to explore the politics of an artistic form. Is there a legitimate way of discussing a specific form as marked with a specific political tendency?<sup>3</sup> Is an audience with a specific historical experience a necessary condition of possibility for the realization of some artistic forms? To those literary critics who have grown up within the framework of Anglo-American New Criticism, the very notion may seem absurd -confusing an "extrinsic" element like politics with an "intrinsic" element like genre. But is there any meaningful sense in which one could say, for example, that Homer, Vergil and Milton reveal a shared political perspective in the very choice of the epic form? To an orthodox Marxist of the old school such a question may, on the contrary, smack of a formalist abstraction from the density of radical historical difference. It may risk mystifying the multiplicity of social, political, economic and historically determined elements which sharply differentiate the archaic, politically fragmented world of Homer from Vergil's Rome, consoling itself for the death of the Republic with the totalitarian rationalization of the Empire, or finally, Milton's England, where the failure of the Puritan revolution has to be somehow reconciled with the instant decadence of the Restoration.

While I hope I would be the last to deny the heavy hand of the historically specific, the issue is perhaps more a matter of the *level* on which one speaks of "politics." A form which molds our perception of power relationships, our perception of who we are socially, politically or sexually-who are our bosses, who are our peers, who is below us, who is an appropriate focus of our desires, a form which defines our relation to the movement of time and the relevant arena for our action-such a form is eminently "political" in my view.

I believe that this is far more obvious to those who concentrate primarily on the medium of film rather than more traditional literary forms. To cite a not entirely random example, Garcia Espinosa, former director of the Cuban film institute (ICAIC), writes: "it is in fact impossible to question a given reality without questioning the particular genre you select or inherit to depict that reality."<sup>4</sup> There is further in Garcia Espinosa an explicit recognition of the relative autonomy of the medium itself: "Until now, we have viewed the cinema as a means of reflecting reality, without realizing that cinema is in itself a reality, with its own history, conventions, and traditions. Cinema can only be constructed on the ashes of what already exists. Moreover, to make a new cinema is, in fact, to reveal the process of destruction of the one that came before."<sup>5</sup> The process of destroying the old forms does not thus imply ignoring them, but the self-conscious subversion of their prior political tendency. So, for example, Garcia Espinosa imagines "a Tarzan film in which the hero takes part in contemporary political conflicts, marries an African woman, and is assimilated into African culture."<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, as the example of Milton especially illustrates, the most self-conscious attempt to subvert the content of an old form does not necessarily eradicate the most important ideological

elements in the form. Thus despite the widely different political and theological commitments of Vergil and Milton, both the *Aeneid* and *Paradise Lost* insist on the fateful seriousness of every sort of politics, insist on the essential linkage -for good or ill- between the sphere of consequential human action and a transcendent order, insist upon a certain extensive temporal scope for that action as the essential precondition of its becoming -if not totally intelligible- then at least meaningful. The polished high diction of literary epic, its focus on a theme of alleged world-historical significance, its divine machinery, its vast length are all in this sense “political.” In the same way, to pursue *ad absurdum* perhaps Garcia Espinosa’s example, it is hard to envision *any* Tarzan movie, except a comic parody, in which the problematic confrontation of the white male representative of the overdeveloped world and the black peoples of developing Africa is not a central interest, in which potentially deadly conflict arising from some quest to exploit Africa or to expel the exploiters is not a crucial element in the plot and the consequent excitement of the film as a film.

In dealing with film there is the added complexity of the level on which we can speak of its “form” or “genre.” Moreover, as John Mraz has pointed out, “Cuban revolutionary film in general has been characterized by what he calls ‘formal resonance’ -the aesthetic tone created by the juxtaposition of different film forms within a particular work.”<sup>7</sup> In discussions of *Lucía* available to me, “epic” is far the preferred term; but in film criticism this term is used loosely of a film that has large -scale battle- scenes and focuses on a period historically distant from the present. Kovacs applies “epic” somewhat more specifically to designate “a nation’s emergence from colonial domination...In dealing with the noblest of national aspirations it automatically moves from the realm of history to the exalted form of the epic.”<sup>8</sup> But Kovacs is himself, it seems, somewhat embarrassed by the film’s failure to adhere to an “epic” quality after the first section (*Lucía* 1895): “the tension of the first episode is too great to be sustained through the entire film” (p. 44) -as if there were some extracontextual law of tension-maintenance that countermands the imperatives of true epic. In fact Kovacs proceeds himself to describe *Lucía* 1933 as a «novella» (1975: 45) and all thought of “epic” seems to have disappeared in his discussion of the third episode, *Lucía* 196...

Without denying that *Lucía* in its scope and in some aspects of its first episode fits the broad sense of “epic” as used in film criticism, I would like to propose that the politics of its trilogic form can better be understood by juxtaposing it to the only complete surviving trilogy from ancient Greece, Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*. However, in exploring the connection between Aeschylus’ dramatic trilogy *Oresteia*, first performed in 458 B.C. and the Cuban film trilogy *Lucía* first released in 1968, I am not attempting to argue for a specific, conscious influence of the ancient on the modern.<sup>9</sup> Until I read Roberto Retamar’s ground-breaking and “penetrating”-to echo the Center for Strategic and International Studies-essay, “Caliban,” it had never occurred to me that, Humberto Solás, the writer-director of *Lucía* might have read Aeschylus. Retamar writes, “Apart from a few professors of philology, who receive a salary for it, there is only one type of man who really knows in its entirety the literature of Europe: the colonial.”<sup>10</sup> To the extent that Solás’s prerevolutionary formation was colonial, it became more conceivable to me that Solás may indeed have read what very few North American professors of philology have read.<sup>11</sup> Retamar, however, also quotes Martí: “The European university must yield to the American university. The history of America, from the Incas to the present, must be taught letter perfect, even if that of the Argonauts of Greece is not taught. Our own Greece is preferable to that Greece which is not ours. We have greater need of it.”<sup>12</sup> I agree. In spite of the fact that Aeschylus was a special favorite of Marx,<sup>13</sup> it is irrelevant to me whether or not Solás has read Aeschylus: without the reality of specifically Cuban history -I would say, without the reality of a successful revolution- he could not have envisioned the trilogy *Lucía*.

