CINEMA NOVO AND NEW/THIRD CINEMA REVISITED: AESTHETICS, CULTURE AND POLITICS

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During the 1960s, three dissimilar but interrelated aesthetic projects were conflated under the rubric of what later became known as the New Latin American Cinema: Imperfect Cinema from Cuba, New Cinema and, later, Third Cinema from Argentina and Cinema Novo from Brazil. As the title of my essay states, I will only focus my analysis on a comparison between Cinema Novo and New/Third Cinema.¹ Both shared a general context of emergence and similar theoretical purposes; however, in practice many differences arose mainly related to the specific characteristics of each local context and the concrete articulations between the aesthetic, the cultural and the political. I intend to ponder those similarities and differences in order to critically and retrospectively map out the complex and paradoxical manifestations of the specific sorts of Latin Americanisms proposed by those cinematic practices so as to shed light on current debates regarding Latin Americanism.

With that purpose in mind, I will explore the aesthetic, political and cultural contentions of various texts, some “manifestos” (in the avant-gardist or Modernist sense) and other political texts, that reflected and theorized on their respective filmic productions. The majority of these texts were pamphlets that accompanied the long feature exhibitions or that ruminated a posteriori on the effects of the shows, hence, the political contingency that underscores many of them and, also, their subjection to multiple rewritings according to the context in which they were released. With respect to New/Third Cinema, these texts include: Fernando Birri’s “Cinema and Underdevelopment” and “For a Nationalist, Realist, Critical and Popular Cinema”—manifestos that accompanied the argumentative long feature (a social tragic-comedy) Los inundados (1962; Flooded Out)—and Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino’s “Toward a Third Cinema. Notes and Experiences for the Development of a Cinema of Liberation in the Third World” (1969) and “La hora de los

¹In the case of Argentina, I have decided to enlist both names, New Cinema and Third Cinema, in order to highlight the differences between those two projects. New Cinema is related to the early transformations within Argentine national cinema traditions activated by Fernando Birri, but also, at a more massive level, by Lautaro Murúa and Leonardo Favio, while Third Cinema is directly connected to the clandestine practice of Fernando Solanas, Octavio Getino and the Cinema of Liberation Group. On this subject, see Miguel Couselo, Historia del cine argentino, chapters 4 and 5.

Why is it important to invigorate the revision of these cinematic projects today? There could be many answers to this question; I have at least three significant reasons. First, it is important to note that, contrary to today’s hegemonic discourses with respect to many cultural practices under scrutiny through so-called Latin American cultural studies—one of their main destructive criticisms being that those practices are constructed from a cultural hegemonic exterior, for instance, US academe, as a mere object of study and discursive apparatus—in the case of the New Latin American Cinema, its existence as a group is directly related to their specific practices within the Latin American countries. Second, one of the aspects of these series of radical practices that strikes my attention the most is, without a doubt, the unfastened union and coexistence of dissimilar leftist political and ideological positions and avant-garde aesthetic orientations in a Latin American movement paradoxically bound through strong cultural, economic and political nationalisms. In Magical Reels, John King asserts that “this cinema can only be understood by examining national situations” (66). I totally agree with this contention; however, I believe it would be more productive to explore the tenuous integument that held and is still today, almost half a century later, holding these heterogeneous practices together under the name of New Latin American Cinema. It is true that the brand of Latin Americanism that amalgamated all those practices, has perhaps undergone opposed and strong contradictory political affiliations and oblique ideological nuances. The important point here is that, in spite of that, the New Latin American Cinema could institutionalize a Latin American imaginary, a utopian horizon as a project to be realized. And finally, the third reason: today there are contradictory feelings mingled with confusing and confused arguments that these projects are either nostalgically glorified by restituting them as the paradisiacal moment of an ingenuous and mythically unified left, or, on the other side, ignominiously annihilated by criticizing them as the infernal moment of their demise or defeat. Neither inferno nor arcadia; only a loose cluster of cultural practices from different cultural and political leftist movements, the majority of which were inspired by sound national and nationalist feelings. Perhaps due to their own ambiguities and

