

# Can Adaptations Create Dialectical Sites within the Skopos Theory? An Exploratory Study of *Inconsolable Memories* and *Memories of Underdevelopment*

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## Abstract

*This is an exploratory study of the adaptation of the novel *Inconsolable Memories*<sup>1</sup> (1965) by Edmundo Desnoes into the film *Memories of Underdevelopment* (1968) by Tomas Gutiérrez Alea under the Skopos theory. This study is a part of a larger ongoing investigation into the cinema of Gutiérrez Alea, in which the researcher is looking at the various techniques he utilizes across his films to generate a social dialectic. The study is located in the skopos defined by Gutiérrez Alea – diminishing the role of the cultural archetypes such as patriarchy and identification with the colonizer that were deeply ingrained in the Cuban people, which he felt, were hampering the continuous progress of the socialist revolution. Here, I'm exploring the strategies he uses in the process of creating a dialectical text as a means of social reform. Gutiérrez Alea has created the adaptation through a collaboration between himself and the author of the novel, Edmundo Desnoes. The study hopes that this collaboration may also reveal a dialectical relationship under the same skopos between the two texts themselves, and the manner in which they interact and modify each other.*

**Keywords:** Adaptation Studies, Cuban Cinema, Tomas Gutiérrez Alea, Cuban Revolutionary Cinema.

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<sup>1</sup> Desnoes' novel was re-titled *Inconsolable Memories* for the first English edition (1967) and later (back to) *Memories of Underdevelopment* in some editions after the film appeared.

## **Introduction**

Both the novel and the film are argumentative texts that present the same dilemma of sustaining the momentum of the socialist changes happening in the socio-political and cultural areas of Cuban society, and open up a specific set of hindrances in this process, for examination by the receptor. The film adaptation takes place in an intra-cultural context, and the focus of the adaptation shifts the central problematic of the novel from a personal self-reflexive paralysis to instrumentalizing the self-reflexivity for social transformation. The adaptation also redefines the relationship between the source text and adaptation.

Before going further, we will briefly outline the methodology of the study, and then, review the theoretical framework within which this study is being conducted. We will survey the relationship between translations and adaptations, before moving on to the intersemiotic transfers that provide the framework of this study given the shift from a verbal text into an audiovisual text. From there, we will examine the strategies used by Gutiérrez Alea to adapt the novel to his particular skopos, and conclude the study.

## **Methodology**

The study is an exploratory one and so, is interpretive in nature. Therefore, the definition of the problem is not fixed, and can be understood rather, as exploring the viability of a research problem.

The tentatively formulated working hypothesis is that the Skopos theory can determine the nature of an adaptation, and that it has the potential to generate dialectical discussions through the adaptation. The second part of the hypothesis is that the adapted text can also generate a reverse adaptation of the novel, which introduces the dialectic into the inter-text spaces. In the attempt to prove the hypothesis, primary research methods such as interviews, focus groups and observations have not been used, given that the adaptation being studied was made in Cuba, and is already more than seventy years old. Due to this, the researcher has employed secondary research methods such as conducting research online and conducting a literature review. All the materials accessed by the researcher were

acquired through library archives, newspaper accounts, interviews and reviews. The literature review has been limited by the fact that although there is sufficient material about the adaptation being studied in the area of Film Studies, the researcher has not been able to find any previous research under the Skopos theory in the area of Cuban revolutionary cinema. The literature review is thus confined to that of the translation and adaptation theories, rather than by inputs from Film Studies. The review is also confined by the type, and nature of sources available on the internet. In addition, the researcher's own library was also consulted wherever applicable.

It is expected that the scope of the conclusions drawn at the end will be limited at best, but will indicate further research into a less-studied area.

## **Review of literature**

The review of literature consists of an overview of the relationship between translations and adaptations, and the specific problems of adapting a text into an audiovisual medium. This indicates an intersemiotic shift, and we will take a look at some positions on this. We then move on to a look at the Skopos theory, and how Cuba's specific contemporary situation sets the skopos for the director, Gutierrez Alea.

## **Translation and Adaptation**

Adaptation and translation as Cynthia Tsui observes, "... share a similar set of debates: these include fidelity vs. creativity, author vs. adaptor/translator; and adaptation or translation practices such as the interpretation, contextualization, and transformation of meaning" (Tsui 2012: 55).