In order to make a case for this perhaps outrageous proposition, I must explore briefly the specifically Greek political roots of the Aeschylean trilogy form as a prologue to exploring some of the ways in which the Cuban choice of the trilogy adheres to significant features of the ancient form. As a corrective epilogue I will return to my own culture and look briefly at *The Godfather* -a trilogy manqué which subverts the form precisely to the extent that it is not exploring a positively revolutionary society.<sup>14</sup>

## THE ORESTEIA: FORM AND CONTEXT

Aeschylean trilogy consists of three connected dramas which, by virtue of their very connection, insist on meaningful movement through a span of time that cannot be readily encompassed within the consciousness of a single adult. This is what I take to be its most decisive feature -its positive political essence, which is the chief basis of the parallel with *Lucía* I wish to explore. Thus dramatic trilogies like O'Neill's or novelistic trilogies like Dreiser's, which follow the same character through successive stages of life, do not fit the pattern first set in Greece of the fifth century B.C. This is in no sense a criticism of such trilogies, but I think there is more than pedantry at stake in insisting on the specificity of a relation to history in distinguishing Aeschylean trilogy from the more familiar type of confined to stages of a single life. Such literary works, or films like Bertolucci's *1900* or Arthur Penn's *Little Big Man*, may explore a relatively broad historical panorama, but in so doing insist on how many changes can be experienced by a *single* consciousness. What I would designate as the specifically Aeschylean trilogy form posits a dialectic of generations in which the consciousness of one generation is inconceivable without the consequences of the *actions* of the previous generation. As a corollary of this generational dialectic, it insists as well upon a gap between the pace of real historical change -fundamental changes in the social, political or economic structures- and the subjective experience, the subjective internalization of those changes in different generations. For a progressive audience, I would argue, "tragedy" lies precisely in the confrontation with that gap, the failure of the pace of historical change to correspond with commitments of human actors to change their world for the better .

In the *Oresteia*, Aeschylus (525/4-456 B.C.) adapts older patterns of dialectical emergence and delayed justice from Hesiod (2nd half of the eighth century B.C.) and Solon (c. 640-560 B.C.) to the radically changed realities of his own moment to offer a complex vision of the working out of historical change on the political and sexual levels. His generation of Athenians, which had experienced the end of tyranny (510 B.C.), the invention of democracy by Cleisthenes (507/6 B.C.), the immediate attacks of oligarchic neighbors and the massive attempt to destroy Athens by the Persians (480-79 B.C.), and -only five years before the trilogy was produced- an internal revolution of conservatives against more radical democrats (462-61 B.C.), constituted an audience with a very sharp sense of the meaning of historic change and the fateful consequences both of socio-political institutions and human action.<sup>15</sup>

The first play, the *Agamemnon*, represents a political order which fuses a vague image of Homeric kingship with a sharply focused analysis of aristocracy -dominance of political and economic life by the great houses (*oikoi*), which transmit their power, wealth and- in a sense-their penchant for crimes of arrogance through inheritance. On the sexual level this regime is presented as a world in which male crime against women -adulterous seduction (Helen as well as the unnamed wife of Atreus), rape and the enslavement for sexual exploitation of female war-captives (all the Trojan women, but especially Cassandra), the murder of a daughter as a war-sacrifice (Iphigeneia)- provoke a double crime: a successful assassination of the king Agamemnon together with his war-prize mistress (Cassandra) and the usurpation of political power by a dominant female (Clytemnestra) allied with a subservient male lover from the younger generation (Aegisthus).

This usurpation is presented at the end of the *Agamemnon* explicitly as "tyranny," the form of government which the Athenian audience knew as the immediate precursor to its own democracy and tended to see as the total antithesis of democracy. The second play of the trilogy, *The Libation-Bearers*, explores the political atmosphere of tyranny, where intimidation and repression breed a second round of intrigue and another double assassination -this time of the tyrants. On the sexual level Aeschylus presents the son (Orestes) and daughter (Electra) allied with the father (dead though he is to be sure) against the mother and her young consort. Aeschylus thus offers homologous permutations of the familial triangles exhibited in the first play. In the *Agamemnon* the father treats his daughter with ultimate hostility and is the object of hostility from the mother, who proclaims herself the ally of the dead daughter. The mother effects her revenge by allying herself with a lover from her son's generation against the father Agamemnon. In the second play we find the father (now a ghost before whose tomb the children pray throughout much of the play) and the son allied against the mother as well as the father and daughter allied against the mother. These reversals may not fit our conception of "progress" : they are simply alternative options within a family structure still conceived of as the locus of violent hostility. For the predominantly male Athenian audience, however, this is presumably an ideologically satisfying tilt back toward male control with the evil father rehabilitated *only* after he is conveniently dead.

The third play, the *Eumenides* or *The Kindly Ones*, invokes as the final political stage of history Athenian democracy, characterized above all by courts and the secret ballots cast by anonymous citizens as the alternative to the seemingly unbreakable cycle of murderous revenge. On the sexual level the male-identified female divinity Athena is the central vehicle of whatever resolution is achieved in the trilogy as a whole. The incorporation through persuasion of the potentially threatening representatives of the old order, the female Furies, dramatizes (literally “makes action of”) the democratic alternative to the violent “solutions” of the preceding two plays. The Furies are now transformed into “Kindly Ones,” preserving Athens from any future *stasis*, a word which covers “civil discord” and “factionalism” as well as “revolution.” This obviously political role is combined with a new sexual function: for the future «the Kindly Ones» are to be fertility goddesses especially charged with overseeing marriage and the family, the locus of disorder in earlier political forms.

We must consider whether the ideological thrust of this form is ultimately anti-historical -an attempt at closure, an insistence that history stops here- or an essentially progressive representation of process, of the long view of historical change. Both elements are clearly present. But the third phase is -in relation to what we can know of the political realities of the work’s historical moment- a utopian projection, an appeal for a harmony and reconciliation that must have looked remote in the wake of a recent plot by disgruntled aristocrats to get rid of the democracy by betraying Athens to Sparta.<sup>16</sup>

In this rapid overview of the *Oresteia* my limited purpose has been to demonstrate that the trilogy form entails a dialectical vision of comprehensive, potentially positive change. Secondly, Aeschylus insists at each stage upon the fusion of the sexual and the political, applied to the revolutionary history of his homeland, where a period dominated by the destructive feuds of aristocrats led to usurpation by a strong-man tyrant, whose regime was in turn cast out by the new creation, democracy.

## **LUCÍA AND THE DIALECTIC OF HISTORY**

The Cuban film trilogy *Lucía* attempts to represent the dialectical character of revolutionary change through three dramatic narratives in which the major female character has the same name. The first takes place in 1895, in the midst of the revolution against the old imperialism of Spain. Lucía is an unmarried woman in her thirties from an aristocratic family which owns extensive lands in the country but lives in the city. Her chances of marriage at the usual age have been disrupted by the war. She is seduced by Rafael, a Spanish military man who poses as an “a-political” half-Cuban, half-Spaniard returning to the land of his birth. Lucía is lured by her lover into revealing the location of the secret rebel camp, the family plantation where her brother Felipe and his comrades are in hiding. Driven “mad” by the sight of her brother’s corpse after the raid staged by Rafael, Lucía confronts Rafael in the central square of the city and stabs him to death.

The second narrative takes place in 1932 and encompasses the fall of the neo-colonialist dictator Machado and the subsequent disillusion with the equally corrupt regime that replaces him. Lucía II is from a wealthy bourgeois family with a business in the city and a summerplace off on an island. She falls in love with and is politically converted by a young revolutionary, Aldo. She becomes a worker in a cigar factory and participates actively in the agitation that leads to Machado’s downfall. She shares her lover’s growing disgust at the corruption of the new regime, for which some of his comrades have died in vain and which seduces others into mindless debauchery. Aldo returns to revolutionary action, but is gunned down in an unsuccessful assassination attempt. Part Two ends with Lucía, alone and pregnant, darkly moving toward a river ominously overshadowed by a looming black bridge. Suicide seems a distinct possibility .

