Outside Hollywood:

Identity and Revolution in Dravidian Political Film and Latin American Third Cinema

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ABSTRACT

In the mid-twentieth century, two distinct film movements rose on opposite corners of the world—Third Cinema in Latin America and Dravidian Political Cinema in South India. Both movements sought to criticize societal changes caused by colonial impositions and utilize film as a medium for political change. This thesis seeks to identify the thematic underpinnings of each movement and employs an inductive approach to determine whether it might actually be able to categorize both movements under a larger postcolonial umbrella. This is accomplished through an analysis of pivotal scenes across films from both movements as they relate to four key thematic indicators—class, gender, religion, and populism. Ultimately, it is clear that the Third Cinema and Dravidian Political Cinema movements *can* be considered part of the same postcolonial film phenomenon, as the movements are unified in both content and form. From this it can be inferred that societal changes that the filmmakers were responding to in each region were so similar to the point that one might even be able to argue that those changes were the same. The framework constructed over the course of the study is one through which other postcolonial films can be analyzed to gauge the extent to which they, too, can be considered part of this larger postcolonial film collective.

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INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century saw film as an artistic medium flourish across the world. In fact, the first film screenings in both Asia and Latin America were actually carried out by Lumière Brothers cinematograph operators in the prior century—before the end of 1896.[1] In these regions and most regions outside Europe and the United States, film was largely an import—one that had specifically been introduced by colonial powers. In a similar vein, the audiences at these early film screenings were not the general public. Rather, it was expatriates and Western-educated elites who would come to view the films developed by filmmakers who were themselves from western Europe and the United States.[2] Even when filmmakers shot their films in occupied regions of Asia, Africa, and the Americas, they presented these locations through a colonial lens rather than an indigenous one; they would tell stories from the voyeuristic perspective of the occupier rather than the occupied.[3]

Nevertheless, global communities would eventually wrestle the means of filmmaking from the elites. They would adopt the medium to suit their own interests and to put forth their own political, economic, and social agendas. Some would even write manifestos and treatises on the subject, explicitly detailing their motivations and desires for their nations. Eventually, movements would pop across the world that sought to move beyond the dominant conceptions of the Hollywood studio, which viewed film primarily as a commercial endeavor and a means of entertainment—as a way to escape. Instead, these filmmakers in occupied and formerly occupied regions would decry U.S. cultural imperialism and the global domination of Hollywood. They would tell their own stories as truthfully as they could. They would not always do so in a way

[1] Roy Armes, *Third World Film Making and the West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 55.
[2] Armes, *Third World Film Making*, 56.
[3] Armes, *Third World Film Making*, 56.

that validated all the communities they sought to represent. Some voices would be left to the wayside in these early postcolonial film movements. Nevertheless, these filmmakers would still come to revolutionize film as a medium itself.

Regional Movements, Global Ties

The following study explores the global significance of two regional postcolonial film movements—Third Cinema and Dravidian Political Cinema—and analyzes whether the two movements can actually be considered part of the same film phenomenon. Both of these film movements sought to respond to the societal changes that had been imposed by colonial powers and reaffirmed by postcolonial elites. That said, as will be discussed below, Third Cinema and Dravidian Political Cinema are film movements separated by language, time, and geography. Therefore, if these films *can* be considered part of the same film phenomenon, it is an indication that the *same* societal changes took place in both of these regions of the world.

Alternatively referred to as "Cinema Novo" (New Cinema) and "Cine Imperfecto" (Imperfect Cinema), Third Cinema is an umbrella term for a set of four interlinked film movements that originated in Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, and Cuba and peaked between 1960 and 1970. Third Cinema sought to respond to the lasting impact of Spanish and Portuguese occupation, as well as the impact of ongoing political and economic intervention spearheaded by the United States during the Cold War.[4] The content of Third Cinema films was largely defined by four manifestos that argue in favor of creating a new type of cinema that stands in opposition to "mainstream" cinema or cinema for pleasure. They argue instead that films needed to be

[4] Tulio Halperín Donghi, "Maturity of the Neocolonial Order (1880–1930)," in *The Contemporary History of Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 158.

created to educate and radicalize the masses. Both the content and form of Third Cinema films were intended to promote a revolutionary political, economic, and social agenda.

Dravidian Political Cinema is a film movement that rose in the 1940s and 1950s. The movement, affiliated with the left-leaning Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, sought to oust the political elites that had risen to power immediately following Indian independence in 1947. Various Dravidian Political Cinema films were written as plays before they were adapted to the screen.[5] In the drama companies that produces these plays, screenwriters would employ songs and symbols to sow nationalist and pro-independence sentiments.[6] Two of the primary playwrights-turned-directors who were raised in the Social Reform Company since childhood were C.N. Annadurai and M. Karunanidhi; both would eventually go on to become the Chief Minister of the state of Tamil Nadu. Unlike the Third Cinema movement, these directors did not produce manifestos explicitly detailing their aspirations.

A Unified Postcolonial Cinema?

Following a survey of the existing literature and an overview of the historical context of each region of interest, this thesis will explore methods for engaging politics through film and continue with a thematic analysis of seven selected films across the two film movements. Ultimately, this study will find that these movements *can* be considered part of the same postcolonial film phenomenon. This is because films in both movements contain and respond to these same key economic, social, and political thematic indicators of class, gender, religion, and

[5] Parallels can be between the aims of these Dravidian political theatre companies and the arguments made by Brazilian theatre practitioner Augusto Boal that "all theatre is necessarily political, because all the activities of man are political and theatre is one of them." See Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, trans. Charles A. McBride, Maria-Odilia Leal McBride, and Emily Fryer (London: Pluto Press, 2008), xxiii.
[6] Kathryn Hansen, "Tamil Drama in Colonial Madras: The Parsi Theatre Connection," *South Asian History and Culture* 12, no. 1 (January 2, 2021): 19–38, https://doi.org/10.1080/19472498.2020.1816414.

populism. In terms of class, the films sought to empower working class individuals to counteract domestic economic inequality and work to oppose foreign economic intervention. In terms of gender, women in these films were presented as an allegory for the nation and brutalized on screen to make a point about both the plight of women and the plight of the nation. In terms of religion, uncritical faith in religious organizations were actively denounced. Finally, in terms of populism, the films employed archival footage to situate their respective political contexts and advocated for the organization of a political system that empowered the masses rather than the few who currently held power. In other words, the film was intended to be a real-world call to political action.

Third Cinema and Dravidian Political Cinema filmmakers are unified by nothing except the societal changes they experienced as a result of colonial imposition and their desire to respond to these changes by utilizing film as a medium. The fact that the films they produced are so similar does indeed suggest that the societal changes they were responding to were themselves the same. This revelation speaks to the repetitive and broad nature of colonial imposition and points to the inevitability of these movements.[7] Given the introduction of film to these societies in the twentieth century and given the way in which these societies were altered politically, economically, and socially by foreign actors, film movements like Third Cinema and Dravidian Political Cinema were not just coincidental. They were effectively predetermined.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Beyond the existing literature on Third Cinema and Dravidian Political Cinema lies an expansive collection of scholarly works about film and filmmaking as a whole. For the purposes of this paper, the most important film philosophy is that of neorealism, a post-World War II Italian film movement which produced techniques employed by both Third Cinema and Dravidian Cinema filmmakers. Following brief introduction to relevant postcolonial theories and a discussion of neorealism, this section will delineate the strengths and weaknesses of the specific scholarship on Third Cinema and Dravidian Political cinema and conclude with an examination of the gaps in this literature.

Postcolonial Theories of Culture

Scholarship in the field of postcolonialism is as vast as the impacts of colonialism itself. The following section primarily aims to explain the ideas of a few key postcolonial theorists as they relate to culture and voice. To distinguish between the terms "colonialism," "post-colonialism," and "imperialism," this study draws on the work of Margaret Kohn and Kavita Reddy who recognize that the words are often used interchangeably by scholars but adopt the following position:

> Given the difficulty of consistently distinguishing between the two terms, this entry will use colonialism as a broad concept that refers to the project of European political domination from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries that ended with the national liberation movements of the 1960s. Post-colonialism will be used to describe the political and theoretical struggles of societies that experienced the transition from political dependence to sovereignty. This entry will use imperialism as a broad term that refers to economic, military, political domination that is achieved without significant permanent European settlement.[8]

[8] Margaret Kohn and Kavita Reddy, "Colonialism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2017), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/colonialism/.

This definition makes it possible to recognize that colonization and imperialism worked in tandem during the twentieth century to alter social, political, and economic landscapes and leave a lasting impact on occupied territories.

The first key relevant aspect of postcolonial discourse is the recognition of colonization as an oppressive project that extends beyond the realm of economics. In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), Frantz Fanon considers race and language, among many other subjects, as prongs of the colonial project that seek to create an "Other" that is forced to conform to the perspective of the occupier.[9] This othering impacts the mental and physical health of the colonial subject. Meanwhile, Santiago Castro-Gómez considers the epistemic dimensions of colonization and imperialism. He argues that occupying entities would adopt the language of scientific rationalism to place themselves at what he calls the "zero-point"—a place where the occupier can observe yet is unobservable by the colonized.[10] These theorists make it clear that, through colonization, the occupier subjugates the occupied by creating arbitrary divisions between the two groups and building social structures around those divisions.

Postcolonial theories of culture form the next relevant aspect of the discourse. In his 1993 work *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said recognizes culture as both (1) a set of practices related to communication, representation, and aesthetic pursuits with the aim of pleasure and (2) the artistic works that a society as deemed of the highest standard.[11] Said explores how these two perspectives on culture inform each other, noting that in societies impacted by imperialism,

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[9] While Fanon's works were tied to his personal experiences and inspired by the African liberation wars, his works were hugely influential for Third Cinema filmmakers. *Black Skin, White Masks* is considered one of his seminal works. See Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, Pluto Classics (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 9.
[10] Santiago Castro-Gómez, *La hybris del punto cero: Ciencia, raza e ilustración en la Nueva Granada (1750-1816)*, 1st ed. (Bogotá: Editorial Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2005).
[11] Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 1st ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), xii–xiii.

artistic works cannot be divorced from the imperialist process that informed them.[12] This understanding of culture is particularly relevant when Said questions the failure to bring discussions of art into critical discourse and asks, "But how can that particular kind of postimperial testimony and study, usually left at the margins of critical discourse, be brought into active contact with current theoretical concerns?"[13] It is this perspective that both Third Cinema and Dravidian Political Cinema filmmakers seemed to adopt as they made the links between their works and the world explicit. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Frantz Fanon argues the importance of creating a "national culture" centered on the pursuit of national liberation, arguing that this liberation will not be found in a pre-colonial past alone.[14]

The final aspect of postcolonial theory relates to the theme of voice. Importantly, questions are raised of *how* the occupied can speak and *who* can speak for them. Gayatri Spivak explores these questions in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In response to the first question, Spivak argues that the occupied can only speak by subjugating their indigenous knowledge and practices to the realm of the "un-scientific."[15] This would involve practices like learning the language of the occupier to express concepts the occupier's language is not fit to convey. In response to the second question, Spivak argues that, even among the occupied, it is often the men that will speak for the women, constructing hegemonic narratives that overwrite the experiences of women for the sake of nationalistic pursuits.[16] In the following study of Third Cinema and Dravidian Political Cinema, all of the films analyzed were written, directed, and produced by men making Spivak's commentary particularly salient.

