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Black God, White Devil: wishing, speaking, lying

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Introduction

In addition to an untoward racialization of the demonic and the divine, the English translation of Glauber Rocha's *Deus e o diabo na terra do sol - Black God, White Devil* - cuts god and the devil free from their tellurgical moorings in the land of the sun (terra do sol), detaching them, in the same stroke, from their metaphysical positioning in the "sertão"/"mar" (backlands/sea) dialectic so fundamental to the movie. This sertão/mar opposition arises from millenarian traditions in the Brazilian Northeast which have predicted liberation from the sun-saturated misery that rules in this poor, desert-like region through a miraculous leap into its opposite: the sea. This is the leap performed in the final images of the movie as a traveling bird's eye view of the endlessly flat sertão metamorphosizes suddenly into a view of a pounding line of waves, equally unending. This jarring transition constitutes the kernel of the following essay.¹ Starting with a more literary reading and ending with Gilles Deleuze's theory of images, I will argue that this leap from desert into sea is not only crucial to probing the dynamics of Glauber Rocha's movie, but evokes also the political quandaries of Third World artists within the contemporary, postcolonial and late capitalist world order and condenses, finally, the new significance that time acquires in post-war cinema according to Deleuze.

Round 1: Wish-fulfillment

(i) An Aesthetics of Violence

According to Jean-Claude Bernardet in *Brazil Em Tempo De Cinema*, Glauber Rocha's film is split most fundamentally into two sections, corresponding to two figures who incarnate the divine and the demonic of the title: the saint or cult-leader Sebastião and the cangaceiro (bandit) Corisco, each of which does not appear in the other section. These two discrete sections are transversed and united by four principal characters: (1) Manuel, the poor cattle herder who kills the landowner when cheated out of his due share and forced thereafter to flee, first to Sebastião and then to Corisco, (2) his wife Rosa, (3) Anônio das Mortes, a head-hunter of sorts who kills both Sebastião and Corisco and (4) Julião, the blind singer-narrator, a figure culled from the tradition of the popular cordel literature of the Brazilian Northeast and playing here a role similar to that of a Greek chorus.²

The distance between Sebastião and Corisco is not as great as the title may lead one to assume. They are, it is soon apparent, two versions of the same phenomena. Religious messianism and social banditry configure the two principal forms of rebellion that have historically arisen in the Brazilian Northeast. These equally violent and mythical reactions are most famously associated with the figures of Antônio

Conselheiro and Lampião, historical prototypes of the film's two characters. Their violence, Rocha will insist in a later interview, is not primitive, not merely residues of a barbarous past but constitute, as Deleuze also suggests, "the archaic obverse of capitalist violence;"³ a reaction to a very modern state of affairs.

Rocha's insistence that this violence of the starving and poor is not primitive but a symptom of neo-colonialism reveals the alignment of Brazil's Cinema Novo, of which *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* is one of the most important films, with the Third World anti-colonialist thought of intellectuals such as Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire. Confronting a situation of economic underdevelopment, and inspired both by the Italian Neo-Realism of the 50s and the French Nouvelle Vague, Brazil's Cinema Novo (1960-1970, roughly) sought to transform a "scarcity of means into a channel for aesthetic experimentation", turning out low-budget films which relied on the artistic talents of specific *auteur's* for a progressive and critical vision of Brazilian society.⁴ In a 1981 interview, Rocha retrospectively summed up the movement in the following terms: "the necessity of creating a revolutionary culture within an underdeveloped country from the cultural point of view; from the cinematographic point of view, the necessity of internationalizing this problem through the international artistic medium of the twentieth century, par excellence: the cinema."⁵ It should not, of course, be forgotten that while Cinema Novo marks a high point in the history of Brazilian cinema, a moment in which Brazilian cinema first conceived of itself as part of a wider, international movement and gained, furthermore, wide-spread international recognition, its critical vision was deeply indebted to debates on the question of national identity in a peripheral country which had shaped Brazil's intellectual life since the nineteenth-century.