The third sequence takes place in the early 1960’s in the countryside where the successful revolution against neocolonialism has concentrated its greatest efforts. Lucía III is a newly-wed illiterate peasant working on a cooperative farm. Her beauty is of a specifically Cuban *mestiza* type compared with the more European appearances of Lucía’s I and II. Her husband Tomas refuses to let her continue working after their marriage and becomes insanely jealous when a young teacher from Habana is housed with them in order to teach Lucía to read. Eventually fed up with Tomás’s oppressive behavior, though still very much in love with him, Lucía leaves him and returns to work. He becomes a drunkard and the film ends with their seemingly irresolvable fighting as he attempts to force her back into the old mold which she can no longer tolerate despite her love for him.

Obviously three separate narratives of events roughly thirty years apart, dealing with characters who are not only not in the same family, but not even in the same class, lack the inherent unity and the marked familial -not to say Oedipal- focus of a Greek trilogy concerned with successive generations of the same ruling *oikos*. In the Cuban context a familial focus would substantially undermine the demonstration of fundamental change in the nature and racial identity of the dominant class that is central to the specificity of the Cuban revolution. In Aeschylus too, however, the world of kings and the great aristocratic “houses” (*oikoi*) disappears in the third play as the acquitted Orestes becomes only a symbol for the current military alliance of Athens and Argos. Athena figures as the symbolic ruler of a democratic citizenry. More obviously like Aeschylus, writer-director Solás has chosen to give sexual politics a central place in his exploration of fundamental, long-term change on the level of political, social and economic structures. Indeed the burden of the third segment is the demonstration of how much more difficult it is to change sexual patterns than to achieve basic shifts of power in other spheres.<sup>17</sup>

Virtually everyone who has commented on the film trilogy<sup>18</sup> has remarked upon the stylistic and thematic richness of the first segment as compared with the other two. But rather than attributing this to either a falling off of inspiration or some essentialist law of tension-maintenance, I would argue that this is a *necessary* feature of the trilogy form: the same is true of the *Agamemnon*, the first play of the only surviving Greek trilogy, because it must not only evoke the initial historical stage but prepare for the subsequent two stages by elaborating themes and images that are capable of having, so to speak, a plot development of their own.

The specifically *dialectical* movement of political change -the implicit rejection of a simple, linear “progress” towards liberation- is clearest in the dark mood of both the second parts of these trilogies. The form, as it were, takes the long view of the revolution but insists that this view is not really available to the subjective consciousness of those whose efforts fail in the short run.<sup>19</sup> So too *The Libation-Bearers* presents the subjective experience of tyranny as distinctly worse in many respects than the inherited monarchy that preceded it. In the pervasive atmosphere of terror established at the outset, the chorus and Electra are afraid even to begin talking about their hatred of the regime. The apparent victory of Orestes leads him at the end of this play to the brink of madness and the isolation of the hunted wanderer. The second part of *Lucía*, with its drab factory, claustrophobic interiors and final shot of the somber bridge menacing over black waters, insists on the subjective experience of the pain of failed revolution, the bleak despair of an intolerable situation from which there seems no exit. It is what I am tempted to call a specifically Marxist conception of tragedy. I am reminded of the very moving words of Che Guevara screened at the end of the Chilean film, *The Promised Land (La Tierra Prometida)*. Alas I do not have access to a text and can only crudely paraphrase them: “For those who suffered and died for a revolution when the time was not right -for them too *our* revolution is made.” Most clearly here tragedy consists in that gap between subjective experience of individuals and the longer movement of history envisioned by the trilogy as a whole.

Both the third segments of these trilogies shift focus to obsessive personalities as emblematic of the obstacles to change where positive change has at last become feasible. The Furies, with their obstinate, compulsively repeated refusals to listen to Athena’s blandishments vaguely parallel later comic contests in Aristophanes between the stubborn, reactionary old choristers and the honey-tongued, Euripides-primed comic hero or heroine. Their eventual transformation leads to a philosophically “comic” celebration of fertility and marriage. The third part of *Lucía* is a kind of folk-comedy throughout -with repeated sexual puns, farcical mockery and the exaggerated behavior- as in the scene where Tomás systematically nails all the windows shut to keep his wife at home -characteristic of comic, obsessive characters. The singer-narrator celebrates in voice-over the fertility of the land of Cuba, and, as if adhering to a Bergsonian comic model -a figure *mechanically* repeating fixed behavior instead of exhibiting *human* adaptability to changed circumstances,<sup>20</sup> explicitly chides Tomás for his failure to adjust and conform to the new values of the revolutionary society. The final frame of a young shepherdess laughing at what for her are clearly only the “antics” of Tomás and Lucía suggests that the coming generation will be free of such “nonsense.” Yet the harshness of Tomás’s and Lucía’s suffering is too vivid for the audience to dismiss it as “mere” comedy. This dimension of the film suggests most deeply the dialectical nature of change -a recognition of the power of patterns from the past to resist and even negate- as they largely do in the case of these protagonists -the positive forward movement of history. It also suggests, despite all the elements which can be seen as self-congratulatory -the refusal of the ideological temptation of closure, which we have seen to be an important aspect of the trilogy form.

A necessary corollary perhaps of the dialectic movement of change in three phases is the artistic challenge of the form to impart a sense of meaningful unity to the whole. There are many subtle and complex means by which these two trilogies imply the essential continuity of this three-step process while conveying the sharp gap between the pace of historical change and the scope of an individual consciousness. As noted above, inaugurating a sustainable pattern of complex continuities and discontinuities, of similarities and significant differences, is an artistic necessity of the first play of the trilogy form. The subsequent plays can afford to be simpler precisely because the terms have been prepared for .

Aeschylus employs a rich range of repeated verbal and visual images to bind together his three segments even as he marks profound changes in consciousness. Most obvious and pervasive perhaps is the image of the longed -for light out of darkness.<sup>21</sup> This is both a dramatic visual metaphor on stage as well as a verbally repeated motif. First it is the literal torch-signal indicating the fall of Troy that releases the watchman from his long vigil. Metaphoric false hopes for a “light of salvation” haunt the language of the first two plays only to find literal and positive realization in the final torchlight procession with which the women of democratic Athens lead the transformed Furies to their new home as “the Kindly Ones.” But a host of other motifs and images-purple cloth, gold, wealth in general, trials, yokes, warfare, flowers, animals both predatory and pathetic varieties-convey on a purely unconscious level that people whose consciousness is formed under an inherited monarchy perceive and live their lives differently from those who live under tyranny or those who participate in democratic life. Moreover, the dramatic shift in scenes in the third play-first to Apollo’s shrine at Delphi, then to the statue of Athena in Athens-visually insist that we are in a different world from the oppressive old order dominated visually and metaphorically by the house (*oikos*) of Atreus both as place and as the key political structure of monarchy and aristocracy.