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[12] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xix.
[13] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 66.
[14] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2002), 233.
[15] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (London: MacMillan Education, 1988), 281.
[16] Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," 308.

Neorealism in Filmmaking

Neorealism has been most clearly defined by French film theorist and film critic André Bazin. In his survey of Bazin's work, Bret Cardullo considered how neorealist filmmakers were able to use their limited resources as effectively as possible. He notes how they worked in real locations, engaging local communities, while seeking to elevate cinema beyond the limits of the Hollywood studio.[17] Italian neorealism came to be in the aftermath of the capitulation of Mussolini's government as filmmakers sought to criticize the widespread unemployment, inflation, and party factionalism present in post-war Italy.[18] In doing so, neorealist filmmakers were able to convey "a powerful sense of the plight of ordinary individuals oppressed by political circumstances beyond their control" in their films, solidifying neorealism as an ethical philosophy and not just a cinematic style.[19] Both Third Cinema and Dravidian Political Cinema subscribe to this philosophy of portraying difficult circumstances as they are—of portraying oppression without sterilizing it. In understanding these two movements as neorealist movements, it then becomes possible to recognize the content of these films as a response to real-world issues; they are not merely escapist storytelling endeavors confined to a movie studio.

Defining "Third Cinema"

Though the term "Third Cinema" has since become broadly applied to several postcolonial film movements across the world, in the case of this study, this focus will remain on the movement from the 1960s and 1970s that gave Third Cinema its name. This movement comprised several smaller sub-movements that originated in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, and

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[17] Bert Cardullo, "What Is Neorealism?," in *André Bazin and Italian Neorealism*, ed. André Bazin and Bert Cardullo (New York: Continuum, 2011), 19.
[18] Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, *Film History: An Introduction*, 4th ed. (New York, NY: McGraw Hill Education, 2019), 324.
[19] Bert Cardullo, "What Is Neorealism?," 19.

Cuba, each led by a group of dedicated directors who sought to cultivate new filmmaking processes at a time when Hollywood held a well-established monopoly on the box office in the region.[20] The following section surveys the most important primary and secondary sources published on these movements.

Origins: Four Manifestos

Third Cinema's transition into a somewhat organized movement came with the publication of four manifestos published between 1965 and 1976 by five directors from different countries. In their manifestos, these directors reflected on their roles as filmmakers and detailed relates to their context. When it comes to defining what exactly "Third Cinema" and its goals are, these four manifestos are some of the most important primary sources.

The first manifesto, "Aesthetic of Hunger" (1965) was written by Brazilian Director Glauber Rocha and holds the most importance. Best known for the creative process he termed Cinema Novo ("New Cinema"), Rocha advocates in his manifesto for a cinema that seeks to "make the public aware of its own misery."[21] Rocha actively denounces other "world cinema," reiterating that Cinema Novo is a *regional* movement seeking to present the misery and suffering of a regional community of people.[22] Primarily, he argues that continued colonial imposition has led to a "philosophical undernourishment" producing a "hunger" that characterizes all of Latin America.[23] Inspired by the works of Fanon, he argues that the label of "primitive" has applied to the Latin America by the United States to subjugate them under U.S. control, and he contends

[20] As far back as the 1920s, films produced in the United States accounted for 80 to 90 percent of screen time in Latin America. See Roy Armes, *Third World Film Making and the West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 47.
[21] Glauber Rocha, "The Aesthetics of Hunger (Brazil, 1965)," in *Film Manifestos and Global Cinema Cultures: A Critical Anthology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 220.
[22] Rocha, "The Aesthetics of Hunger," 219.
[23] Rocha, "The Aesthetics of Hunger," 219.

that the violence of the hungry is actually a revolutionary process, not a primitive one.[24] In this manner, Rocha constructs hunger not just as a sensation but as a driving force behind anti-colonial action; it is a hunger that cannot be satisfied by reform—only by violence. This perspective of a subjugated Latin America in need of revolutionary change is one shared by nearly all Third Cinema filmmakers, and it teaches the United States and western Europe that, through film, a population can become aware of its own subjugation and that it can intellectually understand the source of its "hunger" in order to fight it.

The second manifesto, "For an Imperfect Cinema" (1969), was written by Julio García Espinosa, a Cuban director. Inspired by the Cuban Revolution, Espinosa argues that film must focus on the cause of problems rather than the celebration of results, referring to the latter as "narcissistic."[25] He additionally argues in favor of filmmaking being a universal process, and he asserts that revolutionary filmmakers should be able hold other occupations without ceasing to be filmmakers—that film is a tool for everyone, not just the filmmaker. Meanwhile, the Cuban Revolution and the "experience of exile" in Cuba inspired other Third Cinema filmmakers as well, with filmmakers like Fernando Solanas and Patricio Guzmán working with Cuban filmmakers to produce their documentary films.[26]

The same year Espinosa published his manifesto, Argentine directors Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino published "Toward a Third Cinema" (1969). This was the first manifesto to explore the idea of a "third" cinema. In contrast to Third Cinema, which Espinosa explicitly defines as a revolutionary artistic event, "First Cinema" is the term used to describe consumerist

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[24] Rocha, "The Aesthetics of Hunger," 218.
[25] Julio García Espinosa, "For an Imperfect Cinema," in *The Cuba Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, ed. Aviva Chomsky et al., trans. Julianne Burton-Carvajal (Duke University Press, 2003), 419.
[26] Paul A. Schroeder Rodríguez, *Latin American Cinema: A Comparative History* (University of California Press, 2016), 185.

films, while "Second Cinema" is the term used to describe films that center the creator—the artist—above all else.[27] The most important part of Espinosa's argument is the positioning of Third Cinema as a movement that stands counter to some powerful cultural entity.

In the fourth and final manifesto, "Problems of Form and Content in Revolutionary Cinema," (1976) Bolivian director Jorge Sanjinés centers authenticity. He argues that a revolutionary film will not be able to escape superficiality unless the film is able to center "real substance, humanity or love, and is capable of penetrating through to truth"[28] Like Rocha, Sanjinés promotes authenticity as a required component of revolutionary filmmaking, and he also recognizes that, in endeavoring to produce authentic anti-imperialist films, revolutionary filmmakers will often be subject to censorship.[29] Sanjinés recognizes the material reality of producing films that stand in opposition to dominant power structures. Nevertheless, it is clear to him that opposing those structures is a necessary part of the process.

Third Cinema in Retrospect

Over the past several years, scholars have assessed the Third Cinema movements, noting the movement's overarching themes. Teshome Gabriel and Roy Armes are two scholars who have sought to itemize some of the themes present in Third Cinema films. Gabriel, who understands Third Cinema as extending beyond Latin America, argues that the major themes of the movement include class, culture, religion, sexism, and armed struggle.[30] Armes opts for a more descriptive strategy and considers the factors that have influenced Third Cinema including

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[27] Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, "Toward a Third Cinema," *Cinéaste* 4, no. 3 (1970): 4.
[28] Jorge Sanjinés, "Problems of Form and Content in Revolutionary Cinema (Bolivia, 1976)," in *Film Manifestos and Global Cinema Cultures: A Critical Anthology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 286.
[29] Sanjinés, "Problems of Form and Content," 291.
[30] Teshome H. Gabriel, *Third Cinema in the Third World: The Aesthetics of Liberation*, Studies in Cinema 21 (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1982).

changing social structures and "the nature of cinema as a product of Western capitalism."[31] Ultimately, neither Gabriel nor Armes accurately contends with the regions in which different film movements took place. In my study, I will consider Third Cinema as a regionally confined movement in the same way that Dravidian Political Cinema is a regionally confined movement.

Scholars have also noted several of the shortcomings of the Third Cinema movement. One of the primary shortcomings that scholars have noted is the dangers associated with attempting to divide cinema into three distinct categories. Such scholars have actively criticized the work of Teshome and Armes. In their edited volume titled *Rethinking Third Cinema*, Anthony R. Guneratne and Wimal Dissanayake specifically note that dividing cinema into thirds may in part erase the fact that these three "cinemas" are not on even footing; the consumer oriented "First" Cinema of Hollywood continues to dominate the smaller, regional, experimental "Third" Cinemas.[32] That said, the present study is less concerned with whether or not dividing cinema into three distinct categories is a worthwhile endeavor. Rather, what is important is how Third Cinema filmmakers saw their own work fitting into a broader global cinematic landscape.

Another primary shortcoming of the Third Cinema movement is its depictions of women. Although Third Cinema films often claim to support women's social progress, some scholars argue that the depictions of women in these films actually contradict that goal. Ella Shohat is one scholar who has criticized Third Cinema for forcing women into allegorical roles in which they are scapegoated and brutalized.[33] Shohat specifically cites the works of Getino, Solanas, and Rocha in her criticism. In this study, I am less concerned with whether or not Third Cinema

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[31] Roy Armes, *Third World Film Making and the West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 7.
[32] Anthony R. Guneratne and Wimal Dissanayake, eds., *Rethinking Third Cinema*, Repr (New York: Routledge, 2008), 19.
[33] M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, eds., *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 192.

achieved its goal of promoting women's social welfare and more concerned with whether or not the two film movements I am studying presented women in the same manner.

Ultimately, there are numerous debates among postcolonial scholars regarding the success of Third Cinema movements. Ultimately, the "success" of Third Cinema, however that may be defined, is outside the scope of my study. Nevertheless, these scholars raise several points about the actual content of Third Cinema films, and those points are relevant to my exploration of the content and form of the movement itself.

