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Edward Branigan is Professor Emeritus in the Department of Film and Media Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He is the author of *Projecting a Camera: Language-Games in Film Theory* (2006), *Narrative Comprehension and Film* (1992), and *Point of View in the Cinema: A Theory of Narration and Subjectivity in Classical Film* (1984). With Charles Wolfe, he is the general editor of the American Film Institute Film Readers series.

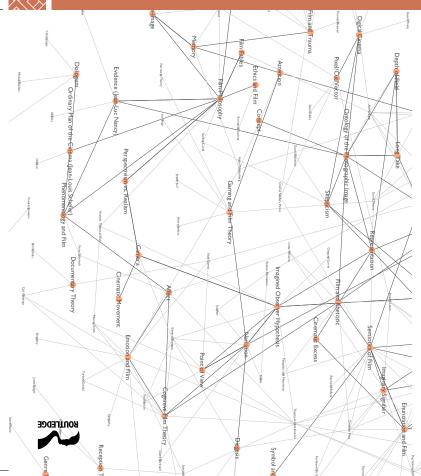**Warren Buckland** is Reader in Film Studies at Oxford Brookes University. His areas of research include film theory (*Film Theory: Rational Reconstructions*, 2012, and *The Cognitive Semiotics of Film*, 2000) and film narratology (*Puzzle Films: Complex Storytelling in Contemporary Cinema*, 2009, and *Hollywood Puzzle Films*, 2014). He is editor of the quarterly journal the *New Review of Film and Television Studies*.

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D. N. Rodowick, *Glen A. Lloyd Distinguished Service Professor in Cinema and Media Studies, University of Chicago*

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THE ROUTLEDGE
ENCYCLOPEDIA
OF FILM THEORY

Edited by
Edward Branigan and Warren Buckland

To those who were at Khe Sanh and Lang Vei, South
Vietnam, 1967–8, and, again, to my parents,
Evelyn and Henry.— E.B.

For my brother, Jason.— W.B.

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THIRD WORLD CINEMA

What is the 'Third World'?

A theorization of 'Third World cinema' must begin with the troubled genealogy of the term 'Third World.' For some, the term lumps together the underdeveloped countries of the world, placing them behind the advanced, market-oriented nation-states (First World) and the centralized communist societies (Second World). For others, it points to a geo-political imagination that congealed at the Bandung Conference of 1956, comprising 'non-aligned' countries claiming their autonomy from the Cold War-era polarization of the NATO alliance and the Communist Bloc. 'Third World' is often invoked pejoratively as the domain of stagnation, as if such a state is its natural condition. Alternatively, it conveys a diagnostic insight about the structural imbalances of the global political economy by pointing to a vast 'periphery' held in a relation of dependence by a few 'core' countries. Before the economic crisis of the mid-1970s, the term registered optimism about the newly independent nation-states emerging from their colonial past into a future of unlimited potentialities; soon after, it conveyed the despair of crushing debt burdens. While contemporary parlance has shifted from 'underdeveloped' to 'developing' countries, and postcolonial backwardness has been historicized as mainly an outcome of colonial exploitation, the entire range of nuances continues to inform the paradigms of Third World cinema.

A project of theorizing Third World cinema must take into account (1) the fact that its object is anything but a stable, singular field, and (2) the criticism that to speak of Third World cinema having its own exclusive theory is also to *exclude* this domain from 'film theory proper'. Nevertheless, there is an interesting history behind this vexing category that cannot be ignored. Invoked from multiple cultural, ideological, and epistemological topoi, it has served a range of purposes over the past six decades. The following account begins with that crucial history; only through such an engagement can we hope to reformulate the overall problematic.

Third Cinema manifesto

In the 1950s and 1960s, the global trend towards decolonization energized the more affirmative connotations of the term 'Third World'. It was in this heady conjuncture that the earliest and, arguably, most influential conceptualization of Third World cinema found articulation in the manifesto 'Towards a Third Cinema' (Solanas and Getino 1997 [1969]). Penned by the leftist Argentine filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino,

and originally published in Spanish in the film journal *Tricontinental*, the manifesto presented a sharply politicized topography of world cinema. 'First Cinema' was defined as the cinema of unbridled commercialism, intent on capturing markets and consolidating the status quo: Hollywood was its global exemplar. Armed with technical wizardry and glamorous packaging, this capitalist cinema of spectacles was said to captivate audiences with fantasies indulging bourgeois desires and values.

