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# Manifesting *La Historia*: Systems of ‘Development’ and the New Latin American Cinema Manifesto

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New Latin American Cinema both feeds into and is fed by the contentious and at times contradictory nature of Latin American culture, social politics, and economy. Manifesto documents, theoretical statements made by the filmmakers-cultural activists themselves, like the film texts, tell a story and, in so doing, recover parts of Latin America’s past, its historical narrative, that oftentimes go unnoticed.<sup>1</sup> Julianne Burton, recognizing the confluence of the filmmakers’ theoretical statements and the derivation of those theories from the “concrete practice” of filmmaking “under specific historical conditions,” points to a glaring omission by mainstream critical theory to account for this body of cinema, “another instance of the asymmetrical nature of cultural exchange between the developed and underdeveloped spheres” (“Marginal” 4). Zuzana Pick similarly characterizes the New Latin American manifestoes’ theoretical objectives, “centered on a politics of representation grounded in the consciousness of underdevelopment” (*New* 18). Orientations toward “development,” we shall see, become the crux of conceptualizing Latin America.

In the late 1950s, studies of underdevelopment in Latin American and Caribbean nations and the whole global region suggested that progress could only be attained through the particular types of “modern” progress acquired in the Western industrialized nations. Coincidentally, the technocratic and aesthetic dominance of Hollywood continued pushing across the Americas and the globe. The earliest manifestoes of the New Latin American Cinema address this intersection of art, social politics, and global markets through their articulations of development and revolution. In some readings, New Latin American Cinema’s revolutionary resistance to imperialistic forms of development are translated as militant, invoking the violence and aggression highlighted by sensationalistic media coverage of the region; militance, however, figures into the revolutionary quality of these manifestoes as they presage the perturbation of newly-found consciousness, *la conciencia*, in and arising from the cultural expressions.<sup>2</sup>

This consciousness-building, far from simply emulating the socialist-state model from which the United States has cited a threat, reveals a long-standing process of democratization in the global region and particular Latin American nations. As David Williams Foster argues, in spite of the political rhetoric of the documents and paradoxes in continental character, clear correspondences exist among the position of the manifesto-writing, the need for social transformation, and the process of democratization in Latin America (467-8).<sup>3</sup> As a part of this democratizing project, these manifestoes redraw and reveal how New Latin American films depict tropes of development, sometimes in revision and reevaluation of official discourses.

In this essay, I examine the function of formative New Latin American Cinema manifestoes and argue that in their reassessment of the tropes of development, the manifestoes critique dominant conceptualizations of the global region and individual countries of Latin America. The terms of these manifestoes—“Aesthetics of Hunger,” “Underdevelopment,” “Revolution,” “Imperfect Cinema,” and “Third Cinema”—are historically situated in nationalist contexts, and yet they are capable of accounting for the heterogeneity of aesthetic and ideological aspects of the New Latin American Cinema movement, as Zuzana Pick and Coco Fusco acknowledge (Pick *New* 22, 56; Fusco “Reviewing” 7). Re-reading with hindsight these relatively well-known manifestoes—written by Glauber Rocha, Fernando Birri, Jorge Sanjinés, Julio García Espinosa, and Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino between 1965 and 1976—in dialogue with contemporary political contexts and prevailing social theories reveals the theoretical and aesthetic aims of New Latin American Cinema and its relationship to the culture, socio-politics, and economy of a liberal, democratically-informed Latin America.

## “Developing” Latin America

A great deal of attention has been paid in the fields of sociology, anthropology, and history to the nature of poverty in certain

global regions and nations, so called by the United Nations “Least Developed Countries” (or LDCs). In many of these studies, a dualism suggests that the inevitability of industrialized progress confounds a romantic depiction of the nations’ backwardness or primitivism. Starting in the late-1950s a wave of “modernization” swept these fields of inquiry, emphasizing the degree to which the poorer nations followed economic, socio-political, and cultural models of the richer, the more “developed,” nations of the West. Particularly, Latin American countries and, as a whole, the Latin American-Caribbean global region have been conceptualized on the basis of comparison to their northern counterparts, especially in light of Eurocentric impulses in the United States.

For example, key to modernization theories were essays by Talcott Parsons and W. W. Rostow that advance an universalized process of social change, modeled in large part on the scientific orientation to biological evolution, through which they reductively define the poorer nations according to their ranking on this scale. The teleology of modernizationism presumes industrial growth and a capitalist economy,<sup>4</sup> foremost, and democratic socio-politics and culture in the stamp of the West, by extension.

In his landmark study of Mexican and Puerto Rican “subcultures of poverty” in the 1960s, Oscar Lewis claims that members of a “slum culture” fatalistically accept their displacement from the dominant, capitalist society (14-7). While acknowledging the “pressures” and “structures” a capitalistic society exerts over its members, Lewis argues that the poor adopt “mechanisms that tend to perpetuate” their alienation from mainstream culture (20-1). Modernizationism, then, places blame on those who are poor for their own poverty and concomitant socio-political and cultural values; remedy, this orientation mandates, comes in the form of in-group alterations toward the adoption of values and enterprises espoused by the dominant body. Lewis’s view offers the allegory for the modernizationist macro-vision of the relationships among the First World order of nations and the developing Third World nations, particularly in the case of the United States and Latin America.

