

Review on “Mimang”

From my perspective, the film *Mimang* is about the wrong time of a pair of friends with mutual affection. In the first chapter, the female protagonist was bright and beautiful, with long hair and in a red dress, and would intentionally move closer between walks with the male protagonist. Her claim that she had no sense of direction was really an excuse for her inclination of dependence on the man. She was inviting the man for a closer relationship, as what she did in the alley - invited the man to smoke together. Smoking together is a kind of obscure intimacy, where people talk among the smoke and get to know each other better; or where affection for each other sprouts in the silence. However, the man didn't react as the colleague of the woman who later on became her boyfriend. He can't respond because he's got a girlfriend. All he could do was light a cigarette where the woman had been smoking after she had left, releasing his secret love for the woman when no one else is around.

In the last chapter, the two reunited after many years at the funeral of a childhood friend, which was again a wrong timing. The season of meeting changed from the warm and exuberant summer to the lonely and cold winter, the woman cut her hair short, wrapped in a dark coat, no longer as enthusiastic as before. The man was the one who wanted to take that step at the moment. The two walked into the small bar, he played the guitar and sang for her, but the woman was no longer in that mood. She talked about her current boyfriend, about his kids, and marriage. As she rushed to another place, the door of the cab slammed shut, and the man's hand rested on the window, not taking that step after all. In *Mimang*, the woman is always the pre-perceiver, she discerned the flow of feelings between the two and threw out a branch, only the man failed to answer. She was also the first to feel the drop of tiny rain, which indicated that she already moved on to the new chapter of life, and as the cab drove away, the man felt the raindrops, the drop of hope as an epiphany.

While the two kept reuniting, they also kept missing out. Letting go with the wrong moment is a life lesson one has to learn, and *Mimang*, an experimental literary film, gives us a bitter-sweet story with watery dialogues.

A Timeless Gaze into the Complexity of Human Condition and Societal Transformation: A Review of Memories of Underdevelopment

In the vast expanse of cinema that intricately dissects human emotions and societal structures, few films manage to encapsulate the nuanced interplay of personal and political landscapes as poignantly as Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's 1968 masterpiece, *Memories of Underdevelopment*. Situated in the tumultuous aftermath of the Cuban Revolution, the film artfully navigates the psyche of Sergio, a disillusioned bourgeois intellectual who chooses to remain in Cuba while his family and friends flee to Miami. Through Sergio's introspective journey, Alea constructs a compelling narrative that delves deep into the chasms of alienation and the search for identity amidst the ruins of a rapidly changing society.

At the heart of *Memories of Underdevelopment* is the exploration of a nation in flux, seen through the eyes of an individual caught between his past privileges and the new socialist reality. Sergio, masterfully portrayed by Sergio Corrieri, embodies the complexities of a man out of sync with his environment. His intellectualism and bourgeois background distance him from the revolutionary fervor, rendering him an observer rather than a participant in the historical process unfolding around him. This estrangement is further accentuated by Alea's use of innovative film techniques, including documentary footage, voiceovers, and jump cuts, which blur the lines between reality and Sergio's subjective perception, thus emphasizing the fragmented nature of his existence.

The film's narrative structure, oscillating between documentary realism and surreal introspection, serves as a mirror to the protagonist's psychological state as well as the collective Cuban psyche. Alea challenges the audience to question the reliability of Sergio's perspective, thereby engaging in a broader dialogue about the nature of understanding and the pitfalls of intellectual elitism. It is this questioning, this probing into the depths of individual consciousness against a backdrop of societal upheaval, that lends the film its enduring relevance.

Furthermore, *Memories of Underdevelopment* subtly critiques the notion of development itself, questioning whether true progress lies in economic prosperity or

the evolution of human values. As Sergio meanders through the newly socialist Havana, his interactions with various characters highlight the disconnect between personal fulfillment and ideological commitment. In doing so, Alea not only portrays the ideological conflicts of post-revolutionary Cuba but also invites viewers to reflect on the universal struggle for meaning in a constantly evolving world.

In conclusion, *Memories of Underdevelopment* stands as a monumental achievement in cinema, not only for its critical examination of the Cuban socio-political landscape but also for its profound insights into the human condition. Tomás Gutiérrez Alea offers a film that is as relevant today as it was in 1968, providing a timeless reflection on the complexities of individual identity and societal change. Through Sergio's eyes, the audience is compelled to confront the uncomfortable realities of underdevelopment, both in the external world and within the depths of the human soul.

Connecting Beats:

The Discordant Harmony in 24 Hour Party People and Control

In the landscape of music biographical films, few stand out as distinctly as Michael Winterbottom's *24 Hour Party People* (2002) and Anton Corbijn's *Control* (2007). Both films orbit the gravity of the Manchester music scene but spin around their subjects with vastly disparate narrative styles and cinematic techniques.

24 Hour Party People recounts the rise and fall of Factory Records and its magnetic impresario, Tony Wilson, portrayed with a charismatic blend of arrogance and passion by Steve Coogan. Winterbottom uses a metafictional approach, whereby Wilson breaks the fourth wall, making the audience both accomplices and critics to his endeavors. This style breathes an engaging, whimsical quality into the narration - contrasting sharply with the methodical solemnity of *Control*.

In stark contrast, *Control*, directed by Anton Corbijn, a celebrated music photographer, is the austere monochrome biography of Joy Division's troubled frontman, Ian Curtis. The story is confined to the internal dissolutions and personal battles Curtis faces, portrayed with intense vulnerability by Sam Riley. Corbijn's decision to steer away from the broader cultural narrative into a deep, introspective exploration grants *Control* a somber tone and a visually arresting aesthetic of high contrast black and white, mirroring the bleak industrial landscapes that so defined the band's music.