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2In La cola del diablo, José Aricó refers specifically to this topic when he reflects on this historical period arguing that: “When we speak about Latin America we evoke a pre-constituted reality that is not such, that in the facts it is a ‘black hole,’ an open problem, an unfinished construction […] a project to realize. […] As an unfulfilled project is always installed in our horizon and it obliges to question ourselves for our destiny, for what we really are or are willing to be” (26). All translations from Spanish and Portuguese texts are mine.
contradictions they could radicalize the aesthetic dimension, many times politicizing it à la Benjamin, very few times mobilizing numerous social sectors and groups. Among their many failures is obvious the impossibility of constructing a market or a massive audience that would allow, first, to reinvest in the film industry by financing their own productions and, second, to politically intervene in the massive mobilization of popular sectors with the concrete purpose of transforming Latin American societies.

Sociohistorical Context

If in Argentina, after the proscription of Peronism in 1955, several filmmakers were searching for a more inclusive “national cultural integration” (Getino),3 in Brazil, during the Juscelino Kubitschek administration (1956-61), filmmakers intended to “build an authentic national culture” (Pereira dos Santos) by incorporating certain marginal regions (specifically the Northeast after the great drought of 1953). Despite their resounding differences, mainly related to concrete local situations, both heterogeneous projects proposed the task of reviewing their respective national traditions, values, histories and hegemonic cultures in each of those countries.

Both New/Third Cinema and Cinema Novo shared not only regional sociohistorical conditions under which they emerged, but also and more important, an impulse of radicalization: aesthetic experimentation, political intervention, cultural reconfiguration and social transformation. These movements were imbued of a generalized optimism: either revolutionary, fed by the Cuban Revolution, or reformist, as the one promoted by the Alliance for Progress and developmentalist economic policies. They definitively constitute and represent a clear cultural modernizing process which acquired different nuances according to their national contexts, even when most of them are identified as “new cinema” practices and even when they are usually interpreted as byproducts of the specific combination between developmentalism and the anti-imperialist struggle characteristic of that period.

“New” sorts of nationalism, many times tinged by populist tendencies, materialized during the 60s within several Latin American countries, and then later extended to the rest of the subcontinent, conforming the ubiquitous arrays of Latin Americanism, deeply interconnected to the African and Asian anticolonialist and national liberation movements and the emergence of the Third World as a result of the Cold War reconfiguration of the so-called New World Order. The nature of these “new sorts of nationalism” was not only cultural, as in the 1920s and 1930s, or economic, as in the 1940s and 1950s, but, in the 1960s and 1970s, their nature was irrefutably holistic—cultural, economic and sociopolitical. One of the most salient characteristics of the predominant leftist movements of this period was precisely their complex ideological combination between Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tse-Tung’s cultural nationalism, Che Guevara’s voluntarism, Franz Fanon’s thirdworldism and national-popular liberation and anticolonialism. By the mid-

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3 As Estela dos Santos firmly asserts for Argentina: “for the first time, national cinema had intended an integration into the national cultural process. And in it, [national cinema] took the side of those who begun a review of history, of tradition, of values, a review of our culture in order to be able to see reality without blinkers on.” (El cine nacional 101).
70s, social, economic, political and cultural contradictions reached new levels, thus thickening the social texture and producing tense confrontations in which optimistic and utopian energies were invested. However, a retrospective critical reading of the sociopolitical and cultural radicalizations will not leave us with a sense of fulfilled justice; on the contrary, violence, terror, repression, and many times, death drenched the whole scene.

Allow me to return to the downfall of the developmentalist governments and the takeover by military dictatorships just to emphasize those specific and concrete differential moments. In Argentina, the beginning of the radicalization preceded the downfall of Arturo Frondizi in 1962 ("Frondizi’s betrayal" of leftist intellectuals is well-known and deeply analyzed in Ismael Viñas, Análisis del frondizismo), while in Brazil it was linked to the João Goulart administration (1961-64) later censored by the following military coup. At that point, when state censorship increased, Cinema Novo and Third Cinema started to pursue dissimilar paths: many of Cinema Novo’s filmmakers were co-opted in 1969 through the creation of Embrapfilme (Empresa Brasileira de Filmes), while Third Cinema became clandestine and was used for political agitation; thus, in each case, the articulations among the aesthetic, the cultural, the political and the social had different configurations.