Perhaps most significantly, modernizationist studies of Latin America rely, in principle and practice, on a specialized significance for the idea of development. Development equates not only

to capitalistic economic and industrial growth, but also to the more figurative and more pervasive notion of Westernization in its social and cultural structures.<sup>5</sup>

Several film manifestoes from the formative period of the New Latin American Cinema refute this modernizationist conceptualization of development in Latin America and offer alternative models of social change that rely heavily on the alliance of Latin American socio-politics, economics, and the arts. Through a reading of the manifestoes in the political contexts in which they were written, alternative social models reveal a “new” Latin America, one that is

wholly different and much more contradictory and complex in nature from the diminution offered by modernizationism.

## Revolutionizing Latin American Film

In certain pockets throughout Latin America in the 1950s and 60s, a strong surge of political pluralism and democratization paved a way for efforts toward social and cultural activity. In Chile, the *Unidad Popular* (Popular Unity or UP),<sup>6</sup> in part descendant from the socialist-labor projects from as early as the 1910s through the Popular Action Front in the 1950s, rubbed against the Christian Democrats (PDC).<sup>7</sup> Frei’s 1964 presidential victory in the name of a Chilean “revolution in liberty” mirrored similar political shifts in Guatemala, El Salvador, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Peru,<sup>8</sup> and Argentina, whereby post-WWII-fascism had been overrun by a contentious balance of democratic liberalism and socialism. Perhaps nowhere can this contest of political values be seen more clearly than in post-Peron Argentina (Rock 337-42). Initiated by the Frondizi administration (1958-62), Argentina found itself caught in a tangle of contradictions: reconciling state-military authoritarianism with *justicialismo* policy; accelerating import-substitution industrialization (ISI), while buying into the International Monetary Fund (IMF); sponsoring national independence and transcontinental interdependence. Argentina’s *Frondizazo*, like other Latin America political philosophies from this time period, at once accepted a development



Stuart Chase’s 1931 best-seller, *Mexico: A Study of Two Countries*, oversimplifies the dualism of places like Tepoztlán and others throughout Latin America, struggling in between the modern thrust of the First World and the dependency that it creates in the Third World. This mural by an unknown artist on one of Tepoztlán’s [Morelos, Mexico] thoroughfares shows that this tension is alive still today.

Courtesy of the author, copyright 2001.

scheme of Western-style industrialization and First World-dependent trade that could be explained by modernizationism, while growing resistant to the oppressive dependency it required. It was in this socio-political context that the first formulations of New Latin American film theory emerged. These formulations of film thought tell a story of Latin America different than those informed by modernizationism.

Fernando Birri,<sup>9</sup> founder of the Santa Fe Documentary School and referred to as the “Father of New Latin American Cinema,” addresses the “sub-cinematography” of both Argentina and “the region of underdeveloped Latin America of which it is a part” in his manifesto “Cinema and Underdevelopment” (86). First published in 1967 in *Cine Cubano*<sup>10</sup> on the heels of the military junta that gave rise to an authoritarian state unlike any experienced in Argentina since the 1940s, “Cinema and Underdevelopment” proposes a revolutionary turn in cinema, and by extension the arts and culture of Latin America. Though clearly tinged by Marxism and in defiance against the military dictatorship ruling his homeland, Birri claims that the cinema of the Latin American global region and its independent nations must resist emulating the dominant social system, which results in “a bourgeoisie superstructure, semi-colonial and underdeveloped” (88). Birri reappropriates the trope of development, one that at the time of his writing is overdetermined by the modernizationist recognition of industrial and Western-style growth. On the first level of argument, Birri proposes a revolutionary cinema that may counteract the pervasive influence of Hollywood studios and U.S. ideologies that find expression in their films; but on a grander scale, Birri’s claim refutes the domination of modernizationism, its conceptualizations of development, and the biases that are associated with this worldview.

Like Birri, Jorge Sanjinés<sup>11</sup> in his “Problems of Form and Content in Revolutionary Cinema,” though extrapolating at times from Bolivian nationalism, offers a global-regional view of Latin American film. Few Latin American countries experienced as politically tumultuous a period as Bolivia did following World War II. Where many of its neighbors enjoyed a resurgence of democratization politically, socially, and culturally after the fall of fascism in Germany and Italy, Bolivia (along with segments of the population in Argentina and Peru) followed its Iberian-colonialists roots and looked to the modern fascism of Spain and Portugal for a national model. As in Cuba, socio-political change was abrupt and drastic in Bolivia, evidenced by the coups of 1952 and 1964 and continuing into the 1980s. Written by Sanjinés in exile and first published in the Cuban *Ojo al Cine*<sup>12</sup> in 1976, “Problems of Form and Content in Revolutionary Cinema” acknowledges this political strife and aims at an ideological coherence that, among other things, gives expression to a collective cultural identity. In this manifesto, Sanjinés speaks directly against the *auteur* model of dominant cinema, favoring instead the dialectical model that Tomás Gutiérrez Alea more fully realizes in his

1982 *Dialéctica del Espectador/The Viewer’s Dialectic*.<sup>13</sup> For Sanjinés, imbedded in this dialectic among filmmaker-collective/film text/spectator was cinema’s revolutionary capability to foster growth in Latin America in an alternative social model to modernizationism.