Translation is a process through which the meaning of the source text is taken faithfully into the target culture. The process of adaptation of a text on the other hand, refers to both kinds of adaptations – a novel being adapted for younger readers or another culture, and a text being adapted to an audiovisual medium such as a film. As Vinay and Darbelnet observe, an "adaptation" can be

described “as a special kind of equivalence, a situational equivalence” (Vinay & Darbelnet 1958,1995). In the case of an audiovisual adaptation, the situationality is determined by the conventions of cinematic mode of presenting a text. The adapted text in this study reveals the choices made to sustain the situational equivalence between the novel and the film, as we shall see later. Adaptations involve a complex two-directional communication – between the author and the various aspects of production and reception in which each of the professions involved – producer, director, actor, sound and light engineers, the director and the editor as well as the spectator on the other side of the lens, assume aspects of authorship. When a text is adapted to a film, literal fidelity becomes redundant to an extent, because the film is capable of integrating a lot of the narration in the expressions and actions of the actor, and the same is true for the visual and audio cues such as background scores. However, a film is an art for and in itself, which allows a great freedom of movement and expressions to the actor, whose job it is to represent the text character faithfully, but not slavishly. It is not surprising then, that adaptation refers to a process that is deliberately open and flexible in order to make the adapted text correspond to the target culture. The distinction between translation and adaptation is a thin line in that translation conveys the content of the text to the target culture, while adaptation (like in some cases of translation) refers to the creative recreation of the source content which makes it culturally appropriate and understandable. The relationship between translation and adaptation cannot be discussed here fully, as that is not the primary thrust of the study, but for convenience sake, the relationship between translations and adaptations can be summarized as:

both adaptation and translation involve products that are situated in a complex context of agents, receivers and agendas of various interests;

both processes involve utterances or texts. Cattrysse (2014: 48) further argues that the production processes in adaptation and translation are considered as intra- or intertextual and intra- or inter-semiotic. He identifies the intra- or inter-textual quality as deriving from the interaction of users with texts in a specific context and the

cognitive, emotive and behavioural effects that result from this interaction;

translation and adaptation are considered irreversible processes, in the sense that a backtranslation is not the same as the source text and, similarly, a novelization of a film adaptation would not be the same as the source novel;

adaptation and translation processes are assumed to be teleological, in that they are influenced by source and target (con)text conditioners, the latter of which play a pivotal role in the overall decision-making;

notions of 'equivalence' can be traced in both adaptation and translation. (Perdikaki, Katerina 2017)

Keeping in mind the objective of this study we for our part, can summarize the similarities between translation and adaptation with the help of Mary Snell-Hornby's (1992) proposition that both Translation studies and Adaptation Studies are *interdisciplines*, that derive inputs from Film Studies, Linguistics, Cultural Studies, and Sociology, to name but a few. So do any studies of films, which also rely heavily on these inputs. In the case of adaptations, well-defined strategies have to be used, and one could say that these strategies are pragmatic shifts, which move the text away from linguistic fidelity to thematic fidelity, and perhaps even redefine the thematic fidelity in order to fulfill a particular function within the target culture. The target culture is a complex and dynamic entity, and whether it is inter- or intra-cultural, adaptations have to stay in pace with the historical changes that are taking place. Therefore, the functionality of the filmic text must respond to the factor of the historical situationality of the culture.

Our study is placed in the intra-cultural context. The functionality of the adaptation in order to stay true to its *skopos*, reflects the pragmatic shifts needed to address the situationality of the text. Going back to Snell-Hornby we can see that the adaptation we are looking at is in itself interdisciplinary, in the kind of film used, the manner in which the film was shot, the usage of fictive and real documentary footage, all derived from an awareness of Film Studies. The linguistic inputs reflect in the self-reflexive usage of patriarchal terms and relationships used in the film. The moments in film that contrast

Cuba's past with the present indicate also, a Cultural Studies bent in the shift away from the scopophilic representations of Cuba's colonized past to an independent country defining its own socialist trajectory. The film constructs the viewer as a person capable of a dialectical engagement, which is a radical shift from the passive audiences built by the Hollywood derived stereotypes of the Batista years. These inputs will form the framework in the definition of the skopos for Gutiérrez Alea. We shall discuss this when we arrive at the specific skopos set by him, within the broader context of the Cuban revolutionary cinema later in the paper.

### **The Intersemiotic Transfer and Similar Concepts**

As we mentioned, adaptations require pragmatic shifts that are indicated by the complex interaction between 1) the entire team producing the cinematic text which is simultaneously the initiator of the text, and the target recipient of the text, and 2) the audiences. The problem is complicated because as Robert Stam also points out, "The shift from a single-track, uniquely verbal medium such as the novel, which "has only words to play with," to a multitrack medium such as film, which can play not only with words (written and spoken), but also with the theatrical performance, music, sound effects, and moving photographic images, explains the unlikelihood – and I would suggest even the undesirability – of literal fidelity." (2000:56)