The Consolidation of New Latin American Cinematographic Traditions

According to Fernando Birri, New Latin America Cinema began its film productions around the mid-1950s “in Cuba with El megano by García Espinosa, Gutiérrez Alea, Alfredo Guevara and José Massip; in Brazil with Nelson Pereira dos Santos; and in Argentina with the Documentary Film School of Santa Fe” (Birri in Martin 95). For Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, this new cinema arises from a “new historical situation” for a “new man”; this new context demands a new “revolutionary cinema”; a “militant cinema that contributes to the possibility of revolution” (Hojas de cine 29-30). Simultaneously and similarly, Glauber Rocha, a Cinema Novo representative, affirms: “our cinema is new because the Brazilian man is new, Brazilian problematics is new and our light is new, thus, our films are different from European Cinema” (Revolução do cinema novo 17). Despite this coincidence with the epochal environment, in his “Aesthetic of Hunger,” Rocha is the only Brazilian filmmaker who identifies directly and establishes relations with the New Latin American Cinema. The majority of the initial Cinema Novo texts refer almost exclusively to its formation as a Brazilian national cinematic movement. First, as a movement that breaks with an industrialized and commercial cinematographic tradition (popularly known as chanchadas) completely alienated from social reality—in Brazil, film production and distribution were in the hands of filmmakers, many times co-opted by “internationalized” aesthetics and politics, that is, hegemonized by Hollywood and financed by local capitalists related to foreign capitals and interests; and, secondly, as a movement that institutionalizes a new national cinematographic tradition, a truly Brazilian cinema that, according to Carlos Diegues, allowed “the Brazilian people to look at themselves on the screen for the first time” (Cinema and Social Change 172). In that sense, Cinema Novo allowed the Brazilian people to recognize themselves in their own reality. This does not mean that Cinema Novo was ideologically more nationalist than
either New/Third Cinema or the New Latin American Cinema in general. All of them were deeply rooted in concrete national circumstances, which many times adopted insidious nationalist feelings in their own particular ways. Perhaps what these varied nationalisms demonstrate is precisely Latin American fragmentation, not to mention Brazilian isolation or its lack of integration to the rest of Latin America. Notwithstanding, the point I would like to stress here is precisely that these “new” cinematic practices come about with the concrete objective of establishing “new” national cinematographic traditions that would ignite social transformation. Practices that were obviously influenced by modernization processes (professionalization and cultural updating) in vogue at the time in each of those countries, but that at the ideological level they are not necessarily in accord with specific policies promoted by those states; that is, many times these projects were financed by developmentalist states, and later by dictatorships, or by international foundations, although they did not ideologically support any of them.4

Most of the texts, written by Latin American filmmakers during the 60s and 70s, reflect theoretically or critically on their own cinematic practice and promote, although in different degrees and from different ideological tendencies, the politicization of cinema, not only as a cultural apparatus but also as means of social transformation. Their clear objective, stated through the enunciation of abstract mottos with the capacity to generalize to the whole Latin American subcontinent, was to politicize their “national” cultures: for a national cinema “against underdevelopment” (Birri); for a “popular,” “critical” and “national” cinema (Birri, Pereira dos Santos, Rocha, Solanas and Getino); for a “decolonizing” cinema (Solanas, Getino, Pereira, Rocha and Diegues); for an agitating, aggressive or violent and “revolutionary” cinema (Rocha, Solanas and Getino); for a “democratic” cinema (Diegues); for a cinema of denunciation of sociopolitical oppression and economic exploitation (all the filmmakers). If in theory these proclamations could be considered mere abstract ideals, all of which could imply a tacit erasure of incontrovertible differences, in practice they definitively materialized the articulation of very concrete interests. As I mentioned above, the integument that unifies all these contradictory movements is a radical impulse (for many just a revolutionary aesthetic impulse), a utopian horizon, an eclectic mixture of forms and techniques formulated according to the political urgency (contingency) of each moment and each context. All these interconnections have created ambiguous games of articulations among dissimilar aesthetics, politics, cultures and ideologies, never exempt from contradictions, paradoxes and aporias.