The beginnings of Brazilian *Cinema Novo* may be interpreted through a similar historical context. Following World War II, Brazil witnessed the end of *Estado Novo*, a paramilitary, fascist regime led by Getúlio Vargas. By 1956, the political winds had changed direction in Brazil, and the moderate Juscelino Kubitschek was elected through his alliances to both the *Partido Social Democrático* (PSD) and the *Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro* (PTB). Brazil faced contradictions similar to its Latin American neighbors, though: namely, its national ideology pivoted on developmentalist-nationalism, an economic policy that influenced other facets of Brazilian society and culture, while striving to maintain national independence (Skidmore 164-70). Where modernizationist treatments of Brazil tend to underestimate this contradictory impulse in its national character, Glauber Rocha’s<sup>14</sup> film theory characterizes the significance of its revolutionary quality, especially as the arts are allied to socio-politics.

“An Aesthetics of Hunger” remains the most often cited Latin American film manifesto and offers profound insight to the formative period of New Latin American Cinema and the society out of which it arose. Like Birri and Sanjinés, Rocha acknowledges the importance of national character, Brazilian nationalism, alongside the transcontinental dynamics of the Latin American-Caribbean global region (59). For Rocha, cinema transcends romantic perspectives of art and must, like a manifesto document itself, address relevant social politics (qtd in Johnson *Cinema* 120). First published in *Revista Civilização Brasileira*<sup>15</sup> in 1965, “An Aesthetics of Hunger” serves as a threshold between what Randal Johnson has described as the earliest phase of *Cinema Novo*, marked by the end of totalitarian rule and a short-lived “radical transformation” toward liberal democracy in Brazilian society, and the later phases, which witnessed a revival of harshly repressive, military-backed authoritarian rule (Johnson *Cinema* 2-3, 119). Like Birri’s “Cinema and Underdevelopment,” Rocha’s manifesto falls in between the optimistic moment of democratization and its demise at the hands of military-led juntas. And yet, “An Aesthetics of Hunger” advances a reconceptualization of development that overturns the prevailing modernizationism of its time through notions of revolution and predicts the political shift to globalization in Latin America by century’s end.

A number of threads bind these three early manifestoes together, especially in terms of their manner for redressing the trope of development. Perhaps most significantly, each takes a turn at advancing a socially radical form of revolution that avoids aggression and combines art and politics, highlighting cinematic investments in and uses of development tropes.

Rocha’s “An Aesthetics of Hunger” is also known as “an

aesthetic of violence,” from the idea, not of inciting violence but rather, of *recognizing* the “violence” that has befallen the citizens of Latin America as a result of their social circumstances; that is, an “aesthetics of hunger” sheds light on the cognitive dissonance between Latin American needs for dependency and independence. Somewhat ironically, Rocha acknowledges Latin America’s displacement from and dependency on so-called “civilized” cultures of the First-World order, a heritage, he argues, that is an imposed “colonial conditioning” and “domination” (59). From their displacement, Latin Americans feel a “national shame” that the First World may ignore completely or may understand only as an “aesthetic” or formal quality, “*um dado formal*,” and a sort of “tropical surrealism”/“*um estranho surrealismo tropical*” that seemingly defies Western logic (“Esthetic” 59-60; “*Estética*” 165, 168). Rocha advises Latin American filmmakers and viewers to reverse the violence of their social circumstance through an “intellectually understood” and “revolutionary” sense of consciousness: “From a moral position...[t]he love that this violence encompasses is as brutal as the violence itself because it is not a love of complacency or contemplation but rather a love of action and transformation”/“*De uma moral...[o] amor que esta violência encerra é tão brutal quanto a própria violência, porque não é um amor de complacência ou de contemplação, mas um amor de ação e transformação.*” (“Esthetic” 60; “*Estética*” 169). *Cinema Novo*, then, uses art to reveal and help replace with “truth” the “untruth and exploitation” of commercial industry, both in cinema as well as in other facets of Latin American society; interestingly, Rocha recognizes the “economic and industrial integration” inherent to cinema and admits that revolutionary cinema depends on this integration. The revolution that Rocha advocates raises ethical questions about “freedom” in defiance of forms of domination—economic, socio-political, and cultural—that stand at the base of modernizationism.

The idea of revolution for Sanjinés, while evoking the *gravitas* of a junta through figurative word choice, results from the audience’s dialectical relationship with the film’s message, bringing to life a “*militancia*”/“fresh militancy” that can be used “*como de una arma*”/“like a weapon” (“*Problemas*” 63; “*Problems*” 64). Sanjinés makes clear, though, that the revolutionary cinema he advocates seeks beauty as a means to “revealing truth” and the essence, “the love,” of humanity: “*el cine revolucionario debe buscar la belleza no como objetivo sino como medio... capaz de penetrar en la verdad*” (“*Problems*” 62; “*Problemas*” 57-8). Sanjinés vehemently attacks bourgeois values, but he also shows favor for wide distribution and the economic support it provides to revolutionary filmmakers, suggesting that it is not the capitalistic values themselves but rather the dominant and exclusionary nature of First World capitalism that has historically detracted from Latin America’s economic growth. This relationship, which Sanjinés describes for cinema as “vertical,” maintains the modernizationist notion of development, similar to the monop-

olistic control the vertically-integrated studio-based film industry as well as other corporate-conglomerate internationals have enjoyed world-wide. Revolution, then, for Sanjinés amounts to the “*proceso de descubrimiento*”/“process of discovery” of watching and making films; discovery allows a kind of development that refutes the biased modernizationist orientation (“*Problemas*” 64; “*Problems*” 65).