Filed during a moment of hope, one just before the 1964 military coup d'état and awash still in the nationalist euphoria of the Juscelino Kubitschek's developmentalist ideology, *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* (1963) figures among the most important films of the Cinema Novo's "aesthetics of hunger" phase (1960-64). Rocha's manifesto "An Aesthetic of Hunger", published in 1965, was to become a canonical text for the rise of new cinemas in Latin America in the 1960s. Fiercely denouncing neo-colonial oppression, and the misery it produces, Rocha argues that Latin America's hunger is not merely an "alarming symptom" but the essence of a still colonized Latin American society and the essence too of the "tragic originality" of Cinema Novo.⁶ While this hunger and misery is lamented in Latin America, "the foreign onlooker cultivates the taste of that misery, not as a tragic symptom, but merely as an aesthetic object within his field of interest."⁷ Against such exoticism, the only noble cultural manifestation that hunger should produce is violence. Cinema Novo's aesthetic, if it is to be revolutionary, must necessarily comprise an aesthetics of violence claims Rocha. Only a violent aesthetics of hunger will liberate Latin Americans from the debilitating delirium of hunger, making the people aware of their own misery and making the colonizer aware of the colonized.

The violence of Sebastião and Corisco's forms of rebellion is then, in a first sense, revolutionary as verbalized in Rocha's manifesto: an attempt at a non-exoticizing revelation of desperation and misery that will liberate the people. But, as will become clear, their violence is in a second sense not revolutionary enough precisely for being born of the debilitating delirium of hunger. This ambiguity between hope and a lack of hope in rebellion by the people is played out in the film right up to very last scene.

(ii) God and Devil

Sebastião offers Manuel a violent mysticism, promising his followers an imaginary land in which the desert becomes sea, the rivers run with milk and dust turns into flour. The prophet's visual signature alternates from slow-moving scenes of an almost painfully lengthened temporality to gyrating scenes of delirium and ecstasy produced by jumpy hand-held camera shots of his impassive face against the sertão's white-hot sky, surrounded by banners whipping wildly in the wind, the harsh cries of his followers and music by Villa-Lobos. His prophecies come at a high price, as if, as Deleuze suggests, "the people were turning and increasing against themselves the violence that they suffer from somewhere else out of a need for idolization."⁸ Manuel is forced by a stony-faced Sebastião into purification rituals which include hauling a boulder on his knees up an interminable path to a chapel and holding a child (probably not his) to be sacrificed in the chapel by Sebastião. The cult-leader requires total allegiance, to the exclusion of Rosa, who - unconvinced by the leader - continuously pleads for Manuel to leave. "Have you forgotten me?" she asks, only to hear "I don't remember anything anymore, not even night or day." "We used to live together," she answers, "we've been here on Monte Santo a long time."⁹ A final sacrifice: Manuel's sense of temporality has been distorted throughout his continuous *state of trance*, his memory blurred. Rosa finally snaps, killing Sebastião with a knife at precisely the moment when Antônio das Mortes arrives to kill the group of devotees.

The couple is spared by Antônio, "to tell their story" he explains to the blind narrator-singer who appears to lead them to their next encounter with the white devil, Corisco. Corisco, a self-titled latter-day St. George, offers Manuel a mystical violence - the blind destruction of the dragon of wealth and evil (the government, the system of capitalism). When Manuel protests in a later scene that one can't bring justice by spilling blood, Corisco replies that his own destiny is so stained that all the blood in the world wouldn't be enough to wash himself clean. Corisco is bound thus to a notion of destiny as strong as the prophecies of Sebastião, but his "willed defeat", as Xavier tellingly suggests, is favored by the film over Sebastião's alienation.¹⁰ As he offered his loyalty before to Sebastião, Manuel offers his services now to Corisco. Re-baptized Satan, he is initiated into cangaço violence by being forced to castrate a landowner.

The screen is now saturated with scenes of the sertão's unrelieved and claustrophobic flatness, a far cry from the delirious up and down ecstasy that undergirds the scenes up in Monte Santo with Sebastião. A fitting backdrop, however, for the now desultory movements of the two survivors and the cangaceiro and his companion Dadá, sifting, as it were, through the remnants of an aftermath. Like the refugee couple, Corisco is also at this point barely more than a ship-wrecked survivor, more unliving than alive. Lampião, the Northeast's legendary bandit, and Corisco's former leader has been killed a few days before and Corisco, talking schizophrenically to himself, claims that the dead Lampião is now inside his body, forming a cangaceiro with two heads, outside and inside, killing and thinking, dead and alive. In his testament to Manuel, he says "When I die, go away with your wife and tell the people that you see that Corisco was already more dead than alive. Lampião is dead, and Corisco died with him. For this very reason I needed to stand on my feet, fighting to the end, turning everything upside down. Till the sertão becomes sea and the sea sertão."¹¹