In spite of their differences, at a Latin American level, Julio García Espinosa, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, Fernando Birri and Nelson Pereira dos Santos are considered to be the founders of the New Latin American Cinema. At a national level, this heterogeneous tradition includes many more names: Glauber Rocha, Leon Hirszman, Ruy Guerra, Carlos Diegues in the case of Brazilian Cinema Novo; Raymundo Gléiser, Fernando Solanas and

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4It is necessary to clarify that the majority of these cinematic projects were financed by state funds or public companies, which were obviously sponsoring certain policies. However, all filmmakers were pretty conscious of the risks involved. With respect to this problem, Pereira dos Santos affirms: “We, Brazilian intellectuals, are influenced by all sorts of pressures and contradictions. We filmmakers take government money to finance our films, but we do not support that government” (Cinema and Social Change 138).
Octavio Getino and other members of the Cinema of Liberation Group, in the case of Argentine Third Cinema.\(^5\) Among the similar characteristics shared by these practices, the following can be listed: both have questioned and problematized the “national” and its circumstances, such as oppression, exploitation, discrimination, marginality, poverty, hunger, misery, by identifying either their roots or sources of origin; both have questioned, although obliquely, the cultural hegemony of their metropolises (Rio and Buenos Aires) by incorporating regional and local thematics (the Northeast in Brazil and the Litoral in Argentina); both have built traditions of production that involved collective practices, even when in the case of Brazil, “cinema d’auteur” was emphasized as revolutionary aesthetics; both have searched for radical aesthetics, forms and languages that would carry out the expression and the (self)-recognition of popular sectors, through which many of the filmmakers have represented their respective national cultures; both have expressed political issues and differences through a diverse assortment of styles and formats dominant in each of those traditions; both have promoted aesthetically self-reflexive ruptures, breaks, and distancing, similar to the ones proposed by the French nouvelle vague. The fundamental purpose of New Latin American cinema was that the exhibitions promote a level of consciousness-raising, which allow the audience to critically reflect upon their own situation. However, these Latin American aesthetics were different to the proposed nouvelle vague avant-gardist aesthetics because the former were more in tune with Bretchtian distancing (perhaps this is also the hard nucleus of Latin American politicization). While the aesthetic devices promoted by the nouvelle vague aimed mainly to the distancing of the I (based on the existential philosophy), through which individual liberation and de-alienation would be achieved; in the case of New Latin American Cinema, the aim was to produce a distancing of the social imaginary (more influenced by the Marxist praxis) that would politicize society and would produce collective de-alienation.

Nevertheless, the fact that many of the filmmakers involved either with Cinema Novo and New/Third Cinema belong to different groups and circuits, thus, embodying dissimilar locations—for instance, Pereira dos Santos was in Rio, while Rocha came from the Brazilian Northeast; Birri came from the interior, Santa Fe, while Solanas/Getino were in Buenos Aires—inscribed with their practices the promotion and articulation of divergent aesthetic, political, cultural and/or ideological interests. These nuances could be observed, firstly, when these filmmakers map out, in their own texts, their “national” cinematographic genealogies (both Argentine and Brazilian); and, secondly, in the use of dissimilar techniques and forms that allow them to explore a great variety of aesthetic and political positions which articulate, sometimes in contradictory ways, many cultural and ideological conflicts.

\(^5\)I would like to note that they are not the only names; many other filmmakers were members of these movements; however, I have just mentioned the most representative of each group. On the other hand, it is interesting to highlight that women’s participation in these movements is almost non-existent. Only during the 80s, according to Solanas and Getino, women filmmakers appear on the scene.
National Genealogies

Stimulated by the general atmosphere of modernization and professionalization triggered by developmentalist policies (Frondizi in Argentina and Kubitschek, Quadros and Goulart in Brazil), the demand for a variety of cultural products—newspapers, magazines, books, music, films, etc.—increased rapidly, incorporating excluded sectors to traditional markets and generating what was later known as an editorial, cinematographic and advertising boom. Both Cinema Novo and New/Third Cinema shared, in general, this pervasive context of optimistic transformations; however, many differences related to their particular sociohistorical configurations arose. Both countries, Brazil and Argentina, had a solid and longstanding trajectory of commercial and industrial filmic traditions, in front of which Cinema Novo and Third Cinema would erupt as avant-garde modernizations. Thus, when remapping their genealogies, all of the filmmakers, in a first instance, counterbalanced the hegemonic tradition, commercial cinema, to these new forms of making cinema that were surfacing.