Beyond light and the setting, let me focus briefly on one further visual marker of change, the symbolic use of cloth. After the impressive but ominous entrance of Agamemnon in his chariot accompanied by his war captive Cassandra, the king is seduced by wife into walking into the palace on purple cloth, a clear symbolic reenactment of all the earlier acts of arrogance associated with excessive wealth. In the second play, after murdering his own mother, Orestes displays a cloth she had used to wrap around her own victim before piercing him (and the cloth) with multiple wounds. Here the bloodied cloth symbolizes the violent and corrupted heritage which Orestes’ tainted murder aims to terminate. Finally, in the climax of the third play the women of Athens are decked in purple stained robes as they escort the transformed Furies, now “Kindly-ones” to their new shrine. The symbol of aristocratic wealth and crime has been purged and appropriated by the sovereign citizenry of democratic Athens.

Solás’ achievement as a filmmaker is perhaps nowhere more striking than in his exploitation of the specific resources of his chosen medium to achieve a sense of continuity while conveying fundamental changes in consciousness.<sup>22</sup> Broadly this consists in three sharply differentiated filmic styles for each of the narratives which echo and play with the conventional devices of various film subgenres.<sup>23</sup> Thus the first segment-filmically the richest-alludes repeatedly to the conventions of historical “epic” and romance films, injects moments of Brechtian “distance” by devices characteristic of newsreel documentary,<sup>24</sup> then veers at crucial moments into the devices of surrealist films or films attempting to convey altered psychic states. For example, the brutally successful sneak raid by the Spaniards and the subsequent reversal in the cavalry counter-attack by the naked black slaves who have joined the revolution echoes and reverses all the American Westerns in which the cavalry arrives to reverse a sneak raid by “evil” Indians: here the people of color win. But in between the two phases of this classic battle is a surreal moment as Lucia wonders stunned and horrified searching amid the corpses looking for her brother. Its filmic distortions echo the dreamlike account earlier of the rape of nuns on a battlefield by men only pretending to be corpses. The distortions here also look forward to her disoriented, “mad” attack on Rafael. Thanks to her battlefield experience Lucia will become soul-sister to the “mad” nun Fernandina who haunts the streets of Habana.

Again without positing direct influence, I am struck by the ways in which the artistic needs of the first part seem to call forth in this figure of Fernandina a character who performs many of the functions performed by the figure of Cassandra in the *Agamemnon*. Both are “consecrated” women (Cassandra was a priestess) brutally violated by the dominant males of their respective worlds and as such symbols of its sexual crimes. Both take on the role of tragic prophetic figures doomed to be ignored. Both

are mocked and misunderstood by the masses whose best interests they alone articulate—Cassandra by trying in vain to warn the people's uncomprehending elders of the imminent murder of their king by the tyrants, Fernandina by her "mad" prophetic exhortation, «Wake up, Cubans.»<sup>25</sup> As Lucía departs on her fateful journey to the coffee-plantation Fernandina appears to cry out in vain "Don't go with him!" In the *Agamemnon* Clytemnestra triumphantly displays the corpses of the king and his slave-mistress both reduced to the "equality" of death. In *Lucía* it is the mad victims who share an equality of ambiguous triumph after Lucía "executes" Rafael. Fernandina rushes over to comfort her and their look of mutual recognition is in fact the real climax of that segment. Thus the first phase is experienced far less as a victory than as a violent disorientation and estrangement with only ambiguous prophetic hints of a different but unknowable future.

The second segment fluctuates between allusions to Hollywood filmic conventions of the thirties and forties and the evocation of the starkness of Italian neorealism. We begin in a dark, claustrophobic factory and are often enclosed in the oppressive bedroom of Lucía's mother or the starkly barren room of her lover. At the same time Taylor rightly stresses that the range of Cuban settings and society encountered in the scenes of the second segment insists visually that real change has occurred from the far more closed world of the creole aristocracy of first segment: "we see much more of Cuban life -the factories and white collar offices of Havana, the theaters, high-class brothels, government buildings, bars, beaches, working-class living quarters, etc."<sup>26</sup> Soft-focused close-ups of the "doe-eyed" Lucía II<sup>27</sup> insist on the limitations of her very real transformations from hot-house flower of the haute bourgeoisie to factory worker to street demonstrator. At the same time the somber, menacing darkness of the final shot of the bridge over the river toward which she slowly advances insists on the operation of forces beyond her control or comprehension.

The third segment is the hardest to categorize -it blends the open style of the documentary with highly stylized features of a folkloric drama- most prominent in the voice-over of the singer-narrator with his creative variations on "Guantanamera." Set in the dazzling sun of the countryside it avoids the static feel of many "country-idyll" films by the frequent images of trucks and people on the move. It sets up a suggestive dual contrast between the closed space of the newly-weds' little shack and, on the one hand, the bright open fields of the work environment and, on the other, the communal space of the party-headquarters where the whole community discusses and dances.

Mraz analyzes a unifying device which constitutes a more accessible parallel to Aeschylus' use of repeated images in different contexts both to give continuity and to mark significant shifts in consciousness. I refer to Solás's use of a peculiarly filmic symbol, the mirror. Like the torchlight in the *Oresteia*, it is verbally marked at the beginning of the trilogy. The first spoken words of the film are, "Girl, did you look at yourself in the mirror before leaving home...your hair's a mess." The first Lucía's mirror shots insist on her complete acceptance of a world in which a woman's appearance is her sole claim to worth. Lucía II's mother primps in front of a mirror in an unconsciously ironic attempt to look like Jean Harlow,<sup>28</sup> as she tries to console herself for her husband's infidelity. But Lucía herself moves to rebellion against her mother precisely when her mother tries to incorporate her into the world of the mirror by making her sit down before it to have her hair combed. As a factory worker Lucía II extends her rebellion against the mirror to the economic and political sphere by using lipstick to write "Strike" and "Down with Machado" on the mirrors of the women's bathroom in the factory. Lucía III starts making up her face in front of a mirror, but the mirror for her becomes a vehicle for measuring the distance between truth and image: she transforms herself into something grotesque to mark the essential falseness of the initial endeavor. Her husband-incapable of achieving that level of perception-happily sings a love song about eternal togetherness as he primps in leisurely fashion before the same mirror.



Lucía. Above: *The Godfather, Part II*

A more politically marked repeated element is constituted by the visual presentations of people of color. The first shot in *Lucía* shows an old, elaborately dressed black serving-man astride a horse which pulls the elegant carriage of *Lucía*. I have noted already the dramatic entrance of the naked black rebels who punish the Spaniards' sneak raid: the contrast with the opening image decisively puts the revolution against colonialism on the side of black liberation. Kovacs further suggests that the contrast of the *mestiza* features of *Fernandina* with the European looks of *Lucía I* anticipates the centrality of the *mestiza Lucía III*.<sup>29</sup> In *Lucía II* we get a brief glimpse of a black person riding on the same ferryboat that



carries Lucía back to the mainland. This suggests that at least some basic civil rights have been achieved. But the intensity of race prejudice is clearly glimpsed in the mother's bitter comments that gossips claim her husband's mistress is black. In *Lucía III*, not only is the protagonist more representative of Cuban racial mixture, but the chief authority figures in that segment, the head of the cooperative and his wife are distinctly black.