An adaptation of the kind we are studying would have suffered greatly if it had restricted itself to literal fidelity. The film would have been a closed, pedantic text invoking apathy towards the protagonist, rather than what it became – an open dialectical site inviting engagement with the protagonist. This kind of adaptation in addition, implicated the production team first in the Skopos, as a means of being able to convey it to the audience. The problem was verbalizing the internalized form of monologic novel devoid of action to the production team, and then adapting the form into a medium that must engage the audience at audiovisual

levels, as well as an intellectual level to meet the specific goal of the film. This was very challenging for as Pauline Kael (cited by Robert Stam) points out, "Movies are good at action; they're not good at reflective thought or conceptual thinking. They're good at immediate stimulus, but they are not a good means of involving people in the other arts or in learning about a subject." (Stam 2000: 59)

Desnoes' novel is an internalized monologue that would have been unsuitable for a dialectical film. The spectator would thus have to be encouraged into self-reflexive thinking through inputs that were wide open for the spectator to enter them and then examine them within themselves. Given the technology and resources available in Cuba at the time, this was going to be very challenging, and would require specific strategies.

When the director is also the person adapting the novel into a screenplay as in this study, it is he who transitions the narrative between two semiotic structures (the intersemiotic translation which Roman Jakobson (1959) defined as "Intersemiotic translation or *transmutation* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems." On the other hand, Seymour Chatman distinguished between the

*kernels* [which are] the major events of the narrative which contribute to the development of the overall plot. According to Chatman (1978), kernels must be maintained as such in the adaptation because their deletion leads to destruction of the narrative logic. Chatman (1978) argued that the minor events, which he called *satellites*, can be deleted, although their deletion may potentially result in an aesthetic impoverishment of the narrative." [Adding to this], Brian McFarlane draws upon Roland Barthes' distinction of narrative functions and argues that, "actions and events can be transferred from novel to film and he defines the functions that are transferable as adaptation proper." McFarlane (1996) calls cardinal functions and catalysers the major and minor events of the narrative respectively." [He continues], "the degree to which cardinal functions are more

or less faithfully transferred can relate to how successful (or not) the adaptation will be.” (Perdikaki 2017).

Speaking of translations Venuti says, “Formal interpretants include a concept of equivalence, such as a semantic correspondence based on dictionary definitions, or a concept of style, a distinctive lexicon and syntax related to a genre or discourse. Thematic interpretants are codes: specific values, beliefs, and representations; a discourse in the sense of a relatively coherent body of concepts, problems, and arguments; or a particular interpretation of the source text that has been articulated independently in commentary.” (Venuti 2012: 497). In case of film adaptations, “Formal interpretants may include a relation of equivalence, such as a structural correspondence maintained between the adapted materials and the film (cf. Iampolski’s ‘structural isomorphism’ between plot details), a particular style, such as a distinctive set of formal features that characterize the work of a director or studio, or a concept of genre that necessitates a manipulation or revision of the adapted materials.” (Venuti 2007: 33).

In our case, we are applying these ideas to the study of the semiotics of a text and a composite of different semiotic systems – sound, action, photographic movement -- that the film is. Here, the concept of formal and thematic interpretants as elements in the process of adaptation for the researcher, encompass both Jakobson’s definition of intersemiotic transfer, as well as Chatman’s kernel and satellites. It permits a grouping of these strategies into formal and thematic interpretants, while distinguishing between the thematic goal of the film, and the strategies used to reach it.

It is an intentional action to take a novel, sit with the writer while writing the script, and then change both the source and the target text dialectically. What was directing this effort? To understand this, we will first take a look at the Skopos theory and then move on to see the extent to which the adaptation fulfills the criteria.



## **Defining Skopos**

The Skopos theory was proposed by Hans Vermeer, and emphasized intentional action – hence the phrase Skopos. According to the Skopos theory, any translation process is determined by the purpose of the overall translational action, translational action being a “[g]eneric term coined by Holz-Manttäri in 1981 and designed to cover all forms of intercultural transfer, including those which do not involve any source or target texts” (Nord 1997: 141). In Nord’s words, “a translational action is determined by its Skopos” or the variety of skopoi it may have (1997: 29). Based on this, we can say that the extent to which a text is adapted in the film will depend on the skopoi – some may need heavy adaptation, others not so much. What Skopos highlights is the understanding of how, and to what extent, the adapter manipulates the target text to allow the receptor to engage with the source text or its thematic, and make the engagement more fruitful.

## **The Skopos as Defined by Gutiérrez Alea within that of the Cuban Cinema**

The traditional criticism of Skopos – that not all actions have an intention, is not applicable here, since the Skopos of the adaptation in the present study was very clearly defined by Tomas Gutierrez Alea at both the institutional and personal levels. Along with his fellow ICAIC (*Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos*) members such as Julio Garcia Espinosa, Humberto Solas and Sergio Giral, Gutiérrez Alea was revolutionizing cinema itself under a Marxist aesthetic and dialectic, as a cinema distinct from the spectacle-led Hollywood cinema, that had been flooding Cuba since the film industry began in Hollywood. They were convinced that this form of cultural imperialism had to be overthrown through the creation of a dialectical cinema which would reflect contemporary Cuba.