Perhaps even more explicitly than Rocha and Sanjinés, Fernando Birri redraws the trope of development through the “consciousness” that “develops” the peoples of Latin America (86). Similarly, Birri pleads for the adoption of non-violent means of social revolution, for example, through the humanistic benefits of the arts: a cinema “which awakens consciousness ... which helps the passage from underdevelopment to development, from sub-stomach to stomach, from sub-culture to culture, from sub-happiness to happiness, from sub-life to life” (86-7). Like Rocha, Birri claims that a revolutionary consciousness helps to alleviate the “misunderstanding” that “always comes about by applying analytical schemes imposed by foreign colonialists”; while attacks go against oligarchy and bourgeois values at the national-state level and imperialism and colonialism at the international level, the main culprit is the methodological orientation that explains and defends domination over Latin America such as modernizationism (87). In fact, Birri advocates a distribution-and-exhibition strategy that borrows from capitalism, where box-office receipts and profitability of a film reflect its commitment to the revolutionary cause of awakening consciousness in its audience; profitability should not, however, be prioritized over the accessibility of the film message to a working class audience (91, 92-3). Like his fellow manifesto-writers, Birri makes clear that the purpose behind the “new cinema” of Latin America was to create a “new history,” one that has eluded mainstream views, blinded by the domination of modernizationism (87). These three early manifestoes, then, depict aspects of Latin America’s history that have been neglected or palliated by academic studies.

## Deconstructing Development

Just as the formative Latin American film manifestoes revealed the shortcomings of the modernizationist conceptualizations of Latin American development, revisionist studies in the fields of sociology, anthropology, and history paid closer attention to the manner in which Latin American narratives conceived of the nations and the region. Critics of modernizationism shifted attention (and blame) away from the poorer nations themselves and more directly to the relationship that poorer nations shared with their richer counterparts. In an almost immediate response to the academic theories of modernizationism, the U.N.’s Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA)<sup>16</sup> in the 1950s pointed to the unfair and unequal terms of trade between the Latin American nations and their richer counterparts. The academy equally responded by the 1960s in

the form of the dependency theory, which advocated the poorer nations by revealing the extent to which richer nations benefited from them within a capitalist global marketplace. In particular, left-leaning revisionists such as Andre Gunder Frank pointed to the ethnocentric bias of prevalent conceptions of development and the dependency that Latin American nations had to the United States, both of which were inherent to the modernizationist paradigm. In direct refutation of Rostow's growth-stages model, Frank suggests that the modernizationist definition of development has ignored the actual history of growth in Latin American countries (45); moreover, the dependency of these Latin American countries within the globally extended capitalist system more firmly entrenches them in economic and, by extension, political, social, and cultural need of and subordination to the First World (13-5). According to the dependency theorist revision, the developed nations' economies required undeveloped countries, and it was through exploitation of the poorer nations' markets and raw resources and consumption by the poorer nations' of high-cost import goods that the First World became fully "developed," in modernizationist terms. It was easy work for dependency theory to tie the Iberian-colonial history of Latin America to its modern economic, political, social, and cultural oppression at the hands of the imperialistic First World.

Arising from the dependency theorists' closer examination of the relationships between and among the more and less developed nations, world-system theory emerged in the early 1970s and continues to drive forward into the most recent studies on globalization and transnationalism. Where dependency theory favored a highly descriptive function, in large part reactionary to the modernization theories, world-system theory applied quantitative and comparative research methodologies,<sup>17</sup> yielding more effectively scientific explanations for the Third World's growth patterns (Roberts 14). Rather than presuppose national growth as part of an universalized and historicized evolution as the modernizationists and dependency theorists previously had done,<sup>18</sup> world-system theorists consider the growth of nation-states and global regions as both independent and system-integrated processes. Though more firmly bound in some cases by the conventions of empirical epistemologies, world-system theories reevaluate development, the keystone to studies of poorer nations, positing it as a characterization of the world-systemic process.