(iii) The Great War: history vs. prophecy

In the course of the film, both of these solutions offered to the injustice in the sertão are destroyed (and discredited as insufficiently revolutionary) by Antônio das Mortes. Antônio das Mortes is an enigmatic figure, a hired head-hunter seemingly in service of the region's hegemonic groups - landowners and the Church - for whom, for sufficient money, he kills those such as Sebastião and Corisco posing threats to their power. At the same time Antônio das Mortes operates as a hand, not of God, but of Rocha himself, liberating Manuel and Rosa (and by extension, the "people") from the two options of alienated revolt so that they can then act rationally, perceive the sources of injustice rather than its symptoms, and prepare for real revolution. "One day," he says, "there will be a great war in this sertão, a war without the blindness of God and devil; and in order to make way for this war, I killed Sebastião and I will kill Corisco. Then I will die, since we are all the same."¹²

Paradoxically perhaps, it is a task he sees himself condemned to. To blind Julião who asks him at one point in the film why, when the government lost armies and armies of men trying to quench the community raised by Antônio Conselheiro at Canudos, he sticks to the seemingly futile task of tracking down cangaceiros in the vast immensity of the sertão, Antônio das Mortes responds: "You need know nothing of me as an individual; I was condemned to this destiny and I have to fulfill it without thought or pity."¹³ It appears that this midwife of history is thus equally bound by a destiny beyond him. Equally alienated, one could ask? Unable, according to Deleuze at least, to grasp anything other than the juxtaposition of two violences and the continuation of one by the other.¹⁴

The blind folk singer links the film with oral traditions of popular culture, with *cordel* poets, directly addressing an audience as he introduces the characters and makes commentaries on the story. While the mediating figure of Julião adds to the feel of a grand plan behind the whole arrangement, confirming the teleological logic of prophecy - most especially when he physically leads the two protagonists to their next encounter - his verbal message leads in another direction, to a vision of a world governed not by a divine plan but one made - and therefore changeable - by man: "My story now is told, a story of truth and imagination, I hope you have learned the lesson: This world is wrong, ill-divided; and Earth belongs to man, not to God or devil."¹⁵

Ismail Xavier argues for an interpretation of the film in terms of two major crisscrossing movements that are explicitly condensed in the figures of Antônio and Julião: the "questioning of a dualistic metaphysics in the name of the liberation of human beings as the subjects of history is superimposed on the gradual affirmation of a "larger order" that commands human destiny."¹⁶ Messianism and *cangaço* become then moments in the progression towards revolution (*cangaço* represented as a moment closer to this final goal than messianism) in which human consciousness moves towards its liberation through a greater awareness of human beings as subjects of a transformative historical praxis. At the same time, this movement towards consciousness does not find completion within the perspective of the protagonists: "There is a hiatus between their experience and the final term, the revolutionary telos around which the narration organizes its lesson."¹⁷ This hiatus is the camera's jump from sertão to sea prophesized over and over within the film. The death of Corisco at the hands of Antônio releases a line of flight by Manuel and Rosa - one that is extraordinarily linear after

the turnings and comings and goings throughout the rest of the film. It is apparently a flight into nowhere, a flight simply away, but it is precisely at this moment that the screen metamorphosizes into surf, into the utopian revolutionary space which has, all along, been Manuel's (and everyone else's) desired point of arrival. We know, however, that Manuel is in fact far from the sea and how then he would have ever in fact reached the "sea" is left dangling. "The consummation of a telos is given, but the particular form in which it is realized remains unspecified."¹⁸ Despite pronouncements by Antônio das Mortes and Julião regarding human agency, a larger order surfaces at this moment, to subsume the human subjects. The gap between the two is structural and fundamental according to Xavier: "the larger form requires that the certainty of the end be affirmed through incompleteness...It is the lacuna that lends strength to prophecy."¹⁹ A stronger prophecy then. And yet, the leap from sertão to sea could be read as one more oneiric and alienated form of wish-fulfillment, like that of Sebastião, Corisco and Manuel, and from which the film, in spite of itself, is unable to escape.