The ICAIC developed a unique style of filmmaking that focused on the dialectical aspects of making and watching films – a film must not entertain only during the time spent inside the theatre, it should not provide a scopophilic identification with the film, but rather, encourage the spectators to engage in the activity of developing a

socialist consciousness through an engaging theme. Their skopos was fulfilling the goal of creating the “New Man” as defined by Ernesto Che Guevara – a man whose social consciousness served the society as a whole, not just himself. These specific historical, sociocultural and economic conditions of Cuba at the time underlay all cultural production. The socialist duty of the Cubans for ICAIC, was to participate in socialism not simply through blind adherence, but through a critical engagement aimed at plugging the loopholes that were developing. The function of cinema, as of the other cultural productions, was to meet this need. The activist element in cultural production defined the skopos of the adaptation at the institutional level.

At the individual level, Gutiérrez Alea set the skopos for the adaptation we are studying clearly, when he mentioned in an interview in 1977 that the novel, “was to be betrayed, negated and transformed into something else.” (Burton 1977: 16-28). As we have mentioned earlier, the goal was to “betray” the individual focus of the novel, and turn it into an aid for defining a social focus. This decision comes out of certain concerns. The principle concern for Gutiérrez Alea was expressed in his view that “... the mission of his films [was] the creation of a stronger revolutionary consciousness.” (Snustad 2004: 38).

In his essay *The Viewer's Dialectic* Gutiérrez Alea says,

... film ought to appeal not only to emotion and feeling but also to reason and intellect. In this case, both instances ought to exist indissolubly united, in such a way that they come to provoke, as Pascal said, authentic "shuddering and tremblings of the mind." [and further] ... Such a way of looking at reality *through* fiction offers spectators the possibility of appreciating, enjoying, and understanding reality better. (1984)

In the case of the adaptation we are studying, these techniques proved to be very successful. This was because in Gutiérrez Alea's words,

Because the spectators feel caught in a trap since they have identified with a character who proceeds to destroy himself and is reduced to . . . nothing. The spectators then have to re-examine themselves and all those values, consciously or unconsciously held, that have motivated them to identify with Sergio. They realize that those values are questioned by a reality that is much stronger, much more potent and vital. (Chanan 1990: 190).

This briefly defines the skopos for Gutiérrez Alea, and defines that of the film under study as well. He believed that true socialism can be effected only through a collective, dialectical engagement not only among the citizens, but also between the citizens and the state, and the same must direct the kind of cinema he wanted to make. *Memories of Underdevelopment* stays true to this skopos by highlighting the fact that the bourgeoisie intellectual paralysis that was the result of deep-rooted cultural archetypes from Cuba's history, was as persistent in Cuba, as the bourgeoisie pressures to subvert the revolutionary process. The only way the paralysis could be negated was first by recognizing its presence, and then addressing it at an individual and institutional level. Both Desnoes' and Gutiérrez Alea's self-reflexivity in their individual texts demonstrates their personal involvement in resolving the paralysis within themselves as well.

## **The Cultural Shift**

What we must keep in mind henceforth is that although we say that the adaptation is intra-textual, the historical success of the socialist revolution in Cuba did, in fact, create a rupture between an old colonized/Americanised culture and the new socialist culture. Here, when we say "intra" we are talking about the broad concerns of struggling against patriarchy, the notion of the instrumentalization of humans under the slavery system, and colonization/imperialism that Cuba had been suffering for over five hundred years, which had not changed completely even in independent Cuba. The old culture had been entrenched for five hundred years, more if we go back to the days of Spanish conquest and colonization. The new one was in the process of defining itself, and had not yet become completely new. The significant location of the novel is set on the eve of the success of

the revolution as is the film, giving Gutiérrez Alea the perfect starting point for domesticating the historical context in order to fulfil the dialectical function of the film.

### **The Source Text and the Adapted Text**

In this section, we will summarize both the novel and film to get an idea of the texts we are dealing with. This section feels the lack of availability of many sources, especially for Desnoes' comments on the adaptation.