A deepening unease tinged this glossy world-view in 'Second Cinema', whose core output came from the various European 'new waves'. But that sense of disquiet never developed into a call for the radical transformation of social structures. For all its sophisticated idioms, including experimentations with space–time configuration and contemplative explorations of modern alienation, Second Cinema remained for Solanas and Getino a domain of effete intellectualism and petty bourgeois angst – dealing 'only … with effect, never with cause' (33). Bearing little resonance for popular struggles, this film festival- and art-house-oriented cinema privileged aesthetic innovation over political rupture, generating an elitist canon.

In contrast, 'Third Cinema' sought to revamp the relationship between aesthetics and politics, turning film cultures into an arena of purposeful activism. This was cinema that recognized the 'anti-imperialist struggle of the peoples of the Third World and of their equivalents inside the imperialist countries' as '*the most gigantic cultural, scientific and artistic manifestation of our time*'; its objective was nothing short of the '*decolonization of the mind*' (37; emphasis in original). As Teshome Gabriel summarizes with remarkable clarity, Third Cinema 'seeks to (a) decolonize minds, (b) contribute to the development of a radical consciousness, (c) lead to a revolutionary transformation of society, (d) develop new film language[s] with which to accomplish these tasks' (Gabriel 1982, 3).

Citing infrastructural advances of the mid-twentieth century, including the availability of cheaper and more mobile cameras and tape recorders, high speed film usable in natural light, automatic light meters, along with a greater dissemination of skills and the establishment of alternative distribution networks (16mm film circuits, underground or semi-public screenings), Solanas and Getino stressed new possibilities for breaking the shackles of capital on cinematic production and expanding the social role of the medium. The alignment of these developments with revolutionary agendas produced a *guerrilla cinema* that used its limited resources tactically, often working on the sly without permits, hoodwinking censorship, and challenging dominant institutions and ideologies.

Three defining features emerge from this articulation of Third Cinema as cultural warfare. First, it seeks to free cinema from an internalized conformity to bourgeois aesthetic standards set by imperialist and art cinemas, standards that are constantly updated according to techno-capitalist advances in filmmaking and that remain out of reach for most of the Third World. Instead of endlessly trying to play catch-up with imported and alienating principles, instead of being inhibited by a 'universal' model of 'the perfect work of art, the fully rounded film', Solanas and Getino (1997, 48) exhort cine-workers to address the contradictions of their own social realities with resources and skills at hand. Eschewing technical sophistication, the focus of Third Cinema shifts to a do-it-yourself mode that turns material constraints into an engine of innovation. Such an attitude is at the heart of Julio García Espinosa's clarion call for an 'Imperfect Cinema' (1969) and Glauber Rocha's passionate affirmation of an 'An Esthetic of Hunger' (1965). Together, these manifestos *potentiate* a cultural field that refuses to be held back by a lack of resources and, instead, embraces its historical mission of liberating culture, of making it a part of everyday struggles.

Second, the rhetoric around Third Cinema is stridently militant, often bordering on machismo: 'The camera is the inexhaustible *expropriator of image-weapons*; the projector, *a gun that can shoot 24 frames per second*' (50; emphasis in original). The new filmmaker is imagined in mythic-futuristic terms, as a revolutionary prepared 'to take chances on the unknown, to leap into space at times, exposing himself to failure as does the guerilla who travels along paths that he himself opens up with machete blows' (48). It is not coincidental that practically all the prominent figures of the various Third Cinema movements of the 1960s and 1970s were men. Cuban filmmaker Sara Gómez, who died all too young, remains the notable exception.

Finally, while grounded in history, Third Cinema is resolutely forward thinking: it is a cinema that takes risks, is exploratory in its approach, and prepares society for revolutionary futures. Its original proponents abstain from strict aesthetic prescriptions: they conceive filmmaking as a series of open-ended experiments. Based on frank dialogue and constantly vigilant about its own modalities, Third Cinema remains capable of resolving problems that are bound to arise on the way to cultural emancipation. This dimension of autocritical integrity has often been lost in subsequent evocations that stress Third Cinema's militancy and seek to advance on its basis a concrete, often rigid programme of ideological resistance.

