

Viva Cuba. (2005).
Directors: Juan Carlos Cremata Malberti and Iraida Malberti Cabrera.

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Cuba Uncovered

The sole focus of this review is to determine the different themes within *Viva Cuba* while tying it to the different styles of cinematographic techniques that were used within the film. *Viva Cuba* is a Latin American film that was released in 2005. The film focuses on the relationship and the hardships of two young children, Malú and Jorgito as they venture out in hope of finding Malú's biological father. Relative themes within the film include trauma as a result of separation or emigration, clashes between different social classes, and the idea of children's' determination. Cinematographic techniques that are mentioned are depth of field, cut, panoramic shot, cross-cut editing, and fade.

The utmost important theme that is seen within this film is the impact that emigration leaves on a child. Given the restricted freedom from parents, children do not have the ability to reject the decision of moving to a different country. A child who is four years or younger may not experience the same trauma as a child who is five years or older; the former undergoes what is known to be infantile amnesia which is basically the idea that children cannot retain memories between the ages of two and four. Malú is devastated that her mother is forcing her to leave the country because the friendships she has created in her hometown will no longer exist. The psychological trauma that children undergo during emigration is devastating, but what is even more devastating is the fact that some parents are not aware of it happening. Like Malú's mother, some parents are more concerned with their personal problems than providing the proper care for their young ones.

The lack of support and comfort that children face in countries like Cuba is what drives children to venture out for a better life. As mentioned above, Malú's mother did not think twice about her daughter's emotions because she was set on the idea of creating a better life with her boyfriend. Here we can see the disconnection within a family; Malú's mother did not pay any attention to her own mother as she was entering the last days of her life. At one point, Malú's mother mentions that her mother was holding her back from leaving the country. Unfortunately, Malú's grandmother represents how younger generations fail to care for their elders; by focusing on their personal wants and needs, they bypass the everlasting memories that could have been experienced with their loved ones. The scene that presents the grandmother's funeral is very short with a lot of cuts; Malú's mother is not seen crying or feeling emotional. Because the film editor decided to use this technique during the scene, one can infer that she was not emotionally moved by her mother's death.

There are heartbeats in the background during the scene where Malú's grandmother passes away. Along with this, the film editor decided to show the scene in black and white while applying the dissolving technique. There are two possible reasons for this particular use of technique. The first deals with the intention to portray a dark moment where life met its end. Whereas the second reason lies with the fact that the heartbeats represent the emotions that Malú is encountering due to experiencing the death of a loved one. Ironically, the only person that is present during the grandmother's death is Malú. The relationship with her grandmother was much stronger than that of her and her mother's relationship. One can say that children who live in Cuba are forced to grow up quickly and experience hardships that no child should have to endure.

Jorgito shows his condolences towards Malú by attending the grandmother's funeral. However, Jorgito is seen hiding behind a tree instead of actually being with Malú and her family. Malú's mother does not like her spending time with Jorgito because she believes that his family is of lower class; whereas Jorgito's mother does not

approve of his friendship with Malú because she believes she belongs to a stuck up, rich family. The division between social classes is seen throughout the film. All in all, we can see that the children do not let the distinction of their classes define their relationship. Instead, they find the good within each other and enjoy each other's company. The children's mothers are very immature as they are seen making dirty faces at one another. Additionally, they make rude comments to each other while their children are around. Parents are usually known for their ability to take on responsibilities while being mature and finding efficient solutions to difficult situations. Children, on the other hand, are usually obnoxious and tend to get into disputes if they do not get what they want. *Viva Cuba* reverses the roles of parents and children. The bickering between both mothers is very unnecessary, immature and uncalled for.

Jorgito and Malú are allegories that represent the younger population of Cuba. They reveal the hardships that families blindly impose on them. Whether it is enforcing the idea of separated classes, forcing emigration, or leaving their loved ones behind, children are exposed to psychological trauma that can lead to devastating endings. The hardships become so extreme that they drive Jorgito and Malú to literally leave their city and put a stop to their nonsense. A close up of both children are used within the last scene of the film to portray how the lives of the children are affected by the argument between both families. There is a quick shot where the camera is focused on Malú covering her ears and closing her eyes; in the background of this shot, the families are seen yelling and getting into a physical argument. The technique used for the shot fits the underlying message perfectly because it clearly describes how children suffer and become traumatized as a result of their family's actions. The family drives Malú and Jorgito to once again run away to shore and seek some sort of freedom.