### **The Novel**

*Inconsolable Memories* is a novel about a man who is alienated from himself and his home country, Cuba. The first edition of the novel appeared in 1965, and later, Edmundo Desnoes himself translated the novel into English in 1967. Desnoes had spent several years in the USA, and returned to Cuba after the revolution, where he took up a position at the influential Cuban publication *Casa de las Americas*. However, he returned to live in New York when he defected. The title of the novel itself derives from Alain Resnais' film *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959) that was a layered text about inconsolable memories set in the context of the bombing of Hiroshima during the Second World War. The novel deals with Desnoes' own uneasy ambivalent commitment to the Cuban revolution. It follows the structure of a diary being written by the protagonist Sergio Malabre, but it's a diary that has no dates, and is marked only by the events that provide the context within which the protagonist finds himself in an existential crisis. There are two principal events of note – the departure of Sergio's wife for the USA after the success of the Cuban Revolution (1959), and the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. Sergio is aware that he is witnessing a radical change in the course of the history of Cuba. The crisis is catastrophic for him at two levels. One, he believes it heralds a nuclear end to history and paralyzes him with the futility of even trying to adapt to a new reality in Cuba. Sergio is an intelligent man who makes detailed analytical notes about the happenings around him, but is unable to participate consciously in the national revolutionary program. The novel interestingly, also works on a critique of Sergio's paralysis, which is a moment of self-

reflexivity where Desnoes examines the nature of his own ambivalence about the revolution.

Toward the end of the novel, we follow Sergio's affair with Hanna, a German student. The relationship is based on Desnoes's real-life romance with a woman named Felicia Rosshandler, whose own family had fled to Cuba from Nazi Germany as Jewish refugees. The young couple ended things when Rosshandler's family defected to New York, but decades later, she saw *Memories of Underdevelopment* when it premiered in the USA (1973), and immediately recognized herself in the character on screen.

## The Film

The adapted text, the film *Memories of Underdevelopment* released in 1968 is, I believe, the most complex one of all of Gutiérrez Alea's films. For one thing, the title suggests that it is a documentary, more like a reportage than a feature film. The complexity of the film arises not just from the formal structure or the self-reflexivity (which is a characteristic feature of all of Gutiérrez Alea's films) but also from the nature of the engagement that he asks of the spectators, and the way it implicates the spectator in the argument. The film is as multifaceted as Cuba's history and society, and the contemporary changes that were taking place in Cuba after the revolution. Presented at a tempo that recalls Michaelangelo Antonioni's films, and the nineteenth century 'ineffectual bourgeoisie man' of Russia who longed to be involved in a cause bigger than himself (Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* for instance), the film invites attention to every frame it presents.

Although the film was released in 1968, Gutiérrez Alea locates the film at an earlier point in the history of Cuba: 1959 and the success of the Cuban revolution, and the Missile Crisis of 1962 and the incident of the failed invasion of Bay of Pigs, same as the novel. This was a critical point in the history of Cuba in more than one way. In locating the film in this period, Gutiérrez Alea immortalizes a historical moment when the past had still not been recuperated, and the future was under threat. We will need to remember that the film is a retrospective analysis of this moment.

## **Instances of Adaptation: Strategies Used by Gutiérrez Alea**

We will begin with observing that Gutiérrez Alea himself had noted in the shooting script of the film insertions from *Hiroshima mon Amour*, although they are absent from the finished film, although it would have provided a direct reference to the novel. He uses the instance in a different way. For Desnoes, the moment in the narrative when the battle tanks roll down Havana's iconic seafront – the Malecon, is an indication of the end of history as indicated in *Hiroshima mon Amour*. On the other hand, Gutiérrez Alea uses the moment to highlight Sergio's alienation from the crisis, by placing him in the balcony of his high-rise flat, and making him look at the tanks coming in through a telescope. Gutiérrez Alea also indicates the end of history, but for him this end is that of Cuba as a whole under the threat of the USA, which Sergio is completely distanced from.

If we apply what Stam says about another Cuban filmmaker and his adaptation of Anselmo Suárez y Romero's novel *El ingenio o las delicias del campo* (1839) into the film *El otro Francisco* to Gutiérrez Alea's own adaptation, we can see that Gutiérrez Alea's film also,

“... self-reflexively, almost paradigmatically, explores the notion of adaptation as demystificatory critique... [he] submitted the original novel to a series of activist operations: he parodied the novel... by exaggerating the novel's melodramatic conventions through their filmic equivalents... he contextualized the novel by revealing the social milieu or artistic habitus out of which the novel was generated ... he inserted contemporaneous historical figures... he supplemented the information provided by the novel through his own research in Cuban history...” (Stam 2000: 64).

Keeping this in mind, we will be looking at two aspects in the adaptation of the novel into a film: 1) The character of the protagonist, Sergio, as an example of the informal interpretant (as used by Venuti 2007: 33) and 2) the usage of documentary footage as an example of formal interpretant.

## Sergio

Let us consider the central character of the novel, Sergio, who undergoes a transformation in the film. In an interview with Julianne Burton Gutiérrez Alea said, “[t]he film plays with . . . identification, trying to ensure that the viewer at first identifies with the character, despite his conventionality and his commitment to bourgeois ideology . . . [but] as the film progresses, one begins to perceive not only the vision that Sergio has of himself but also the vision that reality gives to us.” (Burton 1977: 8-15, 58). Let us see how he does this.