Leading the academic thrust of world-system theory, Immanuel Wallerstein in his groundbreaking *The Modern World-System* set forth four postulates.<sup>19</sup> First, building off the class dichotomy of dependency theory, nations can be classified as central, peripheral, and semi-peripheral, the last being an intermediary zone for nation-states sharing characterizations of the two former. Second, also borrowing from the dependency camp, the terms of trade between poorer countries and the First World order have been unfair and unequal. Third, synthesizing the first two postulates, understanding the positioning of a nation-state necessitates

understanding its independence from the system in coordination with the workings of the whole system. And fourth, mirroring economic cycles are secular trends, including the polarization of world classes. In *The Capitalist World-Economy* Wallerstein cites three main mechanisms—military strength, pervasive ideology, and semi-peripheral mobilization—through which the First World order has maintained a relative domination in the system (22-3). Wary of other world-system theorists' tendency toward depoliticizing national and international power relations, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, like Wallerstein, acknowledges imperialism's translation into state institutions and its subsequent hold on Latin America. Cardoso strives to re-define the conceptualization of development in Latin America, based on analysis of the "will to revolutionize" and the resulting "new patterns of capital accumulation": "These changes demand a reappraisal of emergent structures and their main tendencies...they are marked enough to warrant a major modification of the established analyses of capitalism and imperialism" ("Towards" 299, "Dependency" 87). Similar to Wallerstein's third postulate, Cardoso proposes a post-structuralist, meta-systemic approach to examine the interrelationships among Latin American countries and others parts of the world.

The paradigmatic shift in Cardoso, Wallerstein and other world-system theorists, not only in terms of defining development for Latin American and Caribbean nations and the global region but also in terms of the methodological approach, is mirrored in the statements made by filmmakers in the New Latin American Cinema documents. Similar to the methodological turn in world-system orientations, the formative New Latin American film manifestoes deconstruct the power relations among Latin American countries and their counterparts throughout the world to reveal contemporaneously an awareness of the entire culture-system and its valences along side an awareness of the socio-politics that are allied to cinema's values. Reading the formative New Latin American Cinema manifestoes in the political contexts in which they were written reveals a reversal of the binary positionings traditionally established between Latin America and the First World order in film, but also in economics, socio-politics and culture more broadly.

## Reconstructing Latin American Film History

Perhaps no two nations reveal the dichotomous and contradictory nature of modern Latin America as Cuba and Mexico do, both living in the shadow of their big-brother United States. Since the 1930s, Mexico has experienced constitutional stability in its multi-party politics unmatched in Latin America. Although the official party, the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI), has earned the reputation for beaurocratic authoritarianism, corruption, and "boss" politics, it is a moderate body, winged on the far

left by the *Partido Popular Socialista* (PPS) and by the *Partido de Acción Nacional* (PAN) on the right (Barkin 4). Along with the larger Latin American nations, Mexico has invested its initiatives in import-substituting industrialization (ISI), and likewise found itself by the end of the 1960s perilously reliant on the First World order with steady, if only slight, economic gains and a dramatic polarization between upper and lower classes; perhaps more than any other Latin American country, Mexico saw that there are limits to capitalist dependency.<sup>20</sup> And yet, over the course of the last century, Mexico has grown into a democratic nation, not in the sort of modernizationist evolutionary process of industrialization and Westernization, though, but in its placement alongside similar nations in the world-system marketplace.

On the opposite end of this spectrum, Cuba has been an anomaly among the Americas: Spanish colony as late as 1889; agricultural export-based economy; socialist revolution in 1959 against a legacy of dictatorship in the names of Machado and Batista. As a protectorate of the United States in the first half of the century, Cuba fell prey to *caudillismo* and political corruption, which did little to prevent unemployment, widespread poverty, and overall harsh living standards. *Fidelistas* made small gains in terms of social welfare and distribution of wealth, but Cuba suffered over the long haul from both Soviet dependence and its single export-based economy. As evident by the fall of world-wide communism, the loss of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) trade bloc, and the mass exoduses of Cuban nationals to the United States since the revolution, socialism has proven to be a failed experiment in Cuba.<sup>21</sup> Like Mexico, Cuba centralized its economic initiatives; Mexico was peripheralized by the United States, Europe, and Japan, as Cuba was to the Soviet Union. Socio-politics and culture followed the economic path of dependence, though in radically different directions for each, Cuba and Mexico. This context of diametrically opposed American political schemes provides a framework through which may be read the formative New Latin American Cinema manifestoes, particularly Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino's "Towards a Third Cinema" and Julio García Espinosa's "For an Imperfect Cinema."

Of the five formative manifestoes examined in this article, Espinosa's<sup>22</sup> appears the least ideologically-conflicted and most explicitly Marxist. First published in *Cine Cubano*<sup>23</sup> in 1970 at the up-swing of a romantic revival in socialist-national policy, "For an Imperfect Cinema" embraces the enthusiasm of Castro's idealism. Significantly, though, revolutionary cinema for Espinosa must negate the prevailing aesthetics of mainstream cinema and, in so doing, erase the implicit boundaries between the arts that appeal to social-class distinctions, passed down through Eurocentric tradition. Espinosa's target is the democratization of American art that results from spectatorial participation and mass consumption of films ("For" 75-7). Like Sanjinés, Espinosa claims that the dialectical relationship between a revolutionary film and

its spectators can awaken a sense of "consciousness"/"conciencia" ("For" 73; "Por" 47). And since "aesthetic"/"estético" concerns are inherently tied to "ethics"/"orden ético," the revolutionary turn in cinema will help to instigate a larger socio-political and cultural transformation as well ("For" 71; "Por" 46). However, as we shall see in the Solanas-Getino manifesto, at the root of the consciousness fostered by "an Imperfect Cinema" is a post-structuralist reversal of traditional power relations.