Inspirations and intersections

The kindred formations and influences that the 1969 manifesto names include worldwide anti-colonial struggles and students' and workers' movements, the Cuban Revolution, Frantz Fanon, the Vietnamese resistance to US imperialism, May 1968, Italy's *Cinegiornali liberi*, Japan's Zengakuren documentaries, the US Newsreel collective, filmmakers Santiago Alvarez and Chris Marker. Some others – most notably, leftist cultural figures Sergei Eisenstein and Bertolt Brecht, Italian neorealism, and the body of critique known as Dependency Theory – while not explicitly invoked, remain palpable presences across its pages. This last extra-cinematic influence, a line of thinking associated with social scientists Raúl Prebisch, Paul Baran, and Andre Gunder Frank, maintains that chronic Third World poverty is a result of the unequal terms on which peripheral countries are integrated into the world system: their primary role is to serve the interests of the wealthy and dominant states. The manifesto clearly echoes this structuralist-Marxist position (37). Within the field of cinema, political documentaries present one paradigmatic form for Third Cinema (Solanas and Getino's *La hora de los hornos* [*The Hour of the Furnaces*, 1968] being an exemplar of both), while the mode of cinematic production (if not the ideologies and sentiments) of the Italian neorealists offers a working model for Third World filmmakers facing infrastructural constraints.

Fanon and Brecht remain, arguably, the two most significant intellectual influences for Third Cinema. The manifesto opens with an epigram from the Martinique-born revolutionary thinker: 'we must discuss, we must invent' (33). Fanon (2005 [1961]) advocates a level of emancipation that goes well beyond the neocolonial stagnation presided over by domestic elites even after political independence from colonial occupation. His call for discussion and innovation sets the stage for the articulation of a cultural programme seeking a decisive end to the more chronic occupation of the mind:

> Insert the work as an original fact in the process of liberation, place it first at the
> service of life itself, ahead of art; dissolve aesthetics in the life of society: only in

this way, as Fanon said, can decolonisation become possible and culture, cinema, and beauty – at least, what is of greatest importance to us – become our culture, our films, and our sense of beauty.

(Solanas and Getino 1997, 40)

If Fanon delineates the historical conditions for a genuine liberation, it is Brecht's theories of stagecraft (*see* BRECHT AND FILM), supplemented by core tenets of Russian formalism and Soviet revolutionary cinema, that provide a set of principles for politicized figuration on the way to social transformation (*see* MONTAGE THEORY II [SOVIET AVANT-GARDE]). Solanas and Getino's injunction to 'place' the filmic work 'first at the service of life itself, ahead of art', draws on a strand of critical modernism that can be traced to Viktor Shklovsky, Walter Benjamin, and Brecht, among others. In spite of the specific inflections of their arguments, what is common between Shklovsky's art of 'making strange', Benjamin's stress on 'shock and astonishment', and Brecht's techniques of 'defamiliarization' is a desire to counter the seductive spectacles and habitual modes of perception that induce a certain numbness and inaction in modern subjects. At stake is the revivification of sensuous engagement, making art and philosophy matter within the messy materiality of quotidian struggles.

As Rey Chow puts it, Brecht develops this need for engagement into a highly reflexive, 'mediatized' strategy of laying bare the means of signification, of rendering thought '*ex-plicit through staging*' (Chow 2011, 138–9; emphasis and hyphen in original). Such 'laying bare' takes very different forms in films like *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* (*Black God, White Devil*, 1964), *Memorias del Subdesarrollo* (*Memories of Underdevelopment*, 1968), and *El Otro Franciso* (*The Other Francisco*, 1975), all landmarks of Third Cinema. What remains central in each case is the aspiration to involve audiences, to turn them into active participants in a dialogue about the material conditions and historical contradictions of their lives.

Yet another Brechtian argument coursing through the manifesto has to do with the 'impotence of all reformist concepts' in achieving genuine transformation (Solanas and Getino 1997, 41). Declaring that '[r]eal innovations attack the roots', changing the social function of art, Brecht calls for a radical overhaul of the genre: innovations, not mere renovations, are the order of the day (Brecht 1964, 39–41). For Solanas and Getino, films that restrict themselves to 'the denunciation of the *effects* of neocolonial policy' are 'caught up in a reformist game' that safeguards extant social conditions: this is Second Cinema's crucial limitation. A truly radical approach must involve a laying bare of 'the *causes*', an exploration of 'the ways of organizing and arming for change' (Solanas and Getino 1997, 48).

The Brechtian underpinnings that Third Cinema shares with its contemporaneous Euro-American counter-cinema movements induce a certain conflation of the two in subsequent commentaries (*see* COUNTER-CINEMA). Both formations seek to break with the illusionism of Aristotelian poetics, whose linear and seamless narratives – and, in the case of cinema, mesmeric spectacles – elicit impulsive, often cathartic identification from the audience. Counter-cinema, in particular, thrives on undermining spectatorial pleasures: dispensing with linear, causal narratives featuring psychologically rounded characters, privileging structural arguments over individual motivation, presenting multiple storylines and points of view, refusing pat resolutions, and imploding the illusion of reality by revealing the process of filmmaking. But it also turns this agenda of opposing the modalities of commercial entertainment cinema into a rigid formalist doxa: direct address to camera,

jumpcuts, long takes, insertion of intertitles, contrapuntal sound design, open-ended narratives, overt didacticism at the cost of entertainment, and so on (Wollen 1972).