Editing and cinematography further these contrasting tales. *24 Hour Party People* is marked by an eclectic, almost frenetic editing style. Quick cuts and abrupt shifts between events contribute to a juiced-up, kinetic feel that parallels the punk and post-punk energy flooding Manchester at the time. The film delights in its colourful set-pieces and oddball reenactments that enhance its playful disregard for conventional narrative loyalty.

Conversely, *Control* is characterized by its composed and thoughtful pacing. Long takes and static shots are utilized to enhance the emotional depth and isolation within Curtis's life. The cinematography here serves as a narrative voice itself, employing shadows and silhouettes to externalize the internal conflicts. This methodical pace is

reflective of the film's emphasis on the personal tragedy of Curtis rather than the larger-than-life spectacle of the music scene.

Interestingly, both films use their chosen visual and narrative styles to define the mythologies around their subjects. Winterbottom's approach in *24 Hour Party People* underscores the chaotic, almost circus-like atmosphere of the Factory Records era, filled with legendary bands and legendary mishaps. It acknowledges the constructed mythos of Tony Wilson - the self-styled "man who saved music" - with both satire and affection.

Control, however, peels back the glamorous exterior of the life of a rock star to delve into the struggle of its protagonist, showcasing Curtis not as a myth but a man grappling with fame, illness, and domestic collapse. Its narrative is sincere and intimate, choosing emotional resonance over cultural swagger. The cold clarity of the film's visual style complements this intimate exploration perfectly, ensuring that viewers are drawn into Curtis's life with heartrending focus.

In concluding, the use of narrative techniques and cinematic styles in *24 Hour Party People* and *Control* reflect their directors' interpretations of what moments and elements shaped the Manchester music scene. Where Winterbottom's film is a vibrant tapestry of a cultural explosion, Corbijn's is a poignant portrait of artistic fragility. Both techniques, though divergent, offer compelling views into the souls of their characters and by extension, the music they helped define.

Each work stands as a testament to the power of narrative perspective and stylistic choice in film-making, inviting viewers not only to witness but to feel the rhythm of Manchester's musical heartbeat. Through these lenses - whether it be the colorful, amusing tumult of Winterbottom or the monochromatic, poetic melancholy of Corbijn - we gain a richer understanding of how stories can be told and how profoundly they can differ within the same note of history.

**Dreamscapes of the Frozen North:
The Lyrical Alchemy of Guy Maddin's My Winnipeg**

My Winnipeg (2007), directed by Guy Maddin, is a masterful concoction of memory, fantasy, and reality, and it stands as a testament to the director's unorthodox approach to storytelling and the genre of documentary cinema. Maddin embarks on a phantasmagoric rendition of his hometown, Winnipeg, in Manitoba, Canada, crafting what he dubs a 'docu-fantasia.' This term encapsulates the film's essence, as it intertwines the autobiographical elements with surreal recreations and archived footage that whispers the secrets of a past era.

At the core of *My Winnipeg* is a profound wrestling with the concept of home and the irresistible pull it exerts on Maddin's own sense of identity. The narrative navigates through the snowy streets of Winnipeg, diving into personal anecdotes, urban myths, and the city's history. The choice to narrate the film with a dreamlike monologue reflects the undulating waves of memory. This method elevates the film beyond a mere historical account, transforming it into an exploration of the collective unconscious of Winnipeggers.

Maddin's *Winnipeg* is a terrain marked by somnolent winters and eccentric personalities where the filmmaker's own history conflates with the city's collective memory. His use of archival footage spliced with contemporary shots blurs the line between the past and the present, emphasizing the haunting presence of history. The film's critique of progress—or the lack thereof—is omnipresent; through Maddin's lens, Winnipeg emerges as a city trapped in amber, paradoxically fixed in time yet subject to the inexorable decay of aging.

The visual aesthetic of the film is unabashedly idiosyncratic, employing techniques reminiscent of early silent cinema, like intertitles and exaggerated melodramatic expressions, in combination with fragmented montage reminiscent of Soviet filmmakers. The blurred, grainy black and white imagery, drenched in sepia tones and infused with selective punctuations of color, aids in creating a tangible sense of nostalgia. This style does not merely serve an artistic purpose but also acts as a vehicle for Maddin's introspection; it is as if the deteriorating film stock symbolizes the fading

memories and the wistful longing to grasp what is perpetually slipping away.

Maddin's eclectic mix of interviews, reenactments with actors, and fantastical sequences positions the film in stark contrast to the traditional documentary. Yet, by defying the genre, Maddin delves deeper into the elusive truth of emotional reality. While some may argue that the film's wandering structure and bizarre vignettes muddle its message, it is precisely this disjointedness that embodies the labyrinthine nature of human memory and the city's enigmatic soul.

A crucial element of the film's success is its sound design, which is meticulous in its layering, complementing the visual tapestry with aural textures that range from the hypnotic hum of the city to the intimate timbre of the narrator's confessions. The soundscape contributes to the dream sequences' efficacy, anchoring the audience in Maddin's psychogeographic map while enabling flights of fantasy.

My Winnipeg challenges viewers' perceptions of documentary cinema by infusing it with personal mythology and surreal history lessons. It acts as Maddin's love letter and farewell to the city that defined him, a palimpsest of a location etched with tales of desire, loss, and the inexorable flow of time. This piece is more than a film; it's a poetic introspection, a cine-essay on the impermanence of place and memory's persistence.

In conclusion, Guy Maddin's *My Winnipeg* is a compelling cinematic experience that defies conventional narrative and visual styles to draw a richly textured portrait of a city and its influence on personal identity. Maddin not only challenges the boundaries of the documentary form but also constructs a deeply personal and universal exploration of memory, history, and the meanings we attach to the places we call home.