Finally, a repeated type-scene that marks continuity and change is the party scene.<sup>30</sup> In *Lucía 1895* the essential repressiveness of an aristocratic gathering of frustrated young women is underlined by the evident, perverse delight of Lucía's friend Rafaela in narrating the rape of Fernandina. In *Lucía 1933* the party scenes after the success of the revolution come as close to the surreal mode of certain scenes of Part I as the more restrained realistic mode of Part II permits. These scenes evoke dialectically the antithesis of repression- sex as a game of the politically impotent and drunkenness as the marker of political corruption. In *Lucía 196...* the dance and birthday party at the community center is strikingly condensed in its associations. It evokes broadly the fun of achieved community, but it is also marked by the resurgence of old-style jealousy and the awkwardness of adjusting, on both sides, to a new cultural encounter-as the Russian visitors raise Cuban eyebrows by their "strange" clothes and dance-style.<sup>31</sup>

The cumulative impact of such repeated devices and images is to insist on the different ethos, the different levels of consciousness possible in different historical epochs and, even within particular epochs, to suggest different levels between generations and within the same generation. It is precisely the multigenerational framework of what I am calling the Aeschylean or dialectical trilogy form that makes possible such types of representation.

### **THE GODFATHER: PLUS ÇA CHANGE, PLUS ÇA RESTE LE MÊME**

But does the trilogy form in itself necessarily imply a political commitment to a progressive, dialectical view of history? Such a contention would indeed involve an essentialist view of form which I eschew. I will pass over the complex example of Wagner's *Ring*, which is directly inspired by Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. But already in the dark conclusion of Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*, the third play of a trilogy otherwise lost, there is evidence that the form is not wedded to any inevitable optimism. It does, however, insist on an historical judgement- a multigenerational exploration-of a fatally corrupt ruling class.

In this connection I would like to look briefly at *The Godfather*, a cultural product of our own, over-developed, non-revolutionary society. Although its present three parts now make it, so to speak, an "official" trilogy, the first two parts, appearing in 1972 and 1974 respectively, appear to have been conceived to some extent as a unity, while Part III, appearing in 1990 was clearly an afterthought.<sup>32</sup> Part I deals with a crisis in the hegemony exercised by the aging Godfather and the transformation of his son Michael into the new Godfather. Part II rather arbitrarily<sup>33</sup> cuts back and forth between scenes of the original Godfather's youth-how *he* became Godfather -and scenes tracing Michael's career after his father's death. In spite of the trilogic concentration on generations of the same family, this structuring of the chronology seems to subvert or deny its potential as a trilogy. The juxtapositions serve an essentialist moral vision and blur a serious confrontation with history: "Chronology gives us the pegs on which we hang history." [a famous quote I can't trace]. The implicit trilogy of Parts I & II deals very nearly with the same three periods as *Lucía*: the turn of the century through about 1920, the forties immediately after W .W .II, and the period of the Cuban revolution, which in many respects constitutes the climax of *Godfather II*-the only glimpse of a "utopian" alternative. The trajectory of the three North American epochs is on one level a totally bleak, essentially repetitive process: an initially defensive posture towards threatened family solidarity provokes a use of violence which soon becomes a vehicle for exploitation that in turn leads to the destruction of the family. The far later Part III relentlessly and rather tiresomely repeats this "paradox" about protecting the family by destroying it. The second film ends with Michael's brooding and nostalgic flashbacks after he has had his own brother shot in revenge for his brother's earlier betrayal. The cycle of the revenge, which many see as the point of departure of the *Oresteia*, seems the end point of *The Godfather*.

Fredric Jameson has offered a compelling analysis of the two part structure.<sup>34</sup> Part I, he argues, offers an ideological displacement of the crimes of capitalism into the sphere of the Mafia, where political

and economic analysis can be safely transformed into some essentialist, mystified incarnation of Evil. At the same time the lovingly detailed evocation of the solidarity of the Mafia “family” in both senses reveals a utopian impulse -the envy of white middle- class Americans for the community of various immigrant-groups which capitalism itself has largely succeeded in destroying. Jameson sees the second part as an illustration of Macherey’s thesis that “the work of art does not so much *express* ideology as, by endowing the latter with aesthetic representation and figuration, it ends up enacting the latter’s own virtual unmasking and self-criticism.”<sup>35</sup> Thus the metaphoric displacement of capitalist big-business in Part I is unmasked in Part II when the quest for legitimacy drives the Mafia to take-over more and more “straight” businesses so that Michael sits down at the table with Batista and the heads of the U.S. telephone and telegraph company, the sugar company, and the mining company (in the film the names of the companies are changed to protect the guilty). Jameson notes: “The climactic end moment of this historical development is then reached (in the film, but also in real history) when American business, and with it American imperialism, meet that supreme ultimate obstacle to their internal dynamism and structurally necessary expansion which is the Cuban Revolution.”<sup>36</sup> The flashbacks to the youth of the first Godfather Jameson interprets as the unmasking of the utopian nostalgia for the family by tracing its roots to feudal Sicily, “the survival of more archaic forms of repression and sexism and violence.”<sup>37</sup>

This is a very strong reading of the two-part form, and others have appreciated the temporal juxtapositions of *Godfather II*. I would nonetheless add that the three-epoch structure also shows us twentieth-century capitalism in three decisive phases. The first is the period of enormous expansion of the U.S. industrial plant facilitated by the exploitation of a vast influx of European immigrant labor. In this phase the chief contradiction explored in the film is, on the one hand, the need for the new immigrants to band together to protect themselves and, on the other, the fact of their victimizing each other in their terrible vulnerability. To be sure, the systemic causes of their predicament are totally masked, but the consequences are in the forefront. The second era is the period of intensified exploitation of domestic markets after the second world war. The great economic issue in *Godfather I* is the demand of the more “business- like”, “modern” Mafiosi to move from what the aging Don views as commodities meeting “natural needs”-gambling and sex-to realizing the limitless growth potential of the drug trade. The regressive aspect of the Don, in terms of the logic of capital is to attempt to make a *moral* judgment about a *commodity*. Drugs, in this context become analogous to all the advertising-induced pseudo needs of the society of consumption. Finally, we see the period of export capital and multi-nationals, the enormously intensified exploitation of the third world, where Mafia bosses and corporate executives sit down with neocolonialist puppet dictators only to hear the explosion of revolution. The film presents ironically the symbolic cutting up of Hyman Roth’s birthday cake in the form of Cuba itself as the realization Roth’s articulation of a central goal of capitalism, one to be realized all too fully in the age of Reagan, Bush, and alas Clinton: “this kind of government knows how to help business... we have now what we really need -a real partnership with government.”