On top of this, there is a moment during the children's journey where Malú and Jorgito become fed up with one another. They argue amongst each other, but the difference is that after they are done expressing their emotions they ignore each other

and decide to play the silent treatment. Of course, they learned the power of arguing through their mothers, however, there is a distinct difference between the children and the parents. The children know when to put a halt to the screaming and yelling whereas the parents do not have any self-control. It enforces the idea that children in Cuba are more mature than adults.

Jorgito promises that he will do anything in his power to make sure that Malú does not leave the country. He is not worried or contemplating their differences in social class; he only wants to have the freedom to admire his best friend. During the scene where he offers to accompany Malú across the country, the camera shows both of the children on top of a roof and looking out to the city. The technique used is not a depth of field, but rather a portrait landscape that focuses on both children and the country. There are two interpretations to this; the first deals with the idea that Jorgito wants to give the world to Malú and ensure that she is able to enjoy her life. On the other hand, Malú is admiring her homeland and searching for freedom at the same time. It's not the type of freedom where she wants to escape from the country, but rather freedom from her mother. She is afraid of leaving her old life behind while having to start a new one as a foreigner. Of course, the journey that the children take across the country is a symbol of freedom.

Viva Cuba is known to be a Third Cinema film. According to Leblanc, Third Cinema aims to portray real world issues such as poverty, abuse, discrimination, and corruption. In this case, *Viva Cuba* exposes the psychological abuse that children experience in Cuba. Unlike First Cinema movies, *Viva Cuba* is not exaggerated for entertainment and aims to teach the rest of the world what it is like to live in a corrupted country like Cuba. This film in particular touches on a lot of aspects of life within Cuba. It presents the difficulties that children, adults and elders experience. It also expresses how the division of social classes creates greater problems within a society. An insight into Cuba's government is provided as well.

Cuba gained nominal independence from the United States of America in 1902, but became overthrown by dictator Fidel Castro in 1959 (Knight 2018). Although this film does not show grotesque shots of the cruel violence that occurs in this country, one can still infer that corruption is one of the driving factors that causes families to migrate and children to become violent. At the beginning of the film, children are hiding from their fellow friends while making gun gestures with their hands. This stems from the corruption that is imposed by the government. According to Humanium, Cuban children have limited rights in regards to education, freedom, and health. Most children are prone to poverty and child labor. Because of this, children are more likely to resent their unfair conditions and resort to violence. It can be said that there is a positive relationship between violence and age. In other words, violence increases as children become older.

Jorgito's father is a prominent example of a man who exerts hatred towards his own family. Scene shots move very quickly and contain a lot of cuts whenever Jorgito's father comes onto the screen. Jorgito admits to Malú that his father beats him whenever he acts up. The final scene of the film shows a snippet of Jorgito's father yanking him by the shirt and yelling at him. The film editor uses a slow motion technique to illustrate a clear image on the abuse that parents impose on children. In addition to the child abuse, Cuban men are portrayed as selfish human beings who do not value their families. Malú's father vanishes to the other side of the country and does not take action to visit her. Jorgito's father joins and leaves his family whenever he pleases; he is not a typical father who provides protection and support for his wife and son. The mothers in this film, however, do not let the immaturity of their partners stop them from moving forward.

Women are portrayed as strong, independent and stubborn people who fight for what they believe is right. Although what they believe is right can be controversial, one can conclude that the women in this film are stern and will not back down from their beliefs. From the start, Malú stands very tall with her chest high when confronted by

Jorgito's friends. Malú's mother decides to take on the risk of migrating to another country. Jorgito's mother does not let the abusive relationship with her husband get in the way of caring for her beloved son. The role of a woman in Cuba has gotten better over time; women rights have taken great leaps and improvements as a result of the revolution (Torregrosa 2013). Forty nine percent of the positions in the governing body of Congress in Cuba is held by women; they are known to be ranked third amongst the world for women representation. With that said, women are not underrepresented, however, that doesn't indicate that women do not experience sexual harassment. In addition, the idea of machismo is still seen in Cuba today. On top of personal achievements and high end jobs, women are still expected to be the traditional house wife. By having women within the government, there is hope that the culture of machismo will deteriorate within time.

All in all, *Viva Cuba* is a Third Cinema film that can open the eyes of many people around the world. It exposes the hardships that every single type of human faces in Cuba. It shows how elders are treated, how children are determined to not let the differences in social classes divide them, and how children will venture out to search for their freedom. It examines the role that fathers play in a Cuban family, but most importantly it exposes the psychological trauma that children face as a result of the decisions that adults make. Jorgito and Malú are allegories for the children in Cuba who strive to find their freedom within their own corrupt country. They do not want to have to leave and become foreigners just because their parents are forcing them to do so. They want to make the best of their lives with what they have while enjoying the people that they have had the pleasure of growing up with.

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