Round 2: Speech-act

There is another way to think this lacuna. In his *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, Gilles Deleuze puts forward the claim that "if there were a modern political cinema, it would be on this basis: the people no longer exist, or not yet ... *the people are missing*."²⁰ In classical political cinema, like Soviet cinema (Eisenstein), the people are there even if they are oppressed, tricked, subject or blind, even if they have a virtual existence that is only just beginning to be actualized. The making of the masses, the people, as true subject is then the task of supreme revolutionary art during classical cinema. According to Deleuze, such a notion is compromised, however, by the war crises, by events such as the rise of Hitler, Stalinism and the break-up of the American people so that in post-war cinema the people no longer exist. While this absence of the people is widespread, it is a truth hidden in the West by mechanisms of power and the systems of majority. Given such a configuration, Deleuze assigns a space of epistemological privilege to the Third World where the state of oppression and collective identity crisis make this absence of the people absolutely clear. "Third World cinema is a cinema of minorities, because the people exist only in the condition of minority, which is why they are missing."²¹

If it is true then, that the narrative thread follows the lives of Manuel and Rosa (rather solitary representatives of the "people") fleeing the landowner's henchman and searching for justice and redemption, it is also true that Manuel's only strong moment of agency is the killing of the landowner that jump-starts the movie's narrative.²² Thereafter he is represented as a figure with particularly little power to change his own history, one who on one level surrenders his will both to the cult-leader Sebastião and Corisco and, on another level, is pushed to and fro by the winds of destiny through the killing hand of Antônio. Manuel is not a subject, properly speaking, but subaltern or, in Deleuze's terms, minority. There is no subject in minority art (be it literature or cinema) claims Deleuze, "there are only collective assemblages of enunciation, and literature expresses these acts insofar as they're not imposed from without and insofar as they exist only as diabolical powers to come or revolutionary forces to be constructed."²³ The leap from sertão to sea is a leap taken by the camera's eye, a leap Manuel cannot take, a leap necessarily without a subject, but one, let us not

forget, with diabolical powers.

While Jean-Claude Bernardet explains Manuel's lack of agency according to class origins that limit Glauber Rocha's artistic production, Deleuze is pointing to a limit of a different order. For Bernardet, Antônio is the projection of the middle-classness of both Rocha and of the majority of the film's viewers and his contradictions condense precisely the contradictions of the middle-class, both its seemingly progressive intentions and its bad conscience. Thus, like Antônio das Mortes himself, Rocha and most viewers would find it necessary that the middle class be the agent to liberate Manuel from his alienation and birth the real revolution. It would be for them impossible to think the people able to shake off their own alienation and accomplish the whole revolution by themselves. Antônio das Mortes is baffled when he arrives to find Sebastião already dead. Incredulously, he tells Julião "It was the very people who killed the saint!" But he can't really believe it; the possibility haunts him so that, near the end of the film, he returns to the question: "Who killed the saint?", he probes Julio. "Didn't you say it was the people?", returns Julião ironically. "I lied!"²⁴ His reply is almost savage.

Deleuze's answer, however, is that there is not yet a people, a subject, because all - Sebastião, Manuel, Rocha, the Brazilian audience - exist in a minority situation with respect to the First World. Minority film-makers like Rocha are not bound only by class prejudices but pushed by global (postcolonial) configurations of power into the same impasses that Deleuze describes for Kafka: "the impossibility of not 'writing', the impossibility of writing in the dominant language, the impossibility of writing differently."²⁵ The impossibility of forming a group and that of not forming a group. What to do, besides saying: the people are missing?

First: given that there is no people to become-consciousness, unlike classical cinema, political art here does not make a subject, a consciousness, claims Deleuze, but consists of "putting everything into a trance ... pushing everything into a state of aberration, in order to communicate violences as well as to make private business pass into the political and political affairs into the private."²⁶ Glauber, one could say, puts Manuel into a trance on Monte Santo (a lotus-eaters, memory-less trance). Manuel is pushed into acts of greater and greater violence, turning inward upon himself the larger political violences of the sertão until, and this is what is so hard to grasp for Antônio das Mortes, the situation becomes impossible for Rosa. Putting into trance is putting into a crisis: pushing towards a lived actual which at the same time indicates the impossibility of living. A private snap through which the impossible political situation is suddenly revealed. Corisco's schizophrenic trance, while equally aberrant, is of a different nature. He is already past the crisis point, past the impossible, he is already halfway dead. Almost a specter.