Dravidian Identity and Film

Unlike in the case of Third Cinema, the scholarship surrounding Dravidian Political Cinema is still quite limited. The scholarship that does exist on the subject notes the connection between the Dravidian Self-Respect social movement of the twentieth century and the Dravidian Political Cinema movement, and it also provides thorough descriptions of the political context in which these films were produced and distributed.[34] Though limited, these insights will prove useful in terms of denoting which themes may arise in Dravidian Political Cinema films. At the same time, there have been no studies on Dravidian films that contain any type of scene-by-scene analysis, meaning that the more technical aspects of Dravidian films have yet to be explored in an academic context.

There is, however, more extensive scholarship on the construction of the Dravidian identity itself. This constructed identity is what forms the foundation of the Dravidian Political Cinema movement. Jacob Pandian and Pradip Thomas are two scholars who have considered this

[34] See Erik Barnouw, *Indian Film*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); M. S. S. Pandian, "Parasakthi: Life and Times of a DMK Film," *Economic and Political Weekly* 26, no. 11/12 (1991): 759–70; Swarnavel Eswaran Pillai, *Madras Studios: Narrative, Genre, and Ideology in Tamil Cinema* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2015).

issue. Both point to two distinct factors that promoted this identity—British notions of a Dravidian South versus an Aryan Brahmin North and a renewed interest in ancient Tamil literature that activists could point to in order to claim a "Dravidian past."[35] Pandian describes the twentieth-century process of constructing this Dravidian identity as a "re-ethnogenesis." This paper will consider how this constructed identity is reinforced by filmmakers who sought to present members of the Brahmin caste within South India—and North Indians in general—as the oppressive force within Tamil Nadu under the system left behind by the British.

Addressing Gaps in the Literature

There are two primary gaps in the literature on Third Cinema, Dravidian Political Cinema, and postcolonial cinema as a whole. First, scholars have not adequately contended with the regional nature of postcolonial film movements. Rather, they have sought to make sweeping claims about postcolonial film and then discuss regional movements. This paper will counter that tendency by first looking at Third Cinema and Dravidian Political Cinema *as* regional movements. Only then will themes that overlap between the movements be considered. Interestingly, there is one publication that has briefly compared these movements already, but it, too, fails to regionally locate Third Cinema and instead opts to speak of it in global terms like Armes and Gabriel.[36] The second gap in the literature is one surrounding the scholarship on Dravidian Political Cinema. This study aims to build on the scholarship that exists, however limited, and encourage others to critically engage with this and other regional film movements

[35] See: Jacob Pandian, "Re-Ethnogenesis. The Quest for a Dravidian Identity among the Tamils of India," *Anthropos* 93, no. 4/6 (1998): 551; Pradip Thomas, "Contested Religion, Media, and Culture in India: Explorations, Old and New," *Economic and Political Weekly* 50, no. 18 (2015): 32.
[36] N. Subramanian and Antony Raja, "The Aspects of 'Third Cinema' Storytelling in Tamil Films and the 'Digital Kinetoscope' Experience of Digital Citizens.," *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research* 6, no. 6 (2019): 221–25.

that have not yet been grouped under the "postcolonial" umbrella. By engaging with film movements such as this, it becomes possible to assess whether the unified "postcolonial" label is one worth applying at all.

Based on the existing literature, I hypothesize that it will be possible to find enough overlap between Third Cinema and Dravidian Political Cinema to the point that they can be considered part of the same postcolonial film phenomenon. It is already clear that both movements sought to oppose what they viewed as the overlapping and oppressive social, economic, and political structures within their respective regions, and the next chapter will explore how similar these structures were. From the existing scholarship, it is also clear that both movements sought to empower members of the working class and tended toward populist rhetoric. Should the following research reveal that the films contained additional matching thematic elements, it would indicate that the societal changes these regions underwent during the colonial period may very well have been the same.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The following section provides important historical context regarding two regions with which this thesis is concerned. Specifically, this section will elucidate the societal changes that took place in Latin America and South Asia during their respective colonial periods and in the years that followed. It is necessary to understand this historical context prior to engaging with Third Cinema and Dravidian Political Cinema films, because these film movements are so closely tied to their historical situations.

In Latin America, the discussion will begin with the Portuguese and Spanish colonization of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil and Cuba beginning in the fifteenth century CE, followed by the more recent U.S. interventions in Latin American economies and governance structures. In South Asia, the historical survey will begin at the formation of the colonial Madras Presidency and conclude with an exploration of the pre-independence Dravidian Self-Respect Movement (to which Dravidian Political Cinema is tied). It is towards the end of this movement and soon after India achieved independence in 1947 that the Dravidian Political Cinema movement would reach its peak.

Latin America

Iberian Impositions and Societal Change (1492–1898)

Ever since the first occupation of Caribbean lands in the late fifteenth century, the region now referred to as Latin America has experienced unquantifiable degrees of social change. From the Spanish Requirement of 1513, which all but forced indigenous people to convert to Catholicism or risk enslavement,[37] to the centuries of exploitation faced by enslaved plantation

[37] Monarchy of Spain, "Requerimiento," 1513.

workers in Brazil,[38] a significant number of these social changes took place at the edge of the sword. These changes included the imposition of religion and language, the institutionalization of race, and the exploitation of workers across multiple industries.

The Spanish Requirement of 1513 highlights very clearly the Monarchy of Spain's approach to religious conversion. Though not all clergy in Latin America would approve of the messaging, the violence the government was willing to employ to forcibly convert indigenous populations and strip them of their beliefs is significant in and of itself. Similar tactics were employed by the Portuguese in Brazil, as Jesuit missionaries would work to "pacify" populations by converting them to Christianity.[39] The imposition of language would follow, yet indigenous languages would persist for centuries, with many indigenous languages still being spoken today.

The institutionalization of race and construction of a racial hierarchy is a process that many regions and countries have seen. In Latin America, much of the dialogue surrounding race had to do with the category of "mestizo," meaning "mixed":

> To be sure, mestizo was an invented category, but so too of course were Indian, Creole, and even Spaniard. Two interwoven processes were at work. The first was ethnogenesis: the creation of new peoples and new kinds of peoples, with mestizaje being one of a number of ways in which this took place. The second was a process of social definition and labeling according to the Iberian juridical corporative hierarchies that harked back to a medieval society based on estates or orders, but that in the American colonial world added differentiations based on occupation, color, origins, rank, and status—characteristics that were often subsumed in the term *calidad* (quality). How the combination of these characteristics was perceived was not a product of biology or race alone, but rather a socially determined act. As the historian Verena Stolcke aptly observed, "mestizos are not born, they are created."[40]

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[38] Herbert B. Alexander, "Brazilian and United States Slavery Compared," *The Journal of Negro History* 7, no. 4 (1922): 350, https://doi.org/10.2307/2713718.
[39] Thomas E. Skidmore, *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change*, Latin American Histories (Oxford University Press, 1999), 26.
[40] Stuart B. Schwartz, "Mestizos: 'A Monster of . . . Many Species,'" in *Blood and Boundaries*, The Limits of Religious and Racial Exclusion in Early Modern Latin America (Brandeis University Press, 2020), 76–77, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv17hm7zc.8.

Indeed, in Latin America race would come to serve as just one component of a much larger exploitative system that would continue to subjugate and denigrate those deemed of "low quality" in the centuries that followed.

As mentioned previously, economic exploitation was one factor which completely altered the landscape of regions in Latin America. This is particularly true in parts of Brazil where the forced migration and enslavement of African people fed into a racial hierarchy that intersected strongly with economic conditions. In Brazil, forced labor on sugar plantations led to countless deaths.[41] Meanwhile, during the early colonial period, the Spanish would adopt systems known as *encomienda* and *repartimiento*, which would allow European settlers to effectively demand labor from indigenous people who had been "leased" to them by the authorities.[42] Though these labor systems would evolve over time, indigenous and African workers would remain at the bottom of the labor hierarchy.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, the social changes imposed on Latin America by Spain and Portugal would arrive at a breaking point. Between 1808 and 1826, nearly all continental Latin American countries would gain independence, and leaders like José de San Martín and Simón Bolívar would become household names in the revolutionary history of Latin America.[43] Cuba, however, did not gain independence, and even the benefits of independent fourth countries that were able to attain them would be short-lived, because in the century that followed, U.S. neocolonialism would take hold.

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[41] Skidmore, *Brazil*, 17.
[42] Robert G. Keith, "Encomienda, Hacienda and Corregimiento in Spanish America: A Structural Analysis," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 51, no. 3 (August 1, 1971): 435, https://doi.org/10.1215/00182168-51.3.431.
[43] Meredith Day, ed., *Revolution and Independence in Latin America: The Liberators*, 1st ed., The Age of Revolution (New York: Britannica Educational Publishing in association with Rosen Educational Services, 2016), 17.

Neocolonialism and Foreign Intervention (1900–c. 1990)

The economic interventions of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century marked what historian Tulio Halperín Donghi termed the "new colonial compact," marking the start of a "neocolonial order" heralded by the United States. [44] One of the most brutal neocolonial events was the 1928 massacre of United Fruit Company (now Chiquita Brands International) workers in Santa Marta, Colombia. In 1928, workers began striking to obtain collective insurance and hazard pay, wage increases, and hygiene and health services, among other necessities.[45] In response, the U.S. government advocated for them to be massacred, and, as a series of telegrams revealed, the Colombian government readily complied with the request.[46] Although Colombia is not one of the countries in which the original Third Cinema filmmakers lived, the United Fruit Company *was* active in pre-revolutionary Cuba, and in the early 1900s, U.S. companies invested heavily in extractive rubber industries in Brazil. [47]

World War II was also a hugely significant period in the history of U.S. intervention in Latin America. Theodore Roosevelt's "Good Neighbor Policy" involved the strengthening of Pan-American organizations that would be able to replace direct military intervention as the primary instruments of U.S. influence in the region.[48] Though Latin American and United States involvement in the Pan-American movement fluctuated over the following decades, by the end

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[44] Halperín Donghi, "Maturity of the Neocolonial Order," 158.
[45] Jorge Enrique Elias Caro and Antonino Vidal Ortega, "The worker's massacre of 1928 in the Magdalena Zona Bananera - Colombia. An unfinished story," *Memorias* 18 (2012), 23, www.scielo.org.co/pdf/memor/n18/n18a03.pdf.
[46] Paul Wolf, "The Santa Marta Massacre," Colombia War, accessed March 10, 2022, web.archive.org/web/20120717004708/http://www.icdc.com/~paulwolf/colombia/santamarta.htm (original site discontinued).
[47] John Melby, "Rubber River: An Account of the Rise and Collapse of the Amazon Boom," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 22, no. 3 (1942): 455, https://doi.org/10.2307/2506834;
[48] Tulio Halperín Donghi, "Progress in a Stormy World (1930–1945)," in *The Contemporary History of Latin America* (Duke University Press, 1993), 214–215.

of World War II it had become clear that political and economic global domination be the United States would be inevitable. The years following the war give rise to "developmentalists" who once again sought to engage Europe and the United States in direct investment in the region, setting up a dichotomy between the developed and the underdeveloped—a dichotomy that would provide fertile grounds for criticism in Third Cinema films.[49]

Toward the end of the century, the United States would begin to manipulate the political landscape of Latin America by interfering in national politics. The most systematic and organized intervention was Operation Condor (1968–1989). In 1959, the overthrow of Fulgencio Bataista, the U.S.-backed Cuban dictator, led the United States to seek further control within the region.[50] Carried out by militaries in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay and backed by the U.S. government, Operation Condor involved dirty war, extrajudicial killings, forced disappearance, and torture to suppress opposition.[51] It is during this harrowing period that the initial Third Cinema films were produced and distributed.