In "Towards a Third Cinema," first published in the Cuban *Tricontinental*<sup>24</sup> in 1969 and remaining the most critically significant Latin American film manifesto, Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino<sup>25</sup> propose a "cinema of liberation" for Latin America and other Third World nations. Their subtitle, "Notes and Experiences for the Development of a Cinema of Liberation in the Third World," invokes the function seen in all the formative New Latin American Cinema manifestoes: to examine and critique notions of development, especially as they are imposed by First World order nations. Revolutionary films, as part of a culture of "decolonization"/"la descolonización de la cultura," reveal "an overall dependence that generates models and values born from the needs of imperialist expansion"/"una dependencia global generadora de modelos, y valores nacidos de las necesidades de la expansión imperialista" ("Towards" 37; "Hacia" 116). While clearly favoring Cuban socialism, Solanas and Getino claim that the struggle of revolutionary cinema in Latin America targets a centralized system, acknowledging both independent nations, the global region, and the holistic model of the world as a culture-system itself ("Towards" 39-40). Like Cardoso, Wallerstein, and other world-system social theorists, Solanas and Getino recognize the multiple valencies of the system and its constituent parts operating in a process.

Solanas and Getino argue that revolutionary art must resist the mainstream, the dominant social system, which conceptualizes "culture, art, science, and cinema as univocal and universal terms [that] always respond to conflicting class interests"/"la cultura, la ciencia, el arte, el cine como terminus unívocos y universales [que] responden siempre a los intereses de clases en conflicto" ("Towards" 35; "Hacia" 109). Similarly, Espinosa claims that revolutionary art "gives us a vision of society or of human nature and that, at the same time, it cannot be defined as a vision of society or of human nature. It is possible that a certain narcissism of consciousness—in recognizing in oneself a little historical, sociological, psychological, philosophical consciousness—is implicit in aesthetic pleasure" ("Towards" 73). This "consciousness"/"conciencia" engendered within the spectator espouses a critique of official discourses of domination and inspires essentially democratic individualism.

## Conclusion

Like the contradictory impulses in Mexico's and Cuba's economy, socio-politics, and culture, there is a dissemination, a

plurality of meanings, built into conceptualizations of the Americas, as a whole, the global region of Latin America, and independent Latin American and Caribbean nations. Where formative New Latin American film theories by Rocha, Sanjinés, and Birri redressed the ideas of development, Espinosa's "For an Imperfect Cinema" and Solanas and Getino's "Towards a Third Cinema" particularly critique the epistemological models at work in defining Latin America, revealing the arbitrariness of the system in which potentially multiple forms of knowledge can be constructed.

Both "For an Imperfect Cinema" and "Towards a Third Cinema" valorize revolutionary cinema precisely through their decentralization of culture and, by extension, socio-politics and state nationalism. In a similar methodological approach to the world-system theorists, the Espinosa and Solanas-Getino theoretical approaches recognize the larger context of world cinema in which Latin America's "third cinema" project fits. Revolution and revelation breed a new sense of consciousness in viewers of New Latin American films; where for Rocha, Sanjinés, and Birri this allows a redeployment of tropes of development, in the theories of Espinosa and Solanas and Getino, this settles disputes among the battling significations within New Latin American cinema and the larger contradictory social patterns in the global region. Militancy in each of the manifestoes substitutes the actual physical aggression found throughout the world with the figuratively brutal but ultimately constructive provocation of revelation. The inclination to read the New Latin American Cinema manifestoes as militant and revolutionary in line with the socialist movements in Latin America is reductive, resulting in a singular voiced "historiographical fiction" of Latin America that Coco Fusco and B. Ruby Rich among other scholars reprove (Fusco "Reviewing" 7; Rich 277). Rather, the sorts of revolution and militancy that the filmmakers proffer fits more closely within the humanist tradition, through an alliance of the arts to social politics and culture in the 1960 and 1970s.

Since the 1980s, Latin American film markets have continued to suffer as a result of Hollywood's seemingly endless line of blockbusters with substantial financial backing, wide-spread distribution, and globally recognizable star-actors.<sup>26</sup> And yet, film and video producers in Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, and Venezuela have created a niche for themselves, both nationally and internationally, while Chile, Columbia, and Peru have eked out small-scale production platforms. At once, re-reading these manifestoes, written between 1965 and 1976, historicizes the capitalist-imperialist theories of development and dependency in Latin American culture. Moreover, as video, cable, and television markets continue to open up today throughout the Latin American global region, an historical vantage of the New Latin American Cinema must critically examine the extent to which economic, socio-political, and cultural models benefited Hollywood's studio-based film industry to the detriment of local and state-run companies.<sup>27</sup>

Mediated globalization has taken advantage in the shifts toward democracy, and, as a result, cultural expressions in film as well as critical scholarship on these expressions contest traditionally bound notions of identity in terms of ethnicity, race, and nationality.<sup>28</sup> Considering the formative New Latin American Cinema manifestoes and their critique of "modern" conceptions of Latin America relates aspects of the global region's (hi)story that have been left untold and provides insight to the operative methods of revolution and development in Latin America.