In all three eras the actual language of the film shows a consistently self-conscious meditation in both parts on the fatal dialectic of kinship and business. In Part I, for example, the most powerful excuse which “family” members can offer for their seemingly inevitable betrayals is that “it was nothing personal, just a matter of business.” The insistence on this phrase and its variants is a leitmotif through all the films. The young Vito Corleone, when he first is introduced to the exploitative practices of the “black hand” boss Fanucci, comments, “He’s Italian. Why does he bother other Italians?” The answer: “He knows there’s no one to take care of them.” The major betrayal in the latest period of the film is triggered by the bitterness of the old Italian “family” chief, Pentangeli, because Michael gives precedence to a bigger business deal with the Jew Hyman Roth. Michael later, with heavy dramatic irony, explains to Pentangeli, “All our people are businessmen; their loyalty’s based on that. On that basis, anything’s possible.”

*The Godfather* “trilogy” in this sense, like Aeschylus’ *Seven Against Thebes*, makes an historical judgment on a ruling system from inside its destructive contradictions and only points by implication toward the logic of revolution as a way out for those exploited by the system. But for all its richness *The Godfather* remains locked in an inner logic of despair, because its primary focus and target audience are a society more able to digest essentialist myths of innate human evil than to confront the openness of historical change. The only direct references to “history” in the whole film are emblematic of this cynicism. An historical paradigm of Roman Imperial practice is invoked to induce the suicide of

Pentangeli; and in arguing over the prospects of successfully killing Hyman Roth, Michael declares, "If history's taught us anything, it says you can kill anyone."

Symptomatic of this essentialism is the total failure of *any* part of *The Godfather* to deal radically with the relationships of the sexes. Part I ends precisely with the symbolic shutting out of Kay after Michael has coolly lied to her, having made just one exception to his rule that she never ask about the family's "business." As his agents of murder kiss the hand of the new Don, one of his flunkies firmly closes the door in Kay's face. In Part II she is literally cut off from the family again by a firmly closed door--this time by Michael as he imposes a harsh end to Kay's brief visit with her children. Kay's conscious choice of abortion and Michael's obsession with male offspring emerge as, on the one hand, a tragic denial of the family by a woman who has had too much exposure to specifically Mafia violence and, on the other, an alienating bit of ethnic archaism attributed to Michael. Their divorce confirms the failure of Michael's calculated effort at therapeutic exogamy in seeking a non-Italian wife. In Part III Michael's daughter Mary simply continues the stereotype of women as naive dupes, as dangerous sex objects, and finally, as helpless, innocent sacrificial victims. The transformation of Connie into an active proponent of violent solutions and herself the poisoner of Michael's aged rival Altobello (Eli Wallach) is indeed a striking innovation, but hardly seems to flow directly from a *new* vision of women's potentialities.<sup>38</sup> For the most part women are only in the margins of the picture. There is no confrontation of the structural integration of precisely those traditional roles in the system of obsessive male violence.<sup>39</sup>

The disappointments of Part III, released in 1990, some sixteen years after Part II, are not solely a function of Coppola "taking a dive for Paramount Pictures."<sup>40</sup> What is most painful is the sheer sense of mechanical repetition of the same paradoxes explored with passion and imagination in the earlier films. A different phase of capitalism, the fully multinational corporation, is central to the plot's focus on the acquisition of Immobiliare International; the role of the Catholic Church, a central reservoir for background ironies in Part I and II,<sup>41</sup> now comes very much to the fore as the Corleone family bails out a corrupt Vatican Bank, interacts with a pope and murders an archbishop; politics, seen previously as part of the frame of corruption, now are explicitly equated with the homology of "crime" and "business."<sup>42</sup> Yet we get essentially the same messages, now almost with a parodic force, about destroying the family in overzealous or hypocritical efforts to save it, about the power of money to induce betrayal, about the incompatibility of love and systematic violence. What is true of Part II is even truer of Part III: Coppola's "trilogy" -however described- ends up in the circuit of repetitious revenge that characterized the end of the *first* stage in Aeschylus' dialectical trilogy.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, despite the preparation of Vincent Mancini (Andy Garcia) to take over as Don (and make more sequels?), the film remains true to the only way in which most Americans can conceive of historical change: the experiences of a single consciousness passing through the stages of individual life.<sup>44</sup> All three parts of *The Godfather* are centrally focused on the life-experience of Michael: his aspirations to escape from the family business, his entrapment in the business, his relentless transformation into a monster, and his futile quest for salvation from his own monstrosity. Other figures serve to sharpen and highlight the meaning of these stages, but for all the embeddedness of the protagonist in a specific cultural milieu, he is always first and foremost the isolated individual in quest of but always losing community.

Thus both Coppola and Solás suggest in diametrically different ways the peculiar attraction in our own time of a form which is born of a revolution and which insists that the pace of meaningful change is greater than we can take in one lifetime. For Coppola that change is essentially the relentless destructive operation of the laws of capitalism upon the trapped individual. The glimpse at the Cuban revolution in Part II, while it points to the achievement of something other than capitalism for others, remains for Michael only a temporary frustration of his own aspirations to win as a capitalist. Coppola cannot envision meaningful changes in human consciousness nor in that decisive component of consciousness, the relations of the sexes, because for him history in this sense does not exist.<sup>45</sup> The distinction of the *Oresteia* and *Lucía*, both produced after successful revolutions, is that both works make a critical reassessment of gender relations the centerpiece of their dialectical exploration of fundamental change. While the *Oresteia* ends in a utopian celebration of an envisioned resolution, *Lucía* only hints in the smile of the shepherd girl at a horizon of utopian possibility behind the foreground of continuing struggle. But, to return to my point of departure, the form of the trilogy in each is not a free-floating form available for any artist to try out in any historical moment or, social formation: as a form it is linked to a shared perception of the experience of radical social and political transformation.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES:

(1) A curious example is a 63-page "book" entitled *The Cuban Revolution: Twenty-Five Years Later*, produced by the Center for Strategic and International Studies at Georgetown University and listing as its authors Hugh S. THOMAS, Georges A. FAURIOL and Juan Carlos WEISS. Boulder: Westview Press, 1984. Ordering it though a bookstore, I paid \$22.50 for this exiguous volume, which seems clearly designed to be given gratis to members of congress too busy to do their own homework. Lest the intended audience not read all 63 pages of the text, the project director helpfully summarizes nine "salient points" in less than a page. Point nine reads, "The Cuban revolution cannot offer a single notable novelist, a famous poet, a penetrating essayist, not even a fresh contribution to Marxist analysis," p. xiv. It is touching that this Center, which defines its mission as "providing anticipatory, integrated assessments of major international issues confronting U.S. policymakers" (p. ix) is so concerned with the constant renewal of Marxist analysis. More recently we have been enlightened by the curious arrogance of Jacobo TIMERMAN -sitting in the living room of Pablo Armando Fernandez in the presence of Miguel Barnet expressing his "surprise that post-revolutionary Cuba, in existence now for almost thirty years, has not produced a literature," p. 64.

(2) For what it is worth, Solás himself in response to the question, "what do you observe in your work?" replied, "if we consider influence as a determinant factor in the formation of a creator, I believe that I can only put in the first rank the influence of the Cuban Revolution." COCA, Teresa Fernández. "Humberto Solás: un cineasta y su obra." Interview in *Gramma*, October 23, 1968.