Ultimately, both the economic interventions at the start of the nineteenth century and the political interventions in the latter half of the century set the stage for Third Cinema. While the films also contend with the societal changes that happened during the centuries of Iberian colonization, the continued intervention in the years following independence reignited the flame of revolution and aided the development of these activist filmmakers into a force that oppressive governments would struggle to contain.

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[49] Tulio Halperín Donghi, "New Directions in the Postwar Period (1945–1960)," in *The Contemporary History of Latin America* (Duke University Press, 1993), 251.
[50] J. Patrice McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2005), 3.
[51] McSherry, xviii.

South India

The Madras Presidency (1652–1947)

The seventeenth century marked the beginning of the Madras Presidency and colonial history in South India. Before the establishment of the Madras Presidency, English trading posts were constructed along the southeastern coast of the Indian subcontinent.[52] From 1801 until the passing of the Government of India Act 1858, the East India Company would serve as the primary administrative body in the Madras Presidency.[53] In 1858, the territories of the East India Company would have to be vested in the Crown.[54]

During the nineteenth century, the Madras Presidency would see an increasingly politically engaged public demand their voice be heard by the authoritarian colonial elites. One example of this political engagement is the 1839 petition for education reform signed by 70,000 individuals across various language groups, castes, and locations within the Madras Presidency.[55] Ultimately, the subsequent proliferation of mass petitioning within the Madras Presidency points to the presence of a local political culture that was capable of directly influencing the development of government institutions and policies within the state.[56] Even during the peak of colonial rule, colonial subjects within what is now Tamil Nadu collaboratively constructed a political culture oriented toward community organization and institutional reform.

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[52] Somerset Playne, J. W. Bond, and Arnold Wright, *Southern India: Its History, People, Commerce, and Industrial Resources* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2004), 16.
[53] William Harrison Woodward, *A Short History of the Expansion of the British Empire, 1500-1902*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1902), 244.
[54] Parliament of the United Kingdom, "An Act for the Better Government of India," 21 & 22 Vict. c. 106 (1858).
[55] Scott Travanion Connors, "Mass Petitioning, Education Reform, and the Development of Political Culture in Madras, 1839–1842," *The Historical Journal* 65, no. 2 (March 2022): 395, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X21000418.
[56] Connors, 396.

One area in which reform would become contentious is that of gender. Despite the opening of avenues to generate political reform within the Madras Presidency, women were often still sidelined in discussions. Even in the education space, women were not educated to the same extent as men, and women teachers were left underpaid.[57] One concrete example of gendered impacts of colonization involves the Devadasis, women who were "married" or "dedicated" to deities in temples and required to perform ritual services, as well as maintain sexual relationships with upper-caste men.[58] Although Devadasis were governed by regulations that were different from those governing other women, their sexuality, economic activity, and familial status was still governed by patriarchal institutions.[59] Even the movement to end Devadasi dedication would come to center around "respectability" with its privileging of heterosexual monogamy and the reification of women's roles as "wives."[60]

Towards the end of colonial rule, various activists would come to organize around the identity of caste. Interestingly, caste structures were solidified more during the colonial period than during the preceding pre-colonial eras. It was in institutions of Western education, professional classes, and the Indian National Congress that the dominance of upper-caste Brahmins was particularly visible.[61] During the pre-colonial period, Brahmins in Tamil kingdoms did not play as direct a role in military or political administration when compared to Brahmins in the Maratha or Mughal empires, nor did they have control over much of the land.[62]

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[57] Padmini Swaminathan, "Patriarchy and Class: An Approach to a Study of Women's Education in the Madras Presidency," Working Paper (Madras Institute of Development Studies, August 1992), pp. 11, 26.
[58] Mytheli Sreenivas, "Creating Conjugal Subjects: Devadasis and the Politics of Marriage in Colonial Madras Presidency," *Feminist Studies* 37, no. 1 (2011): 63.
[59] Sreenivas, 64.
[60] Sreenivas, 88.
[61] Narendra Subramanian, *Ethnicity and Populist Mobilization: Political Parties, Citizens, and Democracy in South India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 85.
[62] Subramanian, 88.

Rather, it was through their monopoly over the scribe position that they were able to quickly secure access to Western education during the colonial period.[63] Ultimately it was in opposition to this brand of "Brahminism" that Dravidian activists would come to organize in the early twentieth century.

The Dravidian Self Respect Movement (1925–1948)

The Dravidian Self-Respect movement was an anti-caste and anti-imperialist social movement dedicated to promoting individual liberties in Tamil Nadu. The origins of the movement are most often credited to Erode Venkatappa "Periyar" Ramasamy, who sought to uplift Tamil Nadu's class- and caste-oppressed communities. The Self-Respect Movement utilized what one scholar calls the "politics of heresy" to highlight links between religion and the social dominance of upper-caste Brahmins, as well as attack upper-caste and North Indian structures.[64] Over time Dravidian political parties would come to shy away from the politics of heresy, but Dravidian Political films still contain many elements that align with the philosophy.

The movement rested on a constructed "Dravidian" identity based on two factors—an ethno-nationalistic reading of Tamil Sangam literature and the internalization of the Aryan North vs. Dravidian South narrative promoted by the Europeans. One scholar refers to the first factor as a "re-ethnogenesis" with roots in the fifth century BCE, as "Tamil poets and Tamil academies strove to maintain the unity of Tamil language and Tamil civilization" amidst warring kingdoms.[65] The Tamil literary tradition referenced includes prolific texts like the Silappatikāram and Maṇimēkalai—texts whose characters are actually referenced in the dialogue of some

[63] Subramanian, 89.
[64] Subramaniam, 83.
[65] Jacob Pandian, "Re-Ethnogenesis. The Quest for a Dravidian Identity among the Tamils of India," *Anthropos* 93, no. 4/6 (1998): 551.

Dravidian films themselves. Meanwhile, the second factor contributing to a Dravidian identity stems from the work of European missionaries. These missionaries incorporated existing anti-Brahmin sentiment into a systematic ideology that placed Brahmin South Indians outside what they viewed as a "distinct Dravidian race."[66] Combined, these two factors yielded an identity that sought to unite the majority of Tamils in South India against the elite class.

The Self-Respect movement itself was a movement that defined a new way of living. It was a movement that sought to produce a community of "Self-Respecters." Most importantly, the movement was larger than just an ideology: "Self Respect was not only a set of arguments, but also a set of practical strategies for transforming everyday and ritual life into revolutionary propaganda through choice of dress, names, home décor and domestic ritual, as well as through the attendance of public meetings and the reading of newspapers."[67] Self-Respecters were encouraged to live their life as a revolution in and of itself.

Because important commentaries are made on gender in Dravidian Political Cinema films, it is also important to understand the role of women in the Self-Respect movement. K. Srilata, a Tamil scholar and poet, translated an anthology of writing by women Self-Respecters: *The Other Half of the Coconut: Women Writing Self-Respect History An Anthology of Self-Respect Literature (1928-1936)*. Featuring the perspectives of a diverse collective of women who were actively working to promote widespread access to contraception and marital freedom, the anthology asserts the need to "move beyond the popular perception of women Self-Respecters as the objects of political education, as mobilized and mobilizable subjects."[68] While Srilata

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[66] Narendra Subramanian, *Ethnicity and Populist Mobilization: Political Parties, Citizens, and Democracy in South India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 82.
[67] Sarah Hodges, "Revolutionary Family Life and the Self Respect Movement in Tamil South India, 1926–49," Communication Research 39, no. 2 (2005): 254.
[68] K. Srilata, *The Other Half of the Coconut: Women Writing Self-Respect History: an Anthology of Self-Respect Literature (1928-1936)* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 2003), 26.

expands on the numerous examples of women activists in the movement, the next chapter will explore how Dravidian films did *not* always portray women as the subjects of their stories.

DATA AND ANALYSIS

The following section of this thesis will attempt to bring the voices of civil society actors—channeled through the arts—into the fold of international affairs dialogue. Over the past decade, open-source journals like *Art and International Affairs* have delved deeply into this particular intersection. J. P. Singh, the director of the Institute for International Cultural Relations at the University of Edinburgh, argues in favor of analyzing art as a "universal language" because, "art continues to inform our humanity, the normative condition of being ourselves."[69] Adopting this perspective, this thesis takes an inductive approach, considering the two film movements at hand separately, before bringing them together in postcolonial dialogue. The section will begin with a discussion of film analysis methodologies for international affairs, and the bulk of this section will contain thematic analyses of films from Dravidian Political Cinema and Third Cinema along lines of class, gender, religion, and politics.

Film Analysis Methodologies

Engaging International Politics Through Film

This study modifies and adopts frameworks developed by Stefan Engert, Alexander Spencer, and Brandon Valeriano that set forth ways to teach and learn about international affairs through the medium of film. Recognizing film as a power medium through which human experiences can be shared and understood, the three scholars have proposed and assessed the benefits and drawbacks of different approaches that engage with international politics through the study of film.

[69] J.P. Singh, "Art and the Global," *Arts and International Affairs* 2, no. 2 (July 19, 2017): 166.

The power of film as a lens through which to understand international politics stems from the fact that it is a visual medium. Engert and Spencer recognize that "it is widely accepted as scientific knowledge that the human memory stores information in both a visual and an oral form and that a combination of both cognitive capacities helps people access, learn and then remember information."[70] With respect to teaching international affairs, film as a medium can engage students who are less likely or willing to engage with written texts, and they can also help make abstract concepts more concrete.[71] At the same time, however, film should not be used as a "crutch" to forgo written texts, and some argue that films are inherently too biased to provide any valuable information about politics.[72] These drawbacks are less relevant to the present study, but the films analyzed are not used as one-to-one depictions of historical events; rather, they serve as the filmmaker's *responses* to those events.