## Notes

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- 1 Although the focus of this article spotlights a representative sample of film manifestoes from Latin America from 1965 to 1976, *Art in Latin America* edited by Dawn Ades provides in its appendix older manifestoes that deal with broader aesthetic issues (306-337). Similarly, there is a wealth of material to be examined in film manifestoes that come after this period, including but certainly not limited to the "aesthetics of garbage," "salamander aesthetics," "termite terrorism," "*ciné transe*," "counter-cinema," "nomadic aesthetics" and so forth; See Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's discussion of "Media Jujitsu" (328-33) and Michael Martin's Introductory Notes (17-31). The 1999 special issue of *Wide Angle* edited by Jesse Lerner updates the discussion on Latin American manifestoes. For a collection of Latin American film manifestoes not yet available in English-language translations, see *Hojas de Cine: Testimonios y Documentos del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano*.
- 2 Perhaps the very best of these studies, Julianne Burton's "The Camera as a Gun," equates revolutionary militancy with historical examples of competition and aggression. Similarly, Michael Chanan's critical introduction to his *Twenty-five Years*, the earliest source to compile these most significant documents of the New Latin American Cinema project and still perhaps the best and most often cited discussion of their significance, favors a more competitive reading of militancy and, at its worst, suffers from a predilection toward Marxist-overdetermined readings of the manifestoes.
- 3 Julianne Burton's examination of modes of address in Latin American social documentaries from 1958-1972 similarly points to a democratizing effect ("Democratizing").
- 4 Rostow explains that the last stage of his "five stages-of-growth," the "age of high mass-consumption" in an "advanced industrial society," results from a dynamic model of production that takes advantage of science, technology, and resources (73-4, 12-6).
- 5 Ankie Hoogvelt, among other political economists, points to the ideological interconnections of economy, social politics, and culture (29-31).
- 6 Chilean filmmakers working under the Popular Unity umbrella drafted their own manifesto, entitled "Filmmakers and the Popular Government: A Political Manifesto," in 1970.
- 7 Michael Chanan's *Chilean Cinema* provides excellent historical background information on economic dependency in Chile out of which its national cinema slowly grew (1-26).