Second: if cinema, like all art, is to be political it must not settle for cardboard people and paper revolutionaries, and must in this situation not simply address the people (who do not exist) but contribute to the *invention* of a people. For Deleuze this means something quite specific and subtle. The author must not "make himself into the ethnologist of his people, nor invent himself a fiction which would be one more private story: for every personal fiction, like every impersonal myth, is on the side of the 'masters'."²⁷ The author needs to grab intercessors (real, not fictional characters) positioning them so that they make up fiction, make legends, so that they begin story-telling. This story-telling would not be either an impersonal myth, a personal fiction, or an ethnology. It would not, for instance, be the foundational

romances of the Latin American 19th century: painting a picture of the desired nation to come, birthing a *musée imaginaire*. Deleuze, in other words, leans close here to a whole range of other contemporary critical theories that problematize hegemonic Western notions (the "master's" notions, Deleuze would say) of *representation* with its realist groundsprings, its binding claim to the real, to presence. Deleuze more specifically criticizes the principle of identity that rules the philosophy of representation - the presupposition that in re-presenting one always presents the already known, the same, one is repeating, reiterating, an encounter with the effect that difference as such is eluded. In opposition to this master's myth of re-presentation, Deleuze's story-telling is a question primarily of enunciation itself (*sans* subject); the enunciated takes a back seat here. It is a question of side-stepping re-presentation, producing difference itself. It is "a word in act, a speech-act through which the character continually crosses the boundary which would separate his private business from politics and which *itself produces collective utterances*."²⁸ This speech act producing collective utterances is the Trojan horse of the master's fiction, speaking it's way through the "ideology of the colonizer, the myths of the colonized and the discourse of the intellectual" in order to constitute a "foreign language in a dominant language, precisely in order to express the impossibility of living under domination."²⁹ To be political, Third World cinema must be a cinema of the speech-act.

And yet the image of the impossible Trojan horse should not mislead us into supposing that such story-telling is pure negativity, pure resistance to the dominant. Here Deleuze parts ways with other critics of Western metaphysics such as Jacques Derrida: his "minority" toes a line somewhere between negativity and positivity. His minority author is not simply reacting impossibly, not simply pushing towards a crisis of what is, but "is in a situation of producing utterances which are already collective, which are like the seeds of the people to come, and whose political impact is immediate and inescapable."³⁰ The putting into trance, putting into crisis, then not only indicates the impossibility of living (Corisco) but constitutes more fundamentally a "transition, a passage, or a becoming" which makes the speech-act possible. According to Deleuze, as a political film-maker, Glauber Rocha had to "seize from the unliving a speech-act which could not be forced into silence, an act of story-telling which would not be a return to myth but a `production of collective utterances capable of raising misery to a strange positivity, the invention of a people."³¹ The leap from sertão to sea is perhaps then a final putting into trance, a speech-act of the most foreign of positivities, inventing or, more precisely, willing the future to come, the people to come. A people not of the land of the sun.

Round 3: The false

Deleuze's interpretation of Third World post-war cinema (and his more specific nods towards Rocha) needs however to be understood in relation to the theory of cinema he constructs more generally, and particularly in relation to the rise of the time-image. Deleuze is interested in constructing a theory of cinema that avoids assimilating cinema to language [the widespread notion of 'cinema as the universal language'], a gesture which robs it, he claims, of its most authentic characteristic: its visibility. Deleuze endeavors to think cinema as composed instead of streams of images and signs; this pre-verbal content is intelligible since, for

him, there is a thinking in images. For such a task Deleuze delves into the late nineteenth century French philosopher Henri Bergson for conceptual tools.

Matter, proposes Bergson in *Matter and Memory*, is an aggregate of images, an image here being not simply representation, but material; somewhere between representation and a thing. The photograph, as it were, is then always already taken, already developed in the very heart of things and at all points in space. ("Does this mean that ... we had always had cinema without realizing it?" entices Deleuze.³²)

What then would it mean for us to perceive? Bergson suggests that our bodies are nothing more than centers of action, and that perception constitutes a compass for such action; perception, that is, is images (matter) in reference to the future action of my body. The 'in reference to' implies that perception never captures the full images but signifies always an impoverishment of the photography already given. Perception always and necessarily cut away into the presence of images until our perception retains only superficial skins, only the necessary crusts that are useful for an immediate future action. Hence, while images are invariable in the universe, in our perception images change like kaleidoscopes depending on projected future actions. If the photography is already taken everywhere, we are then simply screens through which real action passes through, leaving only virtual actions. In the mobility of the Whole our sensory-motor schema seek tracks that our bodies, supposed to be in motion, are supposed to follow.