In terms of how to utilize films when engaging with international politics, there are four primary methods, and the first is exploring films as events. Though the films used to fulfill this task are often documentaries, popular films can also provide valuable information about historical events provided they are contextualized in terms of the filmmakers' biases, experiences, and perspectives.[73] The following study does take into account this method; many Third Cinema and Dravidian Political Cinema Films do comment on historical events, and some actually incorporate archival footage as they do so.

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[70] Stefan Engert and Alexander Spencer, "International Relations at the Movies: Teaching and Learning about International Politics through Film," *Perspectives* 17, no. 1 (2009): 85.
[71] Brandon Valeriano, "Teaching Introduction to International Politics with Film," *Journal of Political Science Education* 9, no. 1 (January 2013): 53, https://doi.org/10.1080/15512169.2013.747840; Engert and Spencer, "International Relations at the Movies," 85.
[72] Valeriano, 53; Engert and Spencer, 88.
[73] Engert and Spencer, 89.

The second method involves utilizing film to discuss issues or concepts of importance in international relations. Examples might include utilizing films to explain arms races, civil-military relations, diplomacy, and international cooperation, among many other issues.[74] As in the case of utilizing films to explore historical events, films must be properly contextualized, or they risk the viewer adopting the biases of the filmmaker. This method is not particularly relevant to the present study, because the films to be analyzed will not be analyzed with respect to how they explain concepts; rather, they will be analyzed with respect to their thematic content.

The third method for exploring international politics through films is by viewing films as repositories for cultural identities and narratives. This method evades some of the bias concerns present within the first two methods because it embraces film as a representation of the "self" and views films as "inherently subjective, equally valid, and, most of all, culturally bound stories."[75] This method involves recognizing that films *are* wholly dependent on their context and can only really represent the filmmaker's perspective.[76] This thesis heavily depends on this method, taking both the historical context in which films were made *and* the context in which the films are set to fully content with the perspective and motivations of the filmmaker.

The fourth and final method involves using film to explore and explain international relations theories. This method assumes that films "generally (explicitly or implicitly) make use of the same meta-theoretical assumptions about the world and the nature of the actors in it as IR theories."[77] This method, like the second, is less relevant to the present study. In particular, this study intends to withhold adopting a theoretical framework that makes assumptions about the international sphere and instead seeks to utilize films as empirical responses to historical events

[74] Engert and Spencer, 90; Valeriano, 54.
[75] Engert and Spencer, 91.
[76] Engert and Spencer, 91.
[77] Engert and Spencer, 94.

before attempting to connect these responses to broader theoretical concerns. The only theoretical assumption made is that both Third Cinema and Dravidian Political Cinema films exist and respond to concerns within a postcolonial landscape that resulted from imposed societal changes.

Ultimately, this present study engages international politics through film by maintaining that film is a valid tool using which it is possible to understand how individuals within a society sought to respond to the concerns within that society. In order to do this, four thematic indicators have been selected from those proposed by Teshome H. Gabriel in his study of "Third World" filmmaking; those four indicators are class, gender, religion, and populism.[78] This thesis will analyze how different films respond to or engage with those indicators in order to gauge the similarity of those responses.

Analytical Methods

As discussed previously, in order to compare the Third Cinema and Dravidian Political Cinema movements, the present study will proceed with a thematic analysis of key films from each movement with respect to content and form. Each film to be analyzed was selected, because it has been understood as one of its respective movement's watershed or turning point films. In film studies, as in literary studies, "theme" refers to the unifying central concern of the film.[79] In terms of content, this is reflected in dialogue, plot, and character. In terms of form, the theme is conveyed through the technical aspects of a film. Rather than analyze each film individually (i.e. moving from film to film), this study will instead systematically move through the key thematic indicators previously listed and assess how films from each movement respond to these

[78] Gabriel, *Third Cinema in the Third World*.
[79] John Reich, "1. What Is the Theme? Why Do We Need It?," in *Exploring Movie Construction and Production*, by John Reich (Geneseo, NY: Open SUNY Textbooks, 2017), 3.

indicators. While moving through these thematic indicators, the primary analytical material will be individual one- to five-minute scenes from different films, and the primary analysis will involve the documentation of the content and form of each scene using the template offered below (Table 1).

Table 1. Sample film analysis table.

Film and Timestamp	Content	Form
[Film title] [Cinema still] [Timestamp]	**Plot:** [Short description of scene's plot] **Character:** [Relevant characters from scene] **Dialogue:** [Important dialogue]	**Mise-en-scene:** [Descriptions of physical objects, attire, lighting, sound, etc.] **Framing:** [Camera angle and zoom]

The film analysis techniques that will be utilized are detailed in *Film Art: An Introduction*.[80] The relevant technical aspects of film include visual set-up (mise-en-scene), sound, framing, and camera angle. Mise-en-scene refers to the elements within a shot, as well as how they are set up. This can include set lighting, design, space, costume, and makeup. Lighting contrasts in particular are often used to highlight or obscure certain elements, as well as set up dichotomies such as good versus evil and knowledge versus ignorance. Sound can include on- and off-screen music, sound effects, and voiceover. It is often important to note whether sounds are part of the film universe (diegetic) or whether they exist outside of it (non-diegetic). Framing and camera angle refer to how the camera is viewing the subject. For example, close-up shots privilege facial expressions while high camera angles privilege the viewer above the subject.

[80] David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 8th ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2008).

The analysis will collate relevant scenes as they relate to each thematic indicator, and relevant technical aspects of the scene will be highlighted. The technical aspects used to develop the theme—and not merely the presence of the theme itself—are of interest, because they speak to whether or not films in each movement utilize the same techniques as they respond to their thematic indicators. Although it would be significant enough for the films to explore themes with similar plot lines, characters, and dialogue, it would be an even deeper phenomenon if the films actually developed these themes using the same filmmaking techniques. The movements would then be unified in both content *and* form (i.e. substance and presentation).

Background and Synopsis of Films

Included below are the pertinent details about the seven films analyzed in the continuing of this thesis. In the survey of these films, both the context in which each film was produced *and* the context in which each film is set are detailed along with a synopsis of key plot points. Understanding the context surrounding these films is necessary to understand the films themselves, because movements like Third Cinema and Dravidian Political Cinema actively criticized the global political landscape. Filmmakers from these movements did not coincidentally produce films that so clearly demonstrate what they viewed as societal decline. They produced such films *because* they believed so strongly that their societies were declining.

Dravidian Political Cinema

Nallathambi (1949)

Nallathambi (tr. *Good Brother*) marked director C. N. Annadurai's first film. The film tells the story of Nallathambi Thambidurai, a man from rural Tamil Nadu who, following the death of a distant relative, inherits a Zamindar estate. Although the relative's daughter, Pushpa,

falls in love with Nallathambi, Nallathambi does not return her affections. Meanwhile the manager of the estate, Bhoopathi, has his own ideas for the estate and wants to employ Pushpa to help him find a way to cheat Nallathambi out of the estate. Nallathambi fights his own case in court and eventually succeeds in defeating the estate manager.

Figure 1. Film poster for *Nallathambi*.

Although the film was originally conceived as a remake of *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, an American film from the 1930s, Annadurai eventually opted for the film to take on a more political tone, situating the film firmly in the context of twentieth-century Tamil Nadu and utilizing skits and songs to support alcohol prohibition and denounce the feudal Zamindar system.[81] The Zamindar system was one that began as a land revenue collection system and, during the British colonial era, evolved over time into a political system that placed the Zamindar at the top of a political-social-economic hierarchy.[82] Nallathambi's criticism of the Zamindar system initiated an anti-colonial resistance that would continue to grow in subsequent films from the Dravidian Political Cinema movement.

Velaikari (1949)

While *Nallathambi* marked Annadurai's foray into the world of film, *Velaikari* (tr. *Servant Maid*) was the film that deeply linked the Dravidian movement to film. In the film, Vedhachalam Mudaliyar is a wealthy and ruthless moneylender with two children, Sarasa and

[81] Gopalan Ravindran, "Understanding the Making of Nalla Thambi (1949) and the Production Conventions of Tamil Cinema During 1940s I — Edit Room," *Edit Room: Wide Screen Journal Editor's Blog* (blog), September 6, 2009, https://web.archive.org/web/20200804051605/http://blogs.widescreenjournal.org/?p=1617.
[82] Jeyaveeragandhi Chinniah, "The Role of Zamindars in TamilNadu — The Historical Study," *International Journal of Social Science and Economic Research* 3, no. 10 (October 2018): 5335–38.

Moorthy. While Sarasa treats Amritham, the servant, as horribly as her father, Moorthy does not. At the start of the film, Sundaram Pillai, one of Mudaliyar's debtors is unable to pay his debts and commits suicide. Over the course of the film. Pillai's son, Anandan, uses as many nonviolent tactics as he can to destroy Mudaliyar's reputation in society.

Figure 2. Film poster for *Velaikari*.

Based on a play written by the screenwriter, the film is one that sought to orient itself toward social reform. Nevertheless, some critics have questioned the morality behind Anandan seeking to destroy the reputation of not just Mudaliyar but his entire family.[83] In any case, the "shock" factors present within the film may very well have been placed there intentionally in order to stimulate conversations about the very areas of society that writer Annadurai sought to reform. The film would also come to serve as an exemplar for future Dravidian Political Cinema directors and screenwriters like M. Karunanidhi.[84]

Parasakthi (1952)

M. Karunanidhi's *Parasakthi* (tr. *Divine Feminine*) is the third and final Dravidian Political film that this thesis analyzes. The film follows the story of three brothers—Chandrasekaran, Gnanasekaran, and Gunasekaran—living in Yangon, Burma. As each of the brothers try to make it back to Tamil Nadu to assist their recently married sister, Kalyani, all four siblings fall into predicament after predicament. Gunasekaran travels back first but is robbed at a dance recital and does not want to face his sister while impoverished. Kalyani's father and

[83] Robert L. Hardgrave Jr., "Politics and the Film in Tamilnadu: The Stars and the DMK," *Far Eastern Survey* 13, no. 3 (1944): 291, https://doi.org/10.2307/2643038.
[84] Hardgrave, "Politics and the Film in Tamilnadu," 291.

husband die the night she gives birth, and, as Kalyani struggles to make a living in the aftermath, she is sexually assaulted on multiple occasions—including by a priest. Gnanasekaran gets lost during the journey and loses his leg. Only Chandrasekaran, the eldest brother, is able to become a judge and remain wealthy.