- 8 In Peru, the presidential victories of Manuel Prado in 1956 and Belaúnde in 1963 suggested the extent to which fascism had been overcome by moderate-liberal democracy and socialist-inspired *Aprismo*. José Figueres and his National Liberation movement's liberal democratic social reform in Costa Rica from the 1950s through the 1970s allowed a democratic exchange of political perspectives, and in Venezuela, the presidential election of the *Acción Democrática*/Democratic Action Party's Rómulo Betancourt in 1958 initiated constitutional rule that had been disallowed by a long-standing tradition of military-protected *caudillismo*. A less fully realized shift can be interpreted through the reformist challenge led by Duarte in 1970s El Salvador and Vinicio Cerezo in 1980s Guatemala.
- 9 Fernando Birri's films from this formative period include *Tire Dié* (1960); *Los Inundados/Flooded Out* (1961); *Che, Buenos Aires* (1962); *La Pampa Gringa* (1963); and, *Org* (1978). See Tim Barnard's *Argentine Cinema* for critical attention to Birri's work.
- 10 Michael Chanan in his *Twenty-five Years of the New Latin American Cinema* cites this 1967 version of the text; English-language translations by Malcolm Coad derive from a reprint in Michael Martin's *New Latin American Cinema*. This translation appeared earlier in Chanan's collection.
- 11 The Ukamau Group, a Bolivian film production team including Jorge Sanjinés and Oscar Soria, began in 1961 making federally commissioned documentaries and short films such as *Revolución* (1963) that were examinations of Bolivian institutionalization and underdevelopment. By 1966, the group completed *Ukamau*, which from the native *Aymará* language translates in English to "And so it is," and in 1969, *Yawar Mallku/Blood of the Condor*. Sanjinés explains in his "Problems" that he continued to make films progressively searching for purer manifestations of revolutionary consciousness: in *El Coraje del Pueblo/The Courage of the People* (1971); *El Enemigo Principal/The Principal Enemy*; and, *Fuera de Aquí*, which translates in English to "Get out of here." Willy Oscar Muñoz examines the "revolutionary" qualities of *The Courage of the People*.
- 12 A slightly expanded version of this manifesto appears as part of Sanjinés' *Teoría y Práctica de un Cine junta al Pueblo* in 1979, from which Spanish-language citations derive. Richard Schaaf translated this monograph in 1989 as *Theory and Practice of a Cinema with the People*, and Malcolm Coad translated "Problems", appearing in Michael Chanan's *Twenty-five Years of the New Latin American Cinema*. English-language citations are from Schaaf's translation, reprinted in Michael Martin's *New Latin American Cinema*.
- 13 Paul A. Schroeder considers the interrelationship between Alea's theoretical dialectic and its application in his film *Memorias del Subdesarrollo/Memories of Underdevelopment* (1968).
- 14 Glauber Rocha's early film work includes *Barravento* also known as *The Turning Wind* (1962); *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* also known as *Black God, White Devil* (1964); *Terre em Transe* also known as *Land in Anguish* (1967); and, *O Dragão da Maldade contra o Santo Guerreiro* also known as *Antonio das Mortes* (1969), all of which bespeak his "aesthetics of hunger." See Randal Johnson's chapter on Rocha in *Cinema Novo x 5* (118-61) and Johnson and Stam's *Brazilian Cinema* for two excellent readings of Rocha's films. For Rocha's treatment of history and the Brazilian vernacular, see Ismail Xavier's "Black God, White Devil: The Representation of History."
- 15 All Portuguese-language citations derive from this 1965 version of the text; translations by Randal Johnson and Burnes Hollyman appear in Michael Chanan's *Twenty-five Years of the New Latin American Cinema* and is reprinted in Michael Martin's *New Latin American Cinema*, from which English-language citations derive.
- 16 The Caribbean nations were later added to this United Nations agency's focus, known today by the English-language acronym ECLAC, Spanish-language CEPAL.
- 17 Christopher Chase-Dunn's world-systems work is among the earliest that takes advantage of quantitative analysis, responding to the criticism that studies of Latin American and Caribbean societies did not yield verifiable hypotheses.
- 18 Mouzelis, cited in Crewe and Harrison, reflects back on Frank's dependency theory as a "mirror image" of modernizationism (27); Larrain includes this among criticisms of the dependency school (123-4).
- 19 J. Timmons Roberts and Amy Hite outline these four postulates in their "Introduction" (14-6).
- 20 In *Cinema of Solitude* Charles Ramirez Berg points to socio-political and economic tensions that made their way to cultural expression of *mexicanidad* in Mexico's *Nuevo Cine* starting in the late 1960s (2-6).
- 21 Paul Susman examines Cuba's "crisis" following the fall of the Soviet Union and offers several "substitutes for socialism" (179-81). In a more generous reading of Cuba's socialist economy, Carmelo Mesa-Lago still must characterize the full-employment and productivity policies of the 1970s as a "national concern" and full of "inefficiencies" (132, 139).
- 22 Films from this formative period of New Latin American Cinema directed, co-directed or written by Espinosa include: *El Megano/The Charcoal Worker* (1954); *Cuba Baila/Cuban Dance* (1960); *Las Aventuras de Juan Quin Quin/The Adventures of Juan Quin Quin* (1967); *Lucía* (1969); *De Cierta Manera/One Way or Another* (1977). Dennis West's "Reconciling Entertainment" and Julianne Burton's "Folk Music," both interviews with the filmmaker, examine the intersections of history and popular culture in Espinosa's work.
- 23 All Spanish-language citations derive from this 1970 version of the text. Julianne Burton's translation appears in Michael Chanan's *Twenty-five Years of the New Latin American Cinema* and is reprinted in Michael Martin's *New Latin American Cinema*, from which English-language citations derive. This manifesto has also been published in *Afterimage* in 1971; in *Jump Cut* in 1979; in Coco Fusco's *Reviewing Histories* in 1987; and, in Robert Stam and Toby Miller's *Film and Theory: An Anthology* as recently as 2000. Espinosa's "Meditations on Imperfect Cinema" looks back almost fifteen years to the original manifesto; this essay is printed in Michael Martin's *New Latin American Cinema*.
- 24 All Spanish-language citations derive from this 1969 version of the text. Julianne Burton's translation appears in *Cineaste* and is reprinted in Michael Chanan's *Twenty-five Years of the New Latin American Cinema* and Michael Martin's *New Latin American Cinema*, from which English-language citations derive. It has been published in Coco Fusco's *Reviewing Histories* in 1987 and in Robert Stam and Toby Miller's *Film and Theory: An Anthology* in 2000. Octavio Getino reviews the issues in this manifesto almost a decade after its original publication in "Some Notes on the Concept of a 'Third Cinema,'" printed in Michael Martin's *New Latin American Cinema*.
- 25 Although Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino's collaboration on *La Hora de los Hornos/The Hour of the Furnaces* (1968) is best known, they also team-produced *Argentina, Mayo de 1969: Los Caminos de la Liberación* (1969) and co-directed *Peron: La Revolución Justicialista* (1971). Among the best critical works on Solanas and Getino are Robert Stam's "The Two Avant-Gardes"; Michael Chanan's "The Changing Geography of Third Cinema"; and José Agustín Mahieu's "Del Cine Político." Kathleen Newman's "National Cinema after Globalization" and Zuzana Pick's "Dialectical Wanderings of Exile" look at later works by Solanas.
- 26 Jorge A. Schnitman and Roy Arnes provide detailed overviews of film industries in the global region as well as in individual Latin American nations.

- 27 Though primarily focused on television and cable networks, Elizabeth Fox and Silvio Waisbord point to the growth of media industries in Latin America (18-19).
- 28 This socio-political shift toward democratization has also allowed a re-examination of gender in Latin America; studies include Julia Lesage's "Women Make Media"; Illene S. Goldman's study of *Cine Mujer*; Julianne Burton and Zuzana Pick's "The Women Behind the Camera"; Liz Ktoz's "Unofficial Stories"; Catherine Davies' study of masculinity and modernity in Cuba Cinema; and, Paul Antonoj Paranagua's "Pioneers."

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