Following Bergson, for Deleuze this Whole is not giveable, never closed, but fundamentally Open, "its nature is to change constantly, or to give rise to something new, in short to endure."³³ It is that "by virtue of which the set is never absolutely closed, never completely sheltered, that which keeps it open somewhere as if by the finest thread which attaches it to the rest of the universe."³⁴ Movement in space expresses the Whole which changes, much as (and the image is Deleuze's) the migration of birds expresses a seasonal variation. Movement is a mobile section of duration, of the Whole, it is what relates objects of a closed system to open duration. Time is but the measure or number of this movement (6:30, 20 minutes), subordinated to movement and invisible in itself.

This conceptualization of movement becomes critical to Deleuze's analysis of classical cinema which, he claims, is fundamentally a cinema based upon a movement-image, an image which extracts pure movement from bodies or moving things. The key to the movement-image is that it implies the totality beyond all movements, the Whole.

This system comes into crisis around the First World War (the explanation is not, however, strictly historical), at a point at which the sensory-motor schema which linked perceptions, affections and actions is shattered. A realm of incommensurability opens up. Deleuze signals four changes in the movement-image: 1) the image no longer refers to a situation which is globalizing or synthetic, but rather to one that is dispersive; (2) the line or the fiber of the universe which prolonged events into one another, or brought about the connection of portions of space, has broken; (3) sensory-motor situation or action (directed, meaningful action) has been replaced by stroll, the voyage and continual return journey, by, that is, pointless action; the seer replaces the agent (4) the only thing that maintains a set in this world without totality or linkage are clichés. The crisis gives way to the second type of image in post-war cinema; the time-image (an image, it should be noted, that existed all along for

Deleuze but is only now retrospectively made visible, with its coming into its own).

Movement can only subordinate time and make it into a number that indirectly measures it if movement fulfills conditions of normality. But movement is now aberrant and hence "calls into question the status of time as indirect representation or number of movement, because it evades the relationships of number."³⁵ This does not mean that time now disappears, cast off, or unnecessary. Quite the contrary: "it rather finds this the moment to surface directly, to shake off its subordination in relation to movement and to reverse this subordination."³⁶ In the time-image then, time is no longer the invisible measure of movement. Instead, movement becomes dependent on time and even designates the sickness of time as the cause of its aberration. Chronos is sickness itself. "Conversely, then, a direct presentation of time does not imply the halting of movement, but rather the promotion of aberrant movement."³⁷ One denaturalizes movement so as to see time behind it. The time-image is then the direct presentation of time.

If the time of the movement-image constituted a succession of presents in an extrinsic relation of before and after "so that the past is a former present and the future a present to come," the time of the time-image no longer respects the empirical progression of time, say, from May 24th to May 25th to May 26th.³⁸ Its present seizes the past and future which haunt and coexist with it and, this time, it is "a past which is not reducible to a former present ... [and] a future which does not consist of a present to come", but something more radically other.³⁹ Deleuze identifies three direct signs of time in post-war cinema, three aberrant movements that render time visible. The first two concern *the order of time* and comprise (1) the coexistence of sheets of virtual past, like Borges' paths, forking backwards, and (2) the simultaneity of peaks of deactualized present, a jumping continually from a present point to a present point, crossing over abysses between them. The third constitutes *time as series*, a before and an after which is not points on the successive course of time, but two sides of a power, or the passage of this power to a higher one. It is an image which "brings together the before and the after in a becoming, instead of separating them; its paradox is to introduce an enduring interval in the moment itself."⁴⁰

The Whole has been dispersed. The thread that connects the Open, the connective 'and' now halves. Association and attraction ceases to be important, under the rising sign of the interstice, the limit: "the force of dispersal of the Outside, or the vertigo of spacing: that void which is no longer a motor-part of the image and which the image would cross in order to continue but is the radical calling into question of the image."⁴¹ Images are no longer linked by rational cuts, by successions that express a slow-moving totality beyond the screen but plunge into intervals and incommensurable sides. "False continuity, then, takes on a new meaning, at the same time as it becomes the law."⁴²