(3) The question of course is not new. See JAMESON, Fredric. *Marxism and Form*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971. In the very polemical nature of his title, he takes up arms against the older orthodoxy. See also his *The Prison-House of Language*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972, especially pp. 91-98 on Tynyanov and Lukács. Marx's own highly problematic remarks about Greek art fluctuate between a radical historicizing of artistic form (e.g., "is the *Iliad* possible at all when the printing press and even printing machines exist?") and a seemingly eighteenth-century style essentialism of forms ("Why should not the historical childhood of humanity, where it attained its most beautiful form, exert an eternal charm as a stage that will never recur?"). MARX, Karl and Frederick ENGELS, *Collected Works*. New York: International Publishers, 1986, Vol. 28, pp. 47-48. I take it that the specific nature of the connection between any two historically separate works of art is still an open question.

(4) Cited by BURTON, Julianne in HALEBSKY, Sandor and John KIRK, eds., *Cuba: 25 Years of Revolution*. New York: Praeger, 1985, p. 151. I am indebted to Burton for helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

(5) Ibid.

(6) Ibid, Burton's paraphrase.

(7) MRAZ, John. "Lucía: Visual Style and Historical Portrayal", *Jump Cut* No.19 (December 1978), p. 21.

(8) KOVACS, Steven. "Lucía: Style and Meaning in Revolutionary Film", *Monthly Review* (June 1975), p.35.

(9) CHANAN, Michael. *The Cuban Image*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1985, p. 229 notes the almost obsessive quest for influences and sources for *Lucía*.

(10) RETAMAR, Roberto Fernández. "Caliban: Notes Toward a Discussion of Culture in Our America", trans. Robert Marquez, *Massachusetts Review*, vol.15 #1 & 2, p. 47, republished in Retamar's *Caliban and Other Essays*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1989.

(11) On the other hand, John MRAZ notes that Solás, "of humble origins ...became an urban guerrilla at 14 and later left school altogether." *The International Dictionary of Films and Filmmakers, Vol. II Directors/Filmmakers*, edited by Christopher LYON and Susan DOLL. Chicago: St. James Press, 1984, pp. 510-11.

(12) RETAMAR, "Caliban", p.36.

(13) See the repeated references to Aeschylus in PRAWER, S. S. *Karl Marx and World Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.

(14) The release of a Part III, many years after the first two parts of *The Godfather*, reflects perhaps, beyond the pure commercial desire to cash in on the success of the first two parts, some sense on the part of the director that the theme he has chosen lends itself potentially to the trilogy form. But as I argue later, the attempt to focus simply on the changes conceivable in the lifetime of a single consciousness subverts much of the radical potential of the form.

(15) For a succinct account of these developments see STOCKTON, David. "From Solon to Ephialtes", chapter two of his *The Classical Athenian Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 19-56.

(16) See THUCYDIDES 1.107.4-5. For an analysis of internal Athenian politics in this period see STE. CROIX, G. E. M. de. *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War*. Ithaca, 1972, Chap. V. His view of Aeschylus (pp.183-185) down plays the conciliatory elements in the *Oresteia*, but well stresses the politically explosive character of the period. For a more detailed analysis of the *Oresteia* and the origins of the Aeschylean trilogy form see my *Sons of the Gods*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992, Chapter 4, "Aeschylus' *Oresteia*: Dialectical Inheritance."

(17) Solás's discussion of this emphasis is worth quoting in full, "Women are traditionally the number-one victims in all social confrontations. The woman's role always lays bare the contradictions of a period and makes them explicit. There is the problem of *machismo*, especially apparent in the third segment, which undermines a woman's chances for self-fulfillment and at the same time feeds a whole subculture of underdevelopment. As I've had to argue many times, *Lucía* is not a film about women; it's a film about society. But within that society I chose the one who is most transcendently affected at any given moment by contradictions and change." ALVEAR, Marta, "An Interview with Humberto Solás: Every point of arrival is a point of departure", *Jump-Cut* No. 19 (December 1978), p.29.

(18) At least those whose work has been available to me.

(19) Compare Solás's own comments, "At that time we were celebrating what we called 'The One Hundred Years of Struggle,' the century-long search for genuine independence which began with the *Grito de Yara* (the call to secede from Spain) and continued with the Revolution which began in 1959. I wanted to view our history in phases, in order to show how apparent frustrations and setbacks-such as the decade of the thirties-led us to a higher stage of national life. This was the underlying principle." ALVEAR, Marta, "An Interview with Humberto Solás: Every point of arrival is a point of departure." *Jump-Cut* No.19 (December 1978), p.29.

(20) Compare the famous formula of Henri Bergson for the comic, «le mécanique plaque sur le vivant». *Le rire: essai sur la signification du comique*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950, p. 44 and passim. His comments on the comic character are particularly suggestive: « route raideur du caractère, de l'esprit et même du corps, sera donc suspecte à la société, parce qu'elle est le signe possible d'une activité qui s'endort et aussi d'une activité qui s'isole, qui tend à s'écarter du centre commun autour duquel la société gravite, d'une excentricité enfin, » p.15.

(21) Studies of repeated images in the *Oresteia* are legion. One of the best is Anne Lebeck, *The Oresteia: A Study in Language and Structure*. Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1971. But to the best of my knowledge, no one else has studied these repetitions specifically in terms of changes in political consciousness.

(22) In much of what follows I am indebted to MRAZ, John. "*Lucía*: Visual Style and Historical Portrayal." *Jump Cut* No.19 (December 1978). Looking back at this article after many years, I was struck by the generosity of the editors in reproducing fifty-nine stills that permit a most remarkable elaboration of what the term "visual style" can mean in the hands of great artists inspired by an adequate theme and located in a fit audience.

(23) I would like here to express my thanks to Mayra VILASIS for a particularly enlightening seminar at UNEAC during the 1994 Habana film festival on the role of women throughout the history of Cuban cinema. She opened up great vistas on a variety of stereotypes familiar to Cuban viewers (many of her examples came from Mexican films of the thirties, forties, and fifties) against which Solás is clearly playing in the characterization of the three Lucías, vistas which alas it would be impossible for me to explore here adequately without deeper knowledge of the relevant films.

(24) Among these MRAZ, "Visual Stile", notes not only the hand-held camera commented on with admiration by virtually every discussion of the film but much subtler elements such as changing the degree of contrast from normal range for the aristocratic figures to high contrast in shots of the "people" and what he calls "foreground interventions" and "anonymous close-ups" -shots in which- as in newsreel footage- our focus on the plot is momentarily interrupted by encountering people who have no function in the plot, people who remind us of the "ordinary folk" who are not directly affected by the goings on of the principle figures.

(25) John MRAZ has dubbed Fernandina "the symbol of authentic Cuba." See his "*Lucía*: History and Film in Revolutionary Cuba." *Film and History* Vol. 5, No.1 (1975), p.9.

(26) TAYLOR, Anne Marie. Review of *Lucía* in *Film Quarterly* Vol. 28 No.2 (Winter 1974/5), p.56. See also MRAZ, "History and Film", p.12, who sees in the "unsympathetic portrayal of the Russians" a parallel to the "European and American penetration seen in the first two segments."