The first big difference highlighted in this dichotomic contrast between commercial or industrialized cinema vis-à-vis art cinema, is that while in Brazil the modernization advanced by Antonio Cavalcanti through the Vera Cruz Co. (1949-54) has completely industrialized film production and entered directly in the market, in Argentina, the Cinema of Expression, leaded by Leopoldo Torre Nilsson (influenced by Ingmar Bergman’s films), discursively and aesthetically refused its insertion within the market, though it took advantage of box-office success. Thus, when tracing these genealogies, in Brazil independent cinematic movements, among which Cinema Novo is found, will not have any inconvenience in recognizing themselves as cinema d’auteur practices. According to Glauber Rocha, in his “Revisión del cine brasileño,” since 1962, what was not ‘chanchada’ passed to ‘new cinema’” (148); “if commercial cinema is tradition, cinema d’auteur is revolution. The politics of a modern auteur [filmmaker] is a revolutionary politics; […] to say that an auteur, in cinema, is reactionary, is the same as characterizing him as a commercial filmmaker; is to situate him as an artisan and not as an auteur. […] The politics of an auteur is a free, nonconformist, rebel, violent, insolent vision” (150). In other words, within Brazilian cinematography, only commercial cinema and cinema d’auteur were contrasted.

In Argentina, New/Third Cinema emerge in response to the prevailing elitism of the “cinema de auteur” or “cinema of expression” as it was called there. According to Birri, there were two predominant trends during the 50s in Argentina—commercial cinema and cinema of expression—and both identified with the status quo. In both cases, as stated by his words, the “contradiction between art and industry is resolved very badly, except for the ‘select’ minority which makes up the audience of the ‘cinema of expression’” (Birri in Martin 88). Nevertheless, from 1957 onwards, after the institutionalization of the Santa Fe Film School at the Universidad del Litoral, “new independent currents began to appear in our national cinema, pursuing not expression but ideas” (Birri in Martin 89), an essay-cinema that argued in favor of social mobilization and political participation in order to struggle against underdevelopment and, later, to contribute to the revolution.

In the case of Solanas and Getino, the trace of the genealogical map runs through another conceptual itinerary, much more linked to their political activism in the left wing of Peronism, searching for collective emancipation, national liberation, and decolonization.
Solanas and Getino proposed three conceptual categories in order to interpret filmic productions during the 60s and early 70s: “first cinema,” under which they rope in all the commercial and industrialized productions that replicated Hollywood’s paradigms; “second cinema,” a systemic alternative to “first cinema,” in which they include fundamentally avant-garde productions, such as neo-expressionist, cinema de auteur, “cinema novo” and “expression cinema,” that imitated European’s models, such as Italian neorealism and French nouvelle vague; and, finally, “third cinema,” in which they reunite all those productions “that the System cannot assimilate and which are foreign to its needs, or making films that directly and explicitly are set out to fight the System”; this cinema would be produced from “the outside and against the System, in a cinema of liberation” (Solanas and Getino in Martin 42-43). In Brazil, during the late 60s, commercial cinema would be considered as another manifestation of colonized cinema. For Nelson Pereira dos Santos, “Brazilian cinema could not have been born with the same composition that had the cinematography of that moment; funds could have a national or foreign origin, but technique and the creation process could have never been imported . . . [that was] precisely what Vera Cruz had been doing” (“La conciencia del cinema novo” 136-37).