Gutiérrez Alea portrays him as an American-looking man to reinforce the theme of bourgeois temperament. He is a composite of the old bourgeois upper-class men of Cuba identifying with the American John Doe. His physical attributes and mannerisms have visual details that are expressions of the subtext of the novel. In the representation of Sergio, Gutiérrez Alea initiates the psychological aspects of the hurdles to the socialist progression – the identification with the codes of the white colonizer/imperialist. In his 1967 essay Desnoes writes, “I have been and in many ways I still am a colonial of Western Literature. . . I still feel torn between an image of a man as a meaningless creature, with only his pleasure, his anguish, his day-to-day existence and the intuition that man can be different, transcendent, that the new man is possible.” (Schaller 94). Sergio’s paralysis reflects Desnoes’. Gutiérrez Alea presents this paralysis through voiceovers in Sergio’s voice which vocalize acute observations about the revolution and its imperative, as well as the writing he believes he is good at, but is unable to act on. His patriarchal attitude is thrown into relief through visual cues of how he looks at a woman, or walks down a street, aspects which the novel expects the readers to extract for themselves. The long shots of Sergio walking in the street, the utilization of the telescope as a trope that highlights Sergio’s alienation from the people around him highlight the subtext on which Desnoes bases his novel. Through his appearance and interactions, Gutiérrez Alea presents the image of man that the Cuban man was identifying with, and through his voiceover commentary, Gutiérrez Alea nudges the spectator to

become the New Man, who can transcend the subconscious yearning to follow the imperialist mold into a socialist one, and break down the gap between his own 'desirable, developed' self and the 'despised native.'

Both in the novel and the film, Sergio's friend Eddy who is the farcical intellectual pretender is one more self-reflexive representation of Desnoes, and once again, Gutiérrez Alea uses him to demonstrate the futility of an intellect that cannot renovate itself, and must leave Cuba for to become one with the imperialist culture he desired.

## Documentary Footage

Gutiérrez Alea uses documentaries, pseudo documentaries, and photographs as a demystifying critique of the deep-rooted imperialist archetypes. The film consciously reveals Gutiérrez Alea's awareness that the documentaries are also consciously selected aspects of life as put together by the director of the documentary, whose intention is adapted by him - Gutiérrez Alea - to generate the dialectic, through the voiceovers. In her work published in 1977, Julianne Burton argues that "In the novel the documentary technique is the product of a single consciousness projected inward upon another ('imaginary') individual consciousness, whereas in the film the documentary technique is a product of many points of view and is directed outwards, towards the world at large." (Ruiz 2017: 133). It is this operation that forms different points for dialectical engagement, because it demystifies a context that was familiar to all Cubans. The disconnectedness with reality due to the voiceovers, provides instances where the spectators can insert themselves and read the discrepancy in their own way, hence generating various discussions.

Sergio's voiceover in the first instance of documentary on the historical fact of hunger in Cuba highlights both the underdevelopment of Cuba, as well as the contemporary position on this history as expressed by Sergio to his friend Pablo. In the second instance, Gutiérrez Alea presents a documentary titled

'The Veracity of the Group is in the Murder' [which in itself] adapts again, in an expository mode, the third chapter of *Moral burgesa y Revolución* (1963) by León Rozitchner.



The documentary explores how the compartmentalization of the public functions in capitalist bourgeoisie society blurs the individual responsibility of the citizens (referring to the soldier, the priest, the torturer, the politician and the philosopher). (Ruiz 2017: 139)<sup>2</sup>.

The documentary footage on the prisoners captured during the failed Bay of Pigs invasion, is used as a tool to highlight the instrumental reasoning of the capitalist regime, rather than its desirability.

The third time Gutiérrez Alea inserts the documentary format is in the Round Table discussion on Literature and Underdevelopment. The discussion had actually taken place in Havana in 1964, in which Jack Gelber, René Depestre, Gianni Toti, David Viñas, and Edmundo Desnoes himself had participated in it. In this crucial scene, Gutiérrez Alea brings in an alternative point of view in the form of a voiceover by Sergio,

... who from the audience questions the superficiality and opportunism of Desnoes. This visual game between Sergio ... and his alter ego ("starred" by Edmundo Desnoes himself), is the manner in which Gutiérrez Alea adapts the discursive contamination between the narrator (Malabre) and the author (Desnoes) as presented in the novel. (Ruiz, 2017:141)<sup>3</sup>

The introduction of Sergio's voiceover criticising the futility of that discussion provides the conflicting position that once again, creates a dialectical engagement.