A proposition: if there were a visual signature to *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol*, it would in fact be the false continuity shots. Defined by Deleuze in *Cinema I*, false continuity shots comprise discontinuous, dispersed shots without any assignable link which are, however, brought into connections and liaisons through montage in order to realize the synthetic whole of the film. In classical cinema, unlike postwar cinema, false continuity shots do not break up the whole but are the act of the whole.⁴³ The tension of the dialogue sequence between Manuel and his land owner, Colonel Morais, for instance draws itself out through

an increasingly dilated temporality as the colonel informs Manuel that he is not to be given any cattle and Manuel response alternates between long, tense moments of thought with violent verbal spurts until he finally snaps and kills the colonel. The continuous slow, silent shots gives way to a rapid succession of jump-cut shots, false continuity shots, of Manuel struggling with the colonel, fleeing the colonel's henchmen and exchanging gunshots until Manuel's mother is killed. The screen then gives way to another prolonged continuous shot in which Manuel closes his mother's eyes and turns to look back at the house.⁴⁴ This *dialectic of scarcity and saturation*, as Xavier terms it, surfaces clearly in another sequence in which for interminable, exasperating moments, filmed in long continuous shots, Manuel carries the boulder up to the chapel, followed by equally slow and exasperating moments in which Sebastião sacrifices the child. Rosa's killing of Sebastião at this point breaks this sparse, temporally dilated sequence of shots and summons in another plunge into a very different rhythm of quick confusing jump-shots, time passing too fast to grasp, that visually mark the eruption of gunfire and cries as Antônio das Mortes kills the followers of Sebastião. A quick series of physically disconnected images, gathered together through montage under the linking thematic of Antônio's attack.

As Xavier points out, this sequence quotes images from the Odessa steppes sequence in Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*. It is a debt openly acknowledged. *Deus e o Diabo*, Rocha stated in an interview, was produced "under the struggle between Ford and Eisenstein, and the anarchy of Buñuel, the savage force of surrealism's madness."⁴⁵ On the one hand, then, such montage sequences peppered with violent false continuity shots evoke Eisenstein who Deleuze characterizes as identifiable by images of a certain type of development: from one point to another on the spiral of development "one can extend vectors which are like the strings of a bow, or the spans of the twist of a spiral. It is no longer a case of the formation and progression of the oppositions themselves [as in American cinema], following the twists of the spiral, but of the transition from one opposite to the other, or rather into the other, along the spans: the leap into the opposite."⁴⁶ It is a qualitative leap: the second instant, pregnant with the first, gains in power. This is classical cinema, one must remember, and the development in this case is the development of (revolutionary) consciousness itself. It is the leap, writes Deleuze "of the organic which produces an external consciousness of society and its history."⁴⁷ Rocha's montage simulates these quick qualitative leaps into the opposite, from painfully slow thought to the quickness of hundreds dying, from Manuel's prolonged submission to Sebastião to Rosa's decisive ending of it, but they do not lead to the culminating moment of revolution and victory of the *Potemkin*. *Deus e o Diabo* belongs already to the era of the time-image. There is no longer "a 'general line', that is, of evolution from the Old to the New, or of revolution which produces a leap from one to the other."⁴⁸ There is rather - and here Deleuze explicitly calls up South American cinema as a model - "a juxtaposition or compenetration of the old and the new which 'makes up an absurdity', which assumes 'the form of aberration'."⁴⁹ The dialectical leaps are not producing revolutionary consciousness. False continuity has taken on new meaning in Rocha. They lead around in fits and starts and circles, in absurd and aberrant juxtapositions, until the final flight from Antônio das Mortes and the final false continuity shot, the mysterious 'and' between sertão *and* sea, which now, rather than raising them to an ultimate unification and pointing with certainty to a moving

totality, halves the two images, leaving an interstice gaping between them and questions dangling. It evokes most closely the chronosign defined by Deleuze as time as series, a disjointed before (sertão) and after (sea) brought together in a becoming, which introduces an enduring interval in the very moment.