None of those filmmakers endorsed an apolitical or antipolitical cinema, completely alienated from social relations and sociocultural processes, but rather looked for a “cinema of participation in the sense that it was committed with the opinion trends and the thinking of modern world.” According to Carlos Diegues, “underdeveloped cinema could be at the vanguard of that political cinema because it is, just, the cinema for the oppressed people of the entire world and, thus, the cinema most apt to speak about tragedy, about hunger, about underdevelopment [. . .]” (“Cine: arte del presente” 156).

Aesthetics, Culture and Politics

Perhaps the most important difference between these two cinematic movements is related to their aesthetic proposals, the forms and techniques used to transgress and break not only aesthetic and cultural traditions but also political rules and social customs. In Argentina, the fictionalization of sociopolitical documentary (influenced by Italian neorealism and French cinéma vérité) materialized as the appropriate form to transgress the boundaries set earlier by the expressionist tradition led by Torre Nilsson, while in Brazil, the allegorization of history is the suitable form that acquires the search of the expressionist technique of the “cinema d’auteur”, which epitomizes the transgression to the prevailing traditions, first, the chanchadas and second, the Cavalcanti and Vera Cruz Co. productions. As it can be seen in Julianne Burton’s Cinema and Social Change in Latin America, during the 60s and 70s, the contrast between the documentary impulse (such as in Birri in Argentina, Jorge Sanjinés in Bolivia and Patricio Guzmán in Chile) and fictional filmmaking (such as Rocha, Pereira dos Santos and Diegues in Brazil, and Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Humberto Solás in Cuba) set under fire a paradoxical dichotomy: “the reality of drama” versus “the drama of reality.”

I would like to clarify that these arguments could be read from the many texts that theorized or reflected about the cinematic productions of both Cinema Novo and New/Third Cinema. If we had incorporated an analysis of the filmic texts, we would have seen that the differentiation I am trying to pose is much more ambiguous in the sense that
both New/Third Cinema and Cinema Novo fictionalize documentary and allegorize history or, in Burton’s words mentioned above, put forward “the drama of reality” versus “the reality of drama.” For instance, we can see this in Barravento (1963) and Vidas secas (1963) in the first case, and La hora de los hornos (1968) in the second case.

In a first reading, the fictionalization of documentary and the allegorization of history seem to be representing, if not diametrically opposed, at least very dissimilar aesthetics tendencies: on the one hand, the documentalist influence would try to show “the face of an invisible Argentina” (Birri, “The Roots” 4) by getting close to an “occult and mystified” reality with the purpose of revealing the naturalized poverty and misery; and, on the other hand, the allegorization of history (opposed to the symbolization of history) would display the regional problematics deeply rooted in quotidian reality by means of concrete sociohistorical situations and historicomythological characters constructed as signifiers: the Northeast and misery, Rio and its favelas, the cangaceiro and Lampião, Saint George and the uses of religion, etc. What it is allegorized, according to Roberto Schwarz, is their “atemporal ideas of Brazil.” The apparent technical and formal opposition between the fictionalization of documentary and the allegorization of history, even when promoting a conjugation of new and dissimilar positions in politics and aesthetics which articulate cultural and ideological differences, is itself altered in critical complementarity which searches more incentives for social transformation. It is precisely the use of politicized eclectic and contradictory forms and techniques that constitutes the flaccid integument that allow all these projects to be grouped together under the name of New Latin American Cinema.

Both Cinema Novo and New/Third Cinema have been criticized not only from opposed political tendencies, but also from other alternative aesthetic positions. In this sense, two of the most recognized Latin American cultural critics, Beatriz Sarlo (Argentina) and Roberto Schwarz (Brazil), have formulated the most incisive criticism. For Sarlo, who theoretically opposes aesthetics or art to politics in her analysis of New/Third Cinema, the latter would represent, in accordance to the general atmosphere of the epoch, an obturation of freedom within the aesthetic dimension, the last one being swallowed by the political dimension, that is the new cinema would be corrupt since the very beginning because it was completely absorbed by political discourse. As Sarlo has pointed out, “for Birri and Solanas, all that was not sociopolitical documentary was a concession to the class-enemy” (“La noche” 230), thus, the “aesthetic alternativism,” even when it was opposed to the capitalist bourgeois cinema in the same way as Third Cinema had done, it was at that moment the only critical option. Schwarz, for his part, formulates a much denser and more complex analysis, since he explores and defines the “new artistic, intellectual and class situation” (140) that predominates in Brazil around the sixties. In

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4For this subject, see its highly original developments in Walter Benjamin, The Origin of German Tragic Drama and, later, the consecutive reinterpretations in Roberto Schwarz’ “Culture and Politics in Brazil” (Misplaced Ideas 143-44) and Idelber Avelar’s “The Genealogy of a Defeat” (The Untimely Present 75-77).