Figure 3. Film poster for *Parasakthi*.

Set in both Burma and Tamil Nadu during World War II, the primary historical catalyst for the events of *Parasakthi* is the military occupation of Burma between 1942 and 1945. It is important to note that Yangon (or Rangoon) was a region of Burma that had a population that was 55 percent South Asian prior to World War II.[85] Japan began attacking the region in 1941, and it is estimated that between 450,000 and 500,000 refugees fled to India in the year that followed, while between 10,000 and 50,000 died before they could reach the country.[86] Japan's air raids in Burma are featured in *Parasakthi*, and the mistreatment of the refugees who have reached Tamil Nadu is a crucial plot point.

Third Cinema

Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol (1964)

Brazilian filmmaker Glauber Rocha's *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* (tr. *God and the Devil in the Land of the Sun*, released in the United States as *Black God, White Devil*) takes place in the sertão, or northeastern Brazilian backcountry, and tells the story of husband-and-wife protagonists Manoel and Rosa. Manoel, who works on a ranch, murders his employer after the

[85] K. S. Sandhu and A. Mani, *Indian Communities in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008), 585–587.
[86] Hugh Tinker, "A Forgotten Long March: The Indian Exodus from Burma, 1942," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 6, no. 1 (1975): 2.

employer refuses to pay him his deserved wages. The remainder of the film follows Manoel and Rosa as they fall victim to the machinations of different mystical, spiritual, and religious leaders; one comes to be known as the "Black God" while the other is the "White Devil." Both leaders are killed in the end, and Manual and Rosa are forced to flee once again to maintain security.

Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol is considered by some to be the first in a three-film series followed by *Terra em Transe* (tr. *Distanced Earth*) and *O Dragão da Maldade contra o Santo Guerreiro* (tr. *The Dragon of Wickedness Against the Holy Warrior*), both of which also make commentaries about the political system in Brazil. *Deus* in particular begins by decrying the plight inflicted upon the poor by wealthy landowners and the Brazilian government and ends with a declaration that "the earth belongs to man, not God or the Devil."[87] The film is an allegory for "three important cycles of the Northeast: the *coronelismo* (a system in which large extensions of land are concentrated in the hands of a few powerful owners, the *coronéis*); the *beatismo* (the belief in saints, pious men—*beatos*—who led messianic movements); and the cycle of the *cangaço* (social banditry that flourished in the *sertão* from 1870 to 1940)."[88] The allegory is very specific to the sertão region of Brazil, and the mystical elements within the film are also regionally situated with one critic suggesting that even subtitles may not be sufficient for those unfamiliar with the culture to truly understand the motivations of the film.[89]

Figure 4. Film poster for *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol*.

[87] A. H. Weiler, "'Black God, White Devil,' From Brazil," *The New York Times*, September 25, 1971, sec. Archives, https://www.nytimes.com/1971/09/25/archives/black-god-white-devil-from-brazil.html.
[88] Schroeder Rodríguez, *Latin American Cinema*, 173 –174.
[89] Weiler, "Black God, White Devil."

Las aventuras de Juan Quin (1967)

In Cuban filmmaker Julio García Espinosa's *Las aventuras de Juan Quin* (tr. *The Adventures of Juan Quin Quin*), the film's eponymous hero lives in pre-revolutionary Cuba and works as a farmer. Over the course of the film, Juan ends up moving from one occupation to the next, serving as a sacristan, a circus performer, a theater performer, a bullfighter, and a coffee planter. He and his friend Jachero eventually join Fidel Castro's revolutionary cause and must face the obstacles sent their way by U.S.-backed dictator, Fulgencio Batista. Even with its overtly revolutionary flavor, *Las aventuras de Juan Quin* is presented as a comedy film.

Figure 5. Film poster for *Las aventuras de Juan Quin Quin*.

The historical events most relevant to understanding *Las aventuras de Juan Quin* are naturally those related to the Cuban Revolution. The Cuban Revolution was an ambitious Marxian project that sought to reject the neoliberal world order and build a culture, state, and society that could subsist outside the global capitalist system.[90] Within the political landscape of Cuba, the events that led to mass revolt would be credited to U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista's immensely heightened police surveillance, widespread corruption, and the reliance on his intelligence agency to "disappear" citizens in the latter part of the 1950s.[91] *La hora de los hornos* contends with this history and more through the lens of comedy.

[90] Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt and Jorge Fornet, *To Defend the Revolution Is to Defend Culture: The Cultural Policy of the Cuban Revolution* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2015), 30.
[91] Lillian Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption, and Resistance, 1959-1971*, Envisioning Cuba (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 15.

La hora de los hornos (1968)

Unlike the previous two films, *La hora de los hornos* (tr. *The Hour of the Furnaces*), is a three-part, four-hour documentary-style film produced by Argentinian Octavio Getino and Fernando E. Solanas. This thesis analyzes only the first and most well-known part of the series titled "Necolonialismo y violencia" (tr. Neocolonialism and Violence). The footage is divided into fourteen labeled sections: Introduction, (1) The History, (2) The Country, (3) Daily Violence, (4) The Port City, (5) The Oligarchy, (6) The System, (7) Political Violence, (8) Neoracism, (9) Dependence, (10) Cultural Violence, (11) Models, (12) Ideological Welfare, and (13) The Choice. The documentary explicitly criticizes neocolonialism and foreign intervention.

Figure 6. Film poster for *La hora de los hornos*.

The context of the film depends heavily on the state of foreign intervention in Latin America in the twentieth century. The film understands the region as a "continental unit, where local and national differences cede importance to a shared history of exploitation and at, successively, the hands of the Spaniards, the British, and the United States."[92] The film would not be widely distributed, as the filmmakers, who heavily favored Peronism, a socio-political ideology which was banned in Argentina at the time, were closely watched by the Argentinian government following the military coup.[93]

[92] William David Foster, *Latin American Documentary Filmmaking: Major Works* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003), 129, https://muse.jhu.edu/book/84416/.
[93] Foster, *Latin American Documentary Filmmaking*, 130–131.

Yawar Mallku (1969)

Told in a series of flashbacks, Jorge Sanjinés's *Yawar Mallku* (tr. *The Blood of Condor*) takes place in the twentieth century and details an unsettling moment in the history of an indigenous Quechua community in Bolivia. In the film, an agency—closely resembling the Peace Corps and backed by both the U.S. and Bolivian governments—is secretly sterilizing women under the guise of providing maternal healthcare. When Paulina, the wife of the community's leader, Ignacio, is among those sterilized, Ignacio launches an attack against both the agency and the Bolivian government. Ignacio is injured during these attacks, but the wealthy doctors who already live quite far from the indigenous community actively choose to withhold their assistance, leaving Ignacio to suffer until the end.

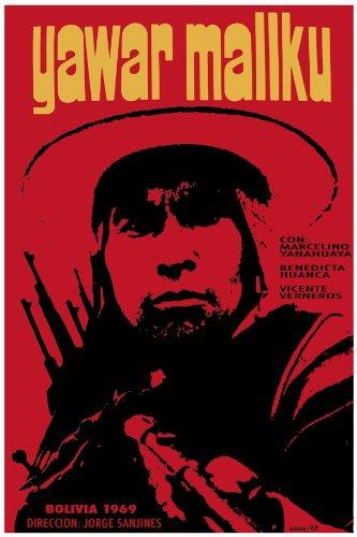


Figure 7. Film poster for *Yawar Mallku.*

Yawar Mallku contends with the tumultuous history of Western healthcare in Bolivia. From the early to the mid-twentieth century, much of the healthcare dialogue by Western professionals centered on eugenics, and the case was no different when it came to discussions about Bolivia.[94] In 1941, one professor of psychiatry, Dr. César Adriazola, published an article in which he advocated for "selective sterilization."[95] Hard eugenicists like Adriazola believed that those who were "unfit" should not be allowed to reproduce; for many the "unfit" included idnigenous people.[96] As it stands, there is no documentary evidence that the Peace Corps conducted sterilization campaigns, though Sanjinés maintains that the film is based on testimony

[94] Ann Zulawski, *Unequal Cures: Public Health and Political Change in Bolivia, 1900-1950* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), ii.
[95] Zulawski, *Unequal Cures*, 170.
[96] Zulawski, *Unequal Cures*, 170.

from sterilized women.[97] Regardless of whether these actions were carried out, the context of eugenics still important and signifies how U.S. institutions viewed indigenous communities in Bolivia at the time.

Thematic Analysis

Class: Portrait of Inequality

Parasakthi is one Dravidian film in which class commentary is particularly salient (Table 2). In one pivotal scene, Chandrasekaran, now a wealthy judge, hosts a feast. He is seen wearing ostensible western attire while his sister, living in poverty and looking for food, is not allowed to enter the property. A very similar scene marks a pivotal moment in the Third Cinema film *Yawar Mallku* (Table 3). The protagonist's brother arrives at a meeting of doctors and public health leaders to find a doctor to help the protagonist, Ignacio, but the doctor is too busy giving a speech about the importance of health to save Ignacio, and he eventually succumbs to his wounds. The films from both movements pay particular attention to the material objects used to distinguish between those of the upper class and lower class, and both include an implicit but very sharp criticism of the hypocrisy of this upper class.

[97] James F. Siekmeier, "A Sacrificial Llama? The Expulsion of the Peace Corps from Bolivia in 1971," *Pacific Historical Review* 69, no. 1 (2000): 83, https://doi.org/10.2307/3641238.

Table 2. Class commentary in *Parasakthi*; Kalyani is turned away from her elder brother's house.

Film and Timestamp	Content	Form
Parasakthi  (2:06:35–2:09:39)	**Plot:** Chandrasekaran, now a wealthy judge hosts a feast while his younger sister, Kalyani, lives in poverty **Character:** A wealthy Chandrasekaran is contrasted with a poor Kalyani **Dialogue:** Kalyani refers to her brother as "Ayya," a more distant term of respect meaning "master" or "sir," reiterating the social hierarchy that divides them	**Mise-en-scene:** Chandeliers and statues in the house, expensive cutlery and cloth napkins on the dining table; men wearing suits **Framing:** Aerial shots, very wide shots

Table 3. Class commentary in *Yawar Mallku*; the protagonist's brother, seeks the help of a wealthy doctor.