By the late 1960s, countries as far flung as India, Senegal, Turkey, and Hong Kong began to experience their own cinematic 'new waves'. Louis Althusser (1971) published his famous essay 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' in 1970, providing an analytical frame that proved extremely productive for film theory. Laura Mulvey introduced a feminist critical optic to the interrogation of the cinematic apparatus in her landmark 1975 essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (*see* FEMINIST FILM THEORY, HISTORY OF). The period also witnessed significant attempts to forge a Brechtian theory of cinema in the pages of the journal *Screen*. What made the Third Cinema intervention distinctive was its stress on postcolonial cultural contingencies and the racialized underpinnings of Third World predicaments. This is why Fanon and his radical polemic on behalf of the global south remained so integral to the manifesto. This is also why Third Cinema, while avoiding narrow formalist orthodoxies, had to embrace the strategic fiction of an authentic (national) consciousness that would replace a false (colonial) one.

Critical elaborations

The tension between a strategic essentialism and a supple dialogism is one of a series of binary oppositions – theory/practice, vanguard/popular, cosmopolitan/national – that complicates Third Cinema's agenda. Not surprisingly, the most notable disputes over Third Cinema's legacy are centred on these binaries: the tensions haunt subsequent attempts at theorizing cinemas of the Third World. It is tempting to line up dialogism–theory–vanguardism–cosmopolitanism against essentialism–practice–populism–nationalism. Even as this reductive polarity threatens to commandeer our understanding, scholars of Third (World) Cinema demonstrate how it erases historical complexities.

In his attempts to reconcile the 'Third' of 'Third Cinema' with that of the 'Third World', Teshome Gabriel effectively *performs* these confounding tensions. On the one hand, he seeks to articulate an integral film language that arises out of the common cultural and political exigencies of Third World societies. Structural conditions and historical experiences shape a cine-aesthetic along a trajectory that follows Fanon's 'steps of the genealogy of Third World culture': from the 'unqualified assimilation' of Euro-American norms, to the 'remembrance phase' focusing on the reinvigoration of indigenous forms and practices and the fostering of a national consciousness, and then towards a more internationalist 'combative phase' when a 'cinema of mass participation' engages 'the lives and struggles of Third World peoples' (Gabriel 1989, 31–3). Although Gabriel calls attention to the overlapping nature of these stages, the impression of a linear teleology persists, intensifying the essentialism inherent to his search for a common aesthetic across cultures.

On the other hand, Gabriel wants to unhinge the category 'Third' from ontological moorings to advance an ideological and methodological orientation. In the interest of forging an internationalist coalition, he argues that Third Cinema is characterized by 'the ideology it espouses and the consciousness it displays', rather than by 'where it is made, or even who makes it' (Gabriel 1982, 2). This line of thinking proves to be particularly productive over the next two decades: rising political disenchantment about the promises of nationalism, and the attrition of its ideals and institutions by the forces of global capital, induce a shift towards transnational and diasporic frames. But as Paul Willemen rightly observes, Gabriel's bracketing of 'the national question' – a direct corollary of his

'rehomogenisation of Third Cinema' – is a bit premature, as national interests continue to be of great political significance and cultural efficacy. Indeed, Third Cinema remains 'determinedly "national," even "regional," in its address and aspirations' (Willemen 1989, 17).

Debates at a 1986 conference in Edinburgh focused on the role of the intellectual *vis-à-vis* broad, popular cultural formations, an issue that was particularly charged in the post-colonies because of the complications wrought by their colonial histories (Pines and Willemen 1989). A chasm opened up between the so-called theorists and activists around the nature of participation most conducive to social transformation. The latter claimed that an insistence on theoretical sophistication was at one with the tyranny of technical flair and philosophical abstraction that helped suppress cultural creativity and induce mass apathy. In response, Homi Bhabha forcefully enunciated a 'commitment to theory': effective political action required working through all naive assertions of essence, authenticity, or autonomy. Indeed, to theorize was to act (Bhabha 1989).