And yet this falseness in the false continuity shot is not the unreal or the untrue. With the time-image, proposes Deleuze, narration ceases to be truthful, to claim to be true, and becomes fundamentally falsifying. "Movement which is fundamentally decentred becomes false movement, and time which is fundamentally liberated becomes power of the false which is now brought into effect in false movement."⁵⁰ But time puts the notion of truth into crisis in the same way that the simulacrum calls into question the very notions of copy and model. The simulacrum, one should remember, is not for Deleuze a degraded copy, "rather it contains a positive power which negates both original and copy, both model and reproduction."⁵¹ The simulacrum is built upon a dissimilitude and implies a perversion, an essential turning away which is not a negativity. It includes within itself a differential, an Other, a multiple, point of view." Contrary to the form of the true which is unifying and tends to the identification of a character, the power of the false cannot be separated from an irreducible multiplicity."⁵² By raising this falseness to a power, life is freed of appearances and of truth and turns toward the power of a decisive will. If truth is always that of the masters or colonizers, simulation, the false, is the function of the poor, it is the production of an effect which is a memory, a legend, a monster.⁵³ The false, writes Deleuze, "ceases to be a simple appearance or even a lie, in order to achieve that power of becoming which constitutes series or degrees, which crosses limits, carries out metamorphoses, and develops along its whole path an act of legend, of story-telling."⁵⁴

Asking about the rationality, the reality, the truth of that final jump (Is Rocha implying that this is where Manuel ends up? Will the "sea" one day come? Or is Rocha emphasizing the gap? Or is he secretly laughing?) would be entirely wrong. Beyond story-telling, one could suggest that, in as much as the jump is a simulacrum to the history written by the masters, a turning away to alterity, it expresses not only a minority film-makers political necessity but also the sickness of Chronos itself, the crisis of a belief in a Whole, a totality, a true, and the giving way more simply to an outside.

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NOTES

- 1 The insight into the importance of this final leap for the movie itself is borrowed in part from Ismael Xavier, *Allegories of Underdevelopment*.
- 2 Jean-Claude Bernardet, *Brazil em Tempo de Cinema*, p. 78.
- 3 Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p. 218
- 4 Xavier, op.cit., p. 1
- 5 Lopes, "A passagem das mitologias", *Ciclo de Cine Brasileiro*, p. 142. Translation mine.
- 6 Rocha, "An Aesthetic of Hunger", in Johnson, *Brazilian Cinema*, p. 70
- 7 ibid., p. 69.
- 8 Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p. 218.
- 9 Transcription and translation mine.
- 10 Xavier, op.cit., p. 45.
- 11 English translation of this dialogue from Xavier, op.cit., p. 46.
- 12 English translation of this dialogue from Xavier, op.cit., p. 46.
- 13 English translation of this dialogue from Xavier, op.cit., p. 45.
- 14 Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p. 219.
- 15 English translation of this dialogue from Xavier, op.cit., p. 33.
- 16 Xavier, op.cit., p. 49.

- 17 *ibid.*, p.50
- 18 *ibid.*
- 19 *ibid.*
- 20 Deleuze, *op.cit.*, p.216.
- 21 *ibid.*, p.220.
- 22 Rosa, it must be said, is altogether a more mysterious figure. Patiently following Manuel, she is even more realistic, less alienated than he. She is not fooled by Sebastião, and kills him, but does accept Corisco. She seems to have more potential than Manuel.. but ultimately is underdeveloped as a character.
- 23 Deleuze, "Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature". *Theory and History of Literature, Vol. 30*, p. 18.
- 24 Transcription and translation mine.
- 25 Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p.17.
- 26 *ibid.*, p.219.
- 27 *ibid.*, p.222.
- 28 *ibid.*
- 29 *ibid.*, p.223.
- 30 *ibid.*, p.221.
- 31 *ibid.*, p.222.
- 32 Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, p.2.
- 33 *ibid.*, p.9.
- 34 *ibid.*, p.10.
- 35 Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p.36.
- 36 *ibid.*, p.36.
- 37 *ibid.*, p.271.
- 38 *ibid.*, p.37.
- 39 *ibid.*, p.222.
- 40 *ibid.*, p.155.
- 41 *ibid.*, p.180.
- 42 *ibid.*
- 43 Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p.28.
- 44 My description is much indebted to Xavier, "Black God, White Devil: The Representation of History", in Johnson, p.137.
- 45 Lopes, "A passagem das mitologias" in *Ciclo de Cinema Brasileiro*, p.147.
- 46 Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, p.33.
- 47 *ibid.*, p.36.
- 48 Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p.32.
- 49 *ibid.*, p.218.
- 50 *ibid.*, p.143.
- 51 Deleuze, "Plato and the Simulacrum" in *October*, p.47.
- 52 Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p.133.
- 53 *ibid.*, p.150.
- 54 *ibid.*, p.275