Film and Timestamp	Content	Form
Yawar Mallku  (55:40–1:04:43)	**Plot:** Ignacio's brother interrupts an event to seek the help of a doctor on behalf of Ignacio **Character:** The doctors and other attendees contrasted with Ignacio's brother **Dialogue:** The doctor forces Ignacio's brother to wait while he keeps speaking about the importance of "science" in the "Free World"	**Mise-en-scene:** High ceilings, expensive cutlery and cloth napkins on the dining table; men wearing suits and women wearing dresses **Framing:** Very wide shots

The use of mise-en-scene to make class commentaries is evident in other films from both movements. Two such films are *Velaikari* (Dravidian Political Movement) and *Las aventuras de Juan Quin Quin* (Third Cinema). In the former, the house of a wealthy moneylender is examined in the opening scene of the film; the moneylender is the object of criticism throughout the film

(Table 4). In the latter, a wealthy plantation owner's house is depicted as opulently decorated (Table 5). In both films, the wealthy individuals go on to financially harm the lower-class characters.

Table 4. Class commentary in *Velaikari*; Mudaliyar and his daughter berate Amritham, a servant.

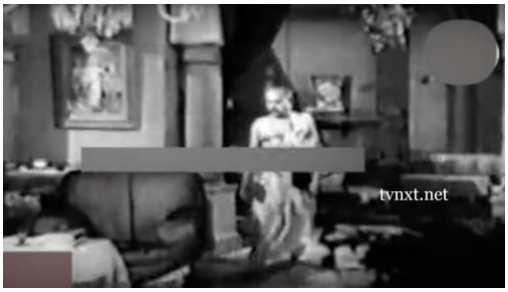
Film and Timestamp	Content	Form
Velaikari  (0:00:45–0:01:53)	**Plot:** Mudaliyar and his daughter berate Amritham **Character:** Vedhachalam Mudaliyar, a wealthy moneylender and his daughter, Sarasa; Amritham, a servant **Dialogue:** Jokes are made at Amritham's expense	**Mise-en-scene:** Chandeliers, framed images, statues, pillars, and upholstered furniture in the house **Framing:** Wide shots

Table 5. Class commentary in *Las aventuras de Juan Quin Quin*; Juan seeks work on a plantation.

Film and Timestamp	Content	Form
Las aventuras de Juan Quin Quin  (1:03:44–1:04:43)	**Plot:** Juan seeks work on a coffee plantation. **Character:** Juan Quin Quin is contrasted with the wealthy plantation owner. **Dialogue:** Juan Quin Quin recognizes that "exploitation" is inevitable	**Mise-en-scene:** High ceilings, pictures, upholstered furniture **Framing:** Wide shots

Ultimately, the thematic indicator of class presents very similarly in both movements with respect to content *and* form. Additionally, the indicator of class is present in nearly every film from each movement. In terms of content, none of these films explicitly discuss the material possessions of the wealthy characters. Rather, the filmmakers utilize the character's actions to criticize the holding of this wealth. With respect to form, both Third Cinema and Dravidian Political Cinema make use of cinematic long shots and mise-en-scene in order to portray and

denounce class inequality. It is the physical items present in a room that are used to distinguish characters who are members of the upper class from those who are not. Relevant objects include framed portraits, chandeliers, statues, and upholstered furniture. Many of the objects also appear anatopic with the implication being that they are imports, and the frame is filled with this excess of material possessions in order to argue denounce wealth inequality. These similarities support the hypothesis that the movements can be grouped together under a unified postcolonial umbrella.

Gender: Woman as Allegory

Among the Dravidian films, *Parasakthi* is one in which plot, character and dialogue work together to present women as a national allegory for Tamil Nadu. In one film, Kalyani is thrust into this allegorical role when she is sexually assaulted by vagabond, who represents those seeking to brutalize the state (Table 6). Kalyani's assault is stopped by her younger brother Gunasekaran, who represents the individual growing into the role of Self-Respecter. It was commonly known at the time that characters called "Anna" in Dravidian Political Films were meant to be reflective of C.N. Annadurai, one of the first political leaders in the Dravidian movement.[98] Ultimately, it is Gunasekaran whom Kalyani ultimately deems worthy of the title by the end of the scene. Gunasekaran becomes the on-screen representation of Annadurai, marking himself as leader.

[98] M. S. S. Pandian, "Parasakthi: Life and Times of a DMK Film," *Economic and Political Weekly* 26, no. 11/12 (1991): 760.

Table 6. Gender commentary in *Parasakthi*; Ignacio, the protagonist, seeks the help of an American doctor.

Film and Timestamp	Content	Form
Parasakthi  (1:12:16–1:16:09)	**Plot:** Kalyani is sexually assaulted; her brother intervenes to stop the assault. **Character:** Kalyani, her assailant, and her brother **Dialogue:** Kalyani refers to both her assailant and brother as "Anna" (elder brother in Tamil), a term of respect	**Mise-en-scene:** Shadows produce evoke the sensation of feeling trapped **Framing:** Wide and medium shots; the subject is in the corner of the screen, furthering the sensation of feeling trapped

In another scene from *Parasakthi*, Kalyani escapes after she is assaulted for a second time (Table 7). Lighting is particularly important in this scene. As Kalyani holds her child and walks through the dark night, the only sources of light are dim streetlights and the lights shining through the windows of the nearby houses. As she walks, Kalyani sings, "God, tell me, is there no way to eradicate the darkness of poverty?" The contrast between the light from the houses and the darkness enveloping Kalyani offers the viewer the answer to Kalyani's question: the individuals with the power to eradicate poverty are hoarding all the light for themselves. Once again, Kalyani is intended to serve as an allegory for the state of Tamil Nadu. She has been stripped of all her possessions, and she has been left in the darkness, while the wealthy are able to maintain their wealth—their control of the light.

Table 7. Gender commentary in *Parasakthi*; Kalyani escapes after she is assaulted for a second time.

Film and Timestamp	Content	Form
Parasakthi  (1:39:56–1:43:26)	**Plot:** Kalyani is sexually assaulted; her brother intervenes to stop the assault. **Character:** Kalyani and her child **Dialogue:** As she walks, Kalyani sings, "God, tell me, is there no way to eradicate the darkness of poverty?"	**Mise-en-scene:** Shadows and contrast between light and darkness; the only sources of light are dim streetlights and the lights shining through the windows of the nearby houses **Framing:** Varying shots that center Kalyani

In Third Cinema, *Yawar Mallku* features a similar allegorical female character (Table 8). Paulina is a woman who is sterilized by an international non-governmental organization while her husband, Ignacio, sets out to determine who is responsible. The scene is filled with men ready to enact revenge; their expressions are hard, contrasting with the bright light of their torches. The use of lighting and shadows is extremely similar to the lighting used in *Parasakthi*. At one point, the window of the house in which the Americans reside contrasts sharply with the darkness outside; the indigenous community, however, has brought their own light—their own power and control. On the other hand, the use of sound in *Yawar Mallku* is unique. While the scene in Parasakthi takes place without any external or non-diegetic sounds, the scene in *Yawar Mallku* features music being played by the American individuals responsible for the sterilizations. The music feels like an imposition in the scene much in the way the Americans are portrayed as an imposition in Bolivia.

Table 8. Gender commentary in *Yawar Mallku*; Ignacio seeks to avenge Paulina's sterilization.

Film and Timestamp	Content	Form
Yawar Mallku  (0:59:26–1:03:40)	**Plot:** Ignacio and other indigenous men find the individuals from the public health agency (backed by the US and Bolivia) that is secretly sterilizing women. **Character:** Ignacio and other men in his indigenous community **Dialogue:** Ignacio asks for the disappearance of the "demons" and "evil spirits" which have afflicted him and his community	**Mise-en-scene:** Shadows and darkness contrasted by the light of the men's torches; diegetic American music plays in the background and is intended to feel out of place **Framing:** Medium shots that allow the viewer to see the faces of the men and their torches

In both *Yawar Mallku* and *Parasakthi*, women are sexually brutalized in order to make some allegorical commentary about the plight of the nation. The male characters are the protagonists of the story, and they are given traditional development arcs. Meanwhile, the female characters are left underdeveloped—they are brutalized in order to highlight the plight of the nation at large, mainly in order to spur the male characters to action. In the case of *Parasakthi*, this gender dynamic is utilized in order to criticize what the filmmakers understood to be widespread depravity caused by enduring colonial governance structures. In the case of *Yawar Mallku*, this gender dynamic is employed in order to criticize the actions of foreign Peace Corps members in Bolivia. Both movements credit outsiders with having brutalized the nation. At the same time, both movements sought to empower women and to liberate them from what filmmakers viewed as colonial oppression. Nevertheless, at the time these films were produced and distributed, women were rarely offered the chance to make their own films and speak on their own behalf.

As was the case with class, both Dravidian Political Cinema and Third Cinema develop the theme of gender with similar content *and* form. The parallels are clearer with respect to form, as the development of the women-as-nation allegory depends quite heavily on plot, character, and dialogue more than it does on elements like costume, sound, and light. Nevertheless, it is compelling that many of the form elements are indeed the same. This is particularly true with respect to lighting, as darkness comes to represent the evil that has been imposed by external actors on the nation.

Religion: Rejecting the Uncritical

Parasakthi and *Velaikari* are two Dravidian films that comment extensively on religion. In the former, a corrupt priest sexually assaults Kalyani in a temple while she is praying (Table 9). The priest, ostensibly upper caste, represents what the filmmaker perceived as an upper caste so corrupt that it feels empowered to betray its own moral obligations. Indeed, this is an upper caste that has desecrated its own sacred spaces, and religion itself has become nothing beyond the temple and the deity. In *Velaikari*, the protagonist Anandan verbally abuses the deity in a temple for her refusal to punish the moneylender whose debts caused his father to commit suicide. The deity is portrayed almost as if she were a character in the scene, and her silence represents the ways in which the elite class was able to co-opt and access religion in ways that those who were not wealthy would not be able to.

Table 9. Religious commentary in *Parasakthi*; a priest sexually assaults Kalyani in a temple.

Film and Timestamp	Content	Form
Parasakhthi  (2:17:10–2:17:30)	**Plot:** The priest at the devil (feminine divine) temple sexually assaults Kalyani while she is praying for the welfare and safety of herself and her son **Character:** The corrupt priest, Kalyani, and Kalyani's child **Dialogue:** The priest tells Kalyani he will treat her like a "princess"	**Mise-en-scene:** Shadows produce an aura of darkness; light is provided by ritual lamps **Framing:** Wide shots

Table 10. Religious commentary in *Velaikari*; Anandan verbally assaults a temple deity.