5Following his argument, Roberto Schwarz argues that in allegory images “persist in their material forms, functioning as documenters of the truth. They are like the reefs of the real history which constitutes its depths” (144).
that sense, Schwarz emphasizes more the paradoxical ideological and cultural articulations that make Cinema Novo a revolutionary aesthetics and Tropicalism a politically conservative aesthetics. In the first case, “the artist would look for his strength and modernity in the present stage of national life, and would keep as much independence as possible in the face of the [international] technological and economic machine,” that is, “technique is given a political dimension”; while in the second case, in tropicalism, the artist would depart “from the point of view of the international avant-garde and of fashion, it records the backwardness of the country as something aberrant,” that is, based on a generalization “that recognize[s] now that social modernization from above has failed,” due to the cultural backwardness of Brazil (143).

Concluding Remarks

Perhaps all these productions suffered from a naive and ill-analytical perspective. Today it is hard to avoid criticisms of the political, although not aesthetic, “failure” of these cinematic movements. I believe the boundaries between national/nationalist and popular/populist were crossed much more than once, politically stigmatizing, or better yet, reifying the revolutionary and radical aesthetic impulses. Maybe Leon Hirszman was right when he asserted, talking about his *Eles não usam black tie* (1981), that “what really matters is how to narrate, not how to adopt a sociological point of view. If it had been like that, I am sure that the movie [would have been] a disaster: [it would have been] a film from the left, for people of the left [. . .], for all those already convinced. [...W]e have to be respectful to man, culturally speaking, and think that he could feel pleasure, aesthetic emotion.” (“Cine nacional y popular” 205). I believe that in the beginnings of New/Third Cinema as well as in Cinema Novo, film productions were always realized having in mind a massive audience, but that they could only reach an always-already convinced audience that did not need those materials to become conscious of the Latin American problems. The circulation and exhibitions of these movies were not only limited but also they did not have the expected success.

In spite of considering film as the democratizing art of the twentieth century, its constant participation with the culture industry would vitiate it from its conception. Some new Latin American Cinema filmmakers believe even today that this sort of film was tantamount to another “cinema of illusions.” Carlos Diegues’ words are categorical: “we made a revolutionary cinema that went in one direction while society went in another” (*Cinema and Social Change* 174). It is clear that this could be said during the 80s by a filmmaker searching for financial possibilities. In this sense, even when Latin American societies underwent fundamental changes, these changes did not follow the itinerary radical intellectuals were predicting at that moment.

Two interrelated aspects will establish valid restitutions for our times: first, the decisive importance of the various links between practical experiences and theoretical reflections. These experiences emphatically demonstrate that it is not necessary to promote an inherently homogeneous or consistent Latin American or Latin Americanist aesthetics, nor even a Latin American or Latin Americanist politics, nor much less a Latin American or Latin Americanist ideology, free of internal contradictions or temporary contingencies in order to creatively put forward utopian horizons, nor a Latin American radical
imaginary which encourages social transformations. At the same time, the strong commitment with reality that many of these filmmakers firmly adopted, a commitment that took them to identify themselves as a group and to convert cinema into an instrument for political analysis of Latin American social problematic, has become since then a characteristic of Latin American cinema. The aesthetic experimentations carried out by the New/Third Cinema and by Cinema Novo, although politically "defeated" as ideological movements from the left, were able to constitute the national cinematographic traditions loosely related among them. Nowadays, it would not be possible to understand the Latin American cinema of the 80s and 90s without the radical cinematic practices of the ebullient 60s and 70s.

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