(27) Cf. KOVACS, "Style and Meaning": "the second Lucía ...a serenely beautiful bourgeoisie with the eyes of a doe" (p.44).

(28) Cf. MRAZ "Visual Style", p.19.

(29) KOVACS, "Style and Meaning" p. 41. Here again I am struck by the parallel between the functions of Fernandina and Aeschylus' use of Cassandra, who as a woman of superior intelligence misunderstood in the first play anticipates the dominant figure of Athena in the third play as the very embodiment of intelligence.

(30) CHANAN notes the contrast between the parties in parts II and III, but does not relate these to the party in part I. *Cuban Image*, p. 235.

(31) Pablo Armando FERNANDEZ, the distinguished Cuban poet, novelist and screenwriter, pointed out a further marking of the three segments during a discussion period following a presentation of a version of this paper at the Casa de las Americas during the Seventh Annual Institute on Culture and Society. He noted that the Spanish spoken in the first part was perfect peninsular Spanish with all the final *s* in place and a highly rhetorical patterning of discourse. The language of the second part is far closer to educated contemporary Cuban speech, while that of the third part is more Afro-Spanish, particularly rich in slang and swearwords. KOVACS, "Style and Meaning," has a fine appreciation of the way in which the music composed by the internationally recognized Leo Brouwer also contributes to the differentiation and unification of the trilogy (p. 47). On the music, see also MRAZ, "History and Film."

(32) In Stephen FARBER's interview with Coppola the idea of a sequel is well underway. Although the idea is attributed to someone else and Coppola declares that "originally I hated the idea," he soon became "very excited about it... What I wanted to do was Part Two, literally designing the second half so that some day they could be played as a six-hour movie. It's really not a sequel; it's very novelistic in its construction." "Coppola and *The Godfather*", *Sight and Sound* (1972), p.223.

(33) Most critics have rightly praised the masterful inter-cutting of scenes in the same time frame (e.g., the juxtaposition of the elaborate ceremony of baptism as Michael becomes literal godfather to Connie's son and the systematic murders of all Michael's rivals). It is less clear to me that the juxtapositions of the career of the young Don Vito with the career of Michael some thirty years later are as artistically effective-although Douglas KELLNER has challenged me in conversation to question my initial perception of the awkwardness of this structuring. See his and Michael RYAN's *Camera Politica*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988, pp. 66-72. Their discussion focuses almost exclusively on the first film. See also HESS, John. "Godfather II: A Deal Coppola Couldn't Refuse", *Jump-Cut* No.7 (May-June 1975), reprinted in Bill NICHOLS, ed., *Movies and Methods: An Anthology* (Berkeley, 1976). While I would acknowledge with Hess and Kellner that the temporal juxtapositions of *Godfather II* may appear more formally imaginative than a straight chronological approach (as on the TV series), as I argue in the text, there are also consequences in avoiding real chronology.

(34) JAMESON, Fredric. "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture", *Social Text* 1 (Winter, , 1979), pp. 130-148.

(35) Ibid 147. It is characteristic of most U.S. reviewers that they see the Cuban Revolution as tacked on gratuitously as sheer self-indulgence of the filmmaker; e.g., Jonathan Rosenbaum in his *Sight and Sound* review (summer 1975), comments "a laboured attempt is made to link his [Michael's] movements in the late Fifties and early Sixties with contemporary history, so that the sealing of a massive business deal in Havana is promptly interrupted by the Cuban revolution breaking out in the nick of time (although not before Coppola has had the fun of reconstructing a brassy Batista-period nightclub for one brief sequence)" p. 187.

(36) JAMESON, "Reification", p.147.

(37) Ibid, p.147.

(38) JAEHNE, Karen, in her review of Part III (*Cineaste* 1990), p. 43, rightly focuses on the invocation in the film of the "Borgia ethic;" but this is rather tacked on historical color rather than evidence of thinking through any meaningful change in the roles of women.

(39) KELLNER and RYAN, *Camera Politica*, have a useful discussion of the dynamics of male narcissism, particularly in Part I of *The Godfather*, pp. 66-71. I also agree with them that the focus on the destruction of the family is essentially nostalgic and traditional.

(40) JAEHNE, review of *Godfather III*, p. 41.

(41) In the FARBER interview, "Coppola and *The Godfather*," Coppola comments, "I wanted to get all the Catholic rituals into the film. That's where the idea of the baptism ending came from. I knew the details. I've almost never seen a movie that gave any sense of what it was like to be an Italian-American. That's what the weddings were like," p.223.

(42) JAEHNE, review of *Godfather III*, notes how the big message “Politics and crime- they are the same thing” is “emblazoned across the screen in subtitles” (p. 41), a nice exploitation of the momentary shift to Italian. See CONLEY, Tom for a subtle appreciation of subtitles in films where two languages are integrated in a single film. *Film Hieroglyphs: Ruptures in Classical Cinema*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p.110. At the same time JAEHNE, review of *Godfather III*, p.41, attributes the audience’s boredom at such “revelations” to the overwhelming demonstrations of the banal unity of crime and politics in the years between Part II and Part III.

(43) I was intrigued to find that JAEHNE actually thinks of the *Oresteia* in connection with Part III: “There’s nothing like a female sacrifice to elevate the tragedy. It reeks of ancient blood ritual, recalling the *Oresteia*, that Greek trilogy in which Aeschylus immortalized the horrors of the house of Atreus-child sacrifice, fratricide, patricide, matricide, even genocide at Troy, but also a new order of justice ushered in by a democratically-inclined Athena to cleanse Orestes from the terrible traditions of blood revenge. *Godfather III* needed to present such a transition to a new higher form of justice, but ...clearly nobody thought of anything new or lofty” (p.41). It is the whole burden of my argument that something “new or lofty” cannot just be dreamed up by creative artists in a vacuum, but must represent a response to real conditions of possibility in the real world of their audience.

(44) This ideology of “bourgeois individualism” is no doubt reinforced by the self-imposed exigencies of the capitalist mode of film production. After creating Al Pacino as a “star” in the first film, the Hollywood star system virtually requires that prospective investors in subsequent films have the security of a known winner at the center of each film-even as Brando was at the center of the first.

(45) In this connection consider Solás’ s comments on the distinction between revolutionary film and what he sees as the inadequacies of films that are merely “political”: “A revolutionary film, in my opinion, must begin with a Marxist conception of reality, be it conscious or intuitive. This concept must be expressed in combative terms, with an eye to actually transforming a situation. I believe that the revolutionary is unable simply to bear witness in a passive way; he or she is always trying to find a solution to difficulties, to transform reality.” A propose of the Italian neorealists, he comments: “Though their films were very beautiful, at times extraordinary, they were also only passive testimonials about the good and the bad, the rich and the poor-nothing more. They didn’t give people tools that would enable them to make use of the opportunities offered by political life itself in order to change society.” ALVEAR, “An Interview with Humberto Solás,” p.31.

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