Global connections, historical difference

A central impetus of the Edinburgh conference was to learn from global experiences of anti-imperialist cinemas in order to foster audiovisual cultures of resistance in Thatcher-era Britain. Across the Atlantic, similar creative enterprises of indigenous populations, descendants of slaves, and immigrants had begun to rattle the all-powerful US culture industry. But the material differences between the metropolitan 'centres' of colonialism and the 'peripheral' postcolonies remained significant. Seeking to establish the commonalities among these distinctive movements while mindful of their historical differences, Ella Shohat and Robert Stam proposed a broad paradigm of 'unthinking Eurocentrism' invested in combating the persistent and ubiquitous legacies of colonialism (Shohat and Stam 1994). Inspired by the multiple circuits and folds of Third World cinema, they offered a pragmatic map consisting of four overlapping circles. (1) 'A core circle of "Third Worldist" films produced by and for Third World peoples', irrespective of their actual location, and according to 'the principles of "Third Cinema"'; (2) a wider circle of the cinematic outputs of Third World societies, 'whether or not the films adhere to the principles of Third Cinema' – thus presumably including popular-commercial cinema; (3) a third circle of films 'made by First or Second World people' in solidarity with Third World communities and 'adhering to the principles of Third Cinema'; and (4) a fourth circle, 'somewhat anomalous in status, at once "inside" and "outside," comprising recent diasporic hybrid films … that both build on and interrogate' Third Cinema conventions (28).

This last circle speaks to a vital strand of millennial art inspired by lives lived between places and along borders, and to a central thrust of post-structuralist theory obsessed with interstitial concepts (e.g. extimacy, which confounds the binary inside/outside, as in a Moebius strip). Beginning with the condition of exile, Hamid Naficy provides one of the most sustained accounts of an interstitial mode of cinematic production in *An Accented Cinema*. Focusing on 'films that postcolonial, Third World filmmakers have made in their Western sojourn' and that key Western filmmakers have produced in exile, Naficy offers the 'accent' as a measure of this cinema's material marginality and rough-hewn quality (Naficy 2001, 3). '[T]he accent emanates not so much from the accented speech of the diegetic characters as from the displacement of the filmmakers and their artisanal production modes' (4). Naficy explores the formal tropes (fragmented, multilingual, reflexive

narratives; epistolary form and doubled characters) and stylistic flourishes (synaesthetic gestures, layered sound, meandering camera movements) which allow filmmakers to foreground their experiences in exile.

What Naficy brings to the table is a careful analysis of the interlocked nature of cinematic subjectivity and the material conditions of Third Worldist film production. Moreover, his close attention to the *affective* dimensions of exilic life – loss and nostalgia, presence and absence, phobic spaces and liminal panics – draws out an element that had remained only implicit in Third Cinema polemics. But Naficy appears to extol embodied experiences of liminality for motivating an auteurist vanguardism: the realm of the popular-commercial gets bracketed yet again. While his stress on the accent as a mode of criticism appears to align it with the politicized aesthetics of Third Cinema, his analytical transformation of the marginal into an elitist precarity is more resonant with Second Cinema.

Perhaps Naficy draws away too quickly from the cultural–phenomenological dimensions of the cinematic accent – dimensions that he reduces to 'the accented speech of the diegetic characters' – in his desire to foreground the materiality of displaced filmmakers' lives and working conditions. Film language comprises much more than linguistic speech: cinematic signification involves colour, sound, rhythm, pace, texture, and much more. An expansive conceptualization of the *cinematic accent* has to take into consideration the specificities of local lifeworlds that shape their cinematic idioms. These specificities – flavours, tones, and aesthetic traditions, modulated and reworked into singular cinematic accents – are, arguably, most evident in the realm of the popular. Recent scholarship seeks to historicize the melodramatic excesses of Latin American media cultures, the song and dance sequences of Indian films, and the martial arts stylings of Hong Kong cinema, even as it acknowledges a degree of global standardization (Paranagua 1996; Sarkar 2011; Yau 2001). In these studies, the accents are not turned into cultural essences; nor are they dismissed simply as idiosyncratic exceptions to, or degenerate mutations of, some presumed cinematic benchmark from the US or Europe.

Indeed, the popularity of Bombay or Hong Kong cinemas all over the world, well beyond South Asian or Chinese diasporic markets, demonstrates the cross-cultural mobility of cine-accents and undermines any intrinsic sense of the qualifier 'Third' – or the 'accented' – as crude, backward, or peripheral (Morris *et al.* 2006; Rajagopalan 2009). Such considerations underscore the need for a thorough critique and overhaul of film theory, so that it can accommodate and account for Third World cinemas without relegating them to its margins. In that sense, the project of theorizing 'Third World Cinema' gives way to one of *theorizing cinema as such* in the light of its Third Worldist expressions.

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