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<sup>2</sup> La verdad del grupo está en el asesino" adapta, de nuevo, en la modalidad expositiva, el tercer capítulo de *Moral burguesa y Revolución* (1963) de León Rozitchner. Estamos entonces frente a una microadaptación dentro de la adaptación macro. El documental explora cómo la compartimentación de labores o funciones públicas, en la sociedad burguesa capitalista, desdibuja la responsabilidad individual de los sujetos (refiriéndose al militar, al cura, al torturador, al político y al filósofo). ((Ruiz, 2017: 139)

<sup>3</sup> ... quien desde el público cuestiona la superficialidad y el oportunismo de Desnoes. Este juego visual entre Sergio (protagonizado por el actor Sergio Corrieri) y su alter ego ("protagonizado" por el mismo Edmundo Desnoes), es la forma en que Gutiérrez Alea adapta la contaminación discursiva entre el narrador (Malabre) y el autor (Desnoes) propuesta en la novela. (Ruiz 2017: 141).

The use of the documentaries is exceptional in the degree of self-reflexivity it introduces in the film. As Nancy Berthier (cited by Ruiz), points out,

Gutiérrez Alea uses the documentary in a profoundly original way. Beyond its function as historical marker, the exported juxtaposed image [one more instance of nested adaptation] introduced a different point of view, which ran parallel to Sergio's. As a consequence, this device throws into relief the subjective quality of Sergio's gaze but conversely, it also emphasized the discursive specificity of the newsreels. In the end the audience was left to make their own judgment. (104). (Ruiz 2017: 143). It should be noted that,

None of the three documentaries appears in the novel. As a result, there is an aesthetic and thematic divergence in the texts conceptualized [by Desnoes and Gutiérrez Alea]. Gutiérrez Alea's adaptation seeks audiovisual mechanisms that expand and problematize Desnoes' thematic. The documentary aesthetic allows Gutiérrez Alea to weave a double discourse that through oppositions, consolidates a text that more than adapting, transgresses the literary version.<sup>4</sup> (Ruiz 2017: 142).

In addition to these, there are other similarities such as the naming sections of the film - Paulo, or Elena – that provide the illusion of chapter headings in novels, which also break the identification with the screen character, and become a point of conscious insertion of the spectator's thoughts. Gutiérrez Alea also provides instances where the spectator reads what Sergio is typing, rather than as speech, and also where he holds up a newspaper clipping talking about John F. Kennedy's return to Florida.

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<sup>4</sup> Ninguno de estos tres documentales aparece en la novela. Por consiguiente, existe una divergencia estética y temática en la concepción de las versiones. La adaptación de Gutiérrez Alea busca caminos audiovisuales que expanden y problematizan el proyecto de Desnoes. La estética documental le permite ir hilvanando un discurso doble que a fuerza de oposiciones consolida un artefacto que, más que adaptar, transgrede la versión literaria1. (Ruiz 2017: 142).

The strategies used by Gutiérrez Alea allow us to say that the formal interpretants can be seen in the structural elements such as the plotline, and the characters. The thematic interpretants (as used by Venuti 2007: 33) are visible in the central skopos that are common to both the source and adapted texts, as well as the manner of presenting the problem. The call for a social consciousness, for self-reflexivity and for rejecting the bourgeoisie archetypes are sustained in the film and echoed by Desnoes who wrote in 1967,

We must decolonize and assert our standing in the world. Expose the danger of mimicry, delve into our social conduct in all its aspects, understand our social, racial and sexual prejudices, consider the individual while the political leaders are preoccupied with the whole of society, live to explore and not to sloganeer. (Schaller 93).

The degree of thematic fidelity is an outcome of both the writer and the film director working towards the same skopos self-reflexively. The thematic fidelity is also enhanced through the short cameo appearances of both Gutiérrez Alea and Desnoes. Gutiérrez Alea plays a director at the ICAIC, who agrees to put a screen test together for the aspiring actress Elena, Sergio's romantic interest. Desnoes himself, as we have mentioned earlier, can be seen later in the film, participating in a panel about literature and underdevelopment.

Going back to what Stam says about the possible diminishing effect of the adaptation on the original text, we can see that in our case, the outcome in this case was rather different. Desnoes highlighting the impact of the adaptation says,

A shapeless idea which I had in my mind and which had remained abstract in the book, has been objectified. The subjective elements of a diary have been given a social density. I have shown the antecedents of the character with documentaries of the world torn by revolution. Sergio is the product, although he might deny it, of the same world which produced Batista... I could almost say that Titon [Gutiérrez Alea] has understood better than I have the essential conflict of the novel: the struggle between the best products of the

bourgeoisie way of life – education, travel and money – and an authentic revolution. (Myerson 1973: 45).

Gutiérrez Alea co-wrote the screenplay for *Memories* with Desnoes. Enhancing the dialogic relationship between the film and the novel, in the revised edition of the novel, Desnoes inserted three new stories that present a conflict with the main narrative of the diary to enhance the dialectic. In the English edition of 1967, Desnoes inserts short stories “written for stories for Eddy (Desnoes), who edits and publishes them in a volume along with Sergio’s diary entries relating to writing short stories for Eddy. Desnoes also incorporated scenes that had been written specifically for the film, such as the one in which a disgusted Sergio pays a visit to Ernest Hemingway’s tourist-ridden house. This addition takes us to reverse adaptation within the same skopos. The study notes that in the reverse process, the adapted text (film) becomes the source text for a new adapted text – another version of the novel. We then have an instance of one novel undergoing two intersemiotic transfers – text-audiovisual-text. However, the analysis would require a full-length study, which will form the basis for future research.

*Skopos* is an exciting theory because as we have seen in this study, it can also indicate a different translation dynamic, that of how the process of adaptation can create a dialogue not only between the adapted texts and the receivers, but also between the original and adapted texts themselves. It shifts away from rigid fidelity to the source text towards allowing more freedom to the adapter in how they bring out the function of the text. In turn, this can lead to interesting literary and cultural issues of how texts communicate, and what emerges from this communication. It also indicates further problematization of the question of authorship not just of the text, but the adapter, as well as the receiver who in turn, is the site of cultural changes driven by ideology and historical contexts.

## Conclusion

An adaptation is a particular variant of the source text. The purpose of creating the variant being studied here was determined by a specific set of historical-cultural events that were shaping the Cuban

revolution from the mid-1960s onwards. Gutiérrez Alea considered the source text as a constituent element of encouraging this new call. As such, it forms the foundation of all the other factors that shaped the adapted text, and the same applies to the reverse adaptation. That Gutiérrez Alea collaborated with Desnoes in the making of the film reflects the perfect collaboration between the creator of the original text and that of the adapted text while ensuring that the skopos was being addressed completely. The fact that the relationship between the source text and film adaptation has so far (as the researcher has been able to find out) not been studied under the Adaptation Studies or Skopos theory indicates that the area is open to new research.

Within the adaptation itself, we can see the dialectics operating at every level of the adaptation through the utilization of the formal and informal interpretants. The intersemiotic transfer is complete, creating a dialectical space where the film talks to the novel, the novel talks to the film, and the conversation creates meaningful inputs that are incorporated in both the texts. At one level, the formal interpretants used in the film highlight the thematic ones through a conversation with the subtext of the novel, and shift the focus towards a collective historical and inflective pause before moving on afresh with the revolution. At the spectatorial level, the dialect shifts from an inward gaze towards the creation of a public sphere within which the spectators can come together as they carry out a self-reflexive examination of the cultural archetypes exerting their hold over each individual. We can see that the adaptation fulfills the Marxist aesthetic in that it is art for the sake of the upliftment of the entire society, and to sustain the social consciousness. It must be said that the film *Memories of Underdevelopment* succeeds in meeting the skopos defined at the outset of the project, as well as creating a dialectical site that permits engagement among all the target audiences – the film team, the audiences and the State to discuss the progress of the revolution and its momentum. It is not surprising then, that this film continues to be one of the films that is a permanent fixture in Film Studies departments.

## Limitations of this Study

The analysis that has been attempted here is in the margins of the discussions that generally surround the film. Adaptation Studies have tended to focus on inter-cultural adaptations and on the effects of the internet and streaming platforms more recently. But it is my belief that Adaptation Studies can also be useful to study how a particular theoretical framework – in this case Skopos, generates a text that is dialectically dynamic. Given this, the researcher worked with the awareness that supportive criticism would not be available, and that there would be deficiencies in applying all the ramifications of both Adaptation Studies and the Skopos theory within the confines of an article. Research for this paper has been extremely challenging due to the paucity of previous literature in terms of studies of Cuban cinema under the Skopos theory. Even full-length books on Cuban cinema such as Michael Chanan's *Cuban Cinema* (2004), and Hector Amaya's *Screening Cuba: Film Criticism as Political Performance during the Cold War* (2010) among others, address the revolutionary aspects of Cuban cinema and its political agenda, rather than aspects under Adaptation Studies, even of those films that were adaptations. The only place where Gutiérrez Alea outlines his plan for Cuban cinema is in his book *The Viewer's Dialectic* (1988), but that is for his cinema in general, as well as that of the ICAIC. His specific goal for the film studied here has been mentioned at the beginning of the paper, and aligns with his arguments in *The Viewer's Dialectic*. The spatial and historical distance of the researcher from the film and novel, as well as the extremely limited access to materials has forced an exploratory aspect on this study, where one can perhaps only indicate future research.

It is a limitation of the present study that such an analysis has been indicated, but has not been carried out extensively here, given that it is a journal article. It is my modest hope that the indication of the dialectics of reverse adaptation will initiate further research in this promising area.

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