Film and Timestamp	Content	Form
Velaikari  (0:37:01–0:42:35)	**Plot:** Anandan verbally assaults the Kali temple deity after the moneylender becomes richer **Character:** Anandan, the son of the deceased debtor **Dialogue:** Anandan demands to know why the Devi only serves the rich	**Mise-en-scene:** Shadows produce an aura of darkness; the altar is filled with and surrounded by lamps **Framing:** Medium and wide shots

Meanwhile, *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* is a Third Cinema film which deeply criticizes religious dogma, a commentary that was fueled by the religious landscape in Brazil and the presence of both Catholic and explicitly anti-Catholic "saints" seeking to amass followers.[99]

[99] Marvine Howe; Special to The New York Times, "New Growth of Brazilian Cults Is Troubling the Catholic Church," *The New York Times*, December 31, 1974, sec. Archives, https://www.nytimes.com/1974/12/31/archives/new-growth-of-brazilian-cults-is-troubling-the-catholic-church-by.html.

In one scene, protagonists Manoel and Rosa are led astray by a self-proclaimed saint with a cult following, and Manoel is forced to participate in ritual infanticide (11). As in the case of the Dravidian films, the physical objects in the scene are important, and there are very few; there is the altar, and there is the knife the Sebastião uses to kill the baby. The scene is simultaneously intimate and incredibly threatening. Allegorically, the scene represents how Sebastião and the religious force that he represents are so strong that even the act of murder does not shake his ability to unify peasant masses represented by Manoel. Ismail Xavier refers to this infanticide as part of a process of the "demystification" of messianism—although the movement frees peasants from feudal domination, it replaces this domination with "only the passivity of prayer and the initiatory rituals that will define them as elect in the moment of cataclysm" but not before.[100]

Table 11. Religious commentary in *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol*; Manoel is asked to murder a child.

Film and Timestamp	Content	Form
Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol  (0:56:10–0:59:03)	**Plot:** Sebastião asks Manoel to ritually murder a child before Rosa murders Sebastião **Character:** Sebastião (the Black God), Manoel, and the child to be sacrificed **Dialogue:** N/A	**Mise-en-scene:** Shadows produce an aura of darkness; limited material objects beyond the altar, which contains multiple candles **Framing:** Medium and close-up shots foster a sense of intimacy; the viewer is witnessing a private moment

As a documentary film, *La hora de los hornos* takes a different approach yet still criticizes religious institutions. In one disorienting scene, brief shots of religious statues and

[100] Ismail Xavier, *Allegories of Underdevelopment: Aesthetics and Politics in Modern Brazilian Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 30.

statues of those representing "the oligarchy" alternate in quick succession (Table 12). Interspersed are shots of lightning strikes. Throughout the entire scene, dramatic extra-diegetic opera music plays in the background. The fast cutting generates a sensation of chaos, and the content of the shots link religious institutions to oppressive powers. Though the filmmaking techniques that are used in this scene are quite different to those used in the other films analyzed, the message remains quite similar.

Table 12. Religious commentary in *La hora de los hornos*; Religious icons in the segment titled "The Oligarchy."

Film and Timestamp	Content	Form
La hora de los hornos  (0:36:40–0:37:48)	**Plot:** Statues of religious figures juxtaposed with statues of colonial occupiers; shots of lightning are interspersed **Character:** N/A **Dialogue:** The narrator describes the "dream of the oligarchy" as total control over everything	**Mise-en-scene:** In most shots, the statues are the only objects in the scene; extra-diegetic opera music plays over the scene **Framing:** Multiple cut-scenes in rapid succession (fast cutting), panning across different elevated statues; medium and wide shots

Ultimately, in the case of religion, the overlaps between content and form may not seem so clear at the outset. Each film movement responds to its own religious stimuli, and the outcomes differ accordingly. In Dravidian Political Cinema, religion is criticized as having been corrupted by the upper caste and elite class. *La hora de los hornos* makes a similar commentary, pointing out that religious institutions bolstered oligarchies. *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* differs slightly because its criticism centers more around rejecting dogma altogether.

At the same time, however, there are compelling overlaps. Neither film criticizes in the abstract; rather it is the individuals serving as religious and spiritual leaders and the regional

religious landscapes that are examined and rejected for encouraging others to follow them uncritically. It is this element of uncritical faith that filmmakers from both movements present as particularly dangerous. The overlaps in form are even more noticeable. Throughout all the films, religion is represented materially using icons, statues, and altars. Religion is not merely discussed; it has a physical presence and, in some instances, almost seems to act as a character on its own. Ultimately, these overlaps are significant enough to reaffirm the hypothesis that these film movements can be linked.

Populism: The Call to Action

Unlike the previous thematic indicators which constituted social constructs, the theme of populism is a political ideology that must be defined. Historian Michael Conniff developed a simple equation to describe populism in Latin America:[101]

$$\text{populism} = \text{leader} \leftrightarrow \text{charismatic bond} + \text{elections} \leftrightarrow \text{followers}$$

Translating the equation into words, one might say, "Latin American populists were leaders who had charismatic relationships with mass followings and who won elections regularly."[102] In order to maintain a uniform understanding of populism across both Latin America and South Asia, this equation will be used as the foundation to discuss responses to populism in Dravidian Political Cinema as well as Third Cinema.

Among the Dravidian films, *Parasakthi* is one that makes the most explicit call for populist politics. In a scene that seeks to promote populist ideologies, Gnanasekaran, one of the brothers, returns to Tamil Nadu but is turned away from a refugee camp (Table 13). The scene features a close-up shot of Gnanasekaran's face as he turns toward the camera, rather than the

[101] Michael L. Conniff, ed., "Introduction," in *Populism in Latin America*, 2nd ed. (Tuscaloosa: University Alabama Press, 2012), 7.
[102] Conniff, "Introduction," 7.

officer at the refugee camp. Looking into the camera, he says, “A land that welcomes all visitors has no room for its citizens.” In this scene, Gnanasekaran speaks directly to the viewer as he denounces the non-Dravidian outgroup for their refusal to accommodate the people who see themselves as the genuine citizens of Tamil Nadu. He is asking the viewer to reflect on their own place within Tamil Nadu’s society.

In the scene immediately afterwards, Gnanasekaran proposes that the other refugees start an association for homeless individuals (Table 14). He speaks in detail about how there are homeless people around the world with whom they can stand in solidarity. Once again, Gnanasekaran’s proposal is one the filmmakers hope might become a reality off the screen. The scene features wide shots that highlight a large crowd of displaced people, and the film explicitly offers these individuals a chance to demand their role within the political system by means of global solidarity among the poor. This type of scene in which large crowds are addressed and called to action features in the conclusion of the film as well.

Table 13. Populist rhetoric in *Parasakthi*; Gnanasekaran tells off an official for refusing to take in refugees.

Film and Timestamp	Content	Form
Parasakthi  (1:59:20–2:02:03)	**Plot:** Gnanasekaran, having lost a leg along the journey, manages to return to Tamil Nadu, but he is turned away from a refugee camp **Character:** Gnanasekaran, the government official working at the refugee camp, and a queue of others seeking refuge **Dialogue:** Looking into the camera, Gnanasekaran says, “A land that welcomes all visitors has no room for its citizens”	**Mise-en-scene:** The clothing of the government official contrasts sharply with the clothing of the refugees **Framing:** Close-up shots in which the subject speaks directly into the camera as though having a direct conversation with the viewer

Table 14. Populist rhetoric in *Parasakthi*; Gnanasekaran organizes an anti-poverty union.

Film and Timestamp	Content	Form
Parasakthi  (2:02:05–2:02:03)	**Plot:** After being turned away from a refugee camp, Gnanasekaran launches an anti-poverty union **Character:** Gnanasekaran and a large group of other displaced people **Dialogue:** Gnanasekaran looks at the camera saying, "The fire of revolution that we light together should make the government tremble with fear"	**Mise-en-scene:** Foliage from the forest **Framing:** Alternation between wide shots that highlight the sheer number of displaced and disenfranchised individuals and close-up shots that allow the viewer to feel included in the conversation

As *Parasakthi* comes to a close, shots of the inauguration ceremony are interspersed with archival footage of C.N. Annadurai, M. Karunanidhi, and other Dravidian leaders (Table 15). This archival footage blurs the lines between fiction and reality and once again calls the viewer to action by showing them this film is a microcosm of their own society, and it is a society in need of change.

Table 15. Populist rhetoric in *Parasakthi*; the family inaugurates an orphanage.

Film and Timestamp	Content	Form
Parasakthi  (2:48:02–2:50:29)	**Plot:** After being turned away from a refugee camp, Gnanasekaran launches an anti-poverty union **Character:** The three brothers and sister; a large audience; real-life political leaders **Dialogue:** Two girls sing a political song about the importance of cooperation	**Mise-en-scene:** Multiple people **Framing:** Alternation between wide shots of the crowds from the movie, medium shots of the protagonists as they welcome people into the welfare home, and shots of actual political leaders speaking at events

Among the Third Cinema films, *La hora de los hornos* is the film that makes the most explicit call for populist action. Naturally, because it is a documentary-style film, all the footage in the film is sourced from actual events. In the introduction of *La hora de los hornos*, archival footage of Argentinian protestors follows a title card with a Franz Fanon quote reading, "The colonized man will liberate himself by and through violence." (Table 16). The film argues quite clearly that the solution to this oppression and exploitation is argued to be collective action.

Table 16. Populist rhetoric in *La hora de los hornos*; the film begins with an explicit call to arms.

Film and Timestamp	Content	Form
La hora de los hornos  (0:00:00–0:06:15)	**Plot:** Protestors fill the streets **Character:** Actual protestors who would be repressed by the government **Dialogue:** On-screen quote by Franz Fanon: "The colonized man will liberate himself by and through violence."	**Mise-en-scene:** Extra-diegetic drums beat in the background, energizing the scene **Framing:** Rapid alternation between revolutionary quotes and footage of protestors, weapons, individuals injured by neocolonial forces

Though it is not one of the films analyzed in this thesis, Glauber Rocha's *Terra em Transe* (tr. Land In Anguish) provides another important perspective on populism. Over the course of the film, he criticizes populism that is divorced from material improvements for the poor. He allegorically represents this variety of populism as "carnival, as a grotesque juxtaposition of incongruous figures, a display of dancing masks miming the unity of forces and interests that are in fact incompatible."[103] Instead, in order for Brazilians to truly liberate

[103] Xavier, *Allegories of Underdevelopment*, 75.

themselves, they must organize *outside* the existing political structure that will only continue to subjugate them.

This final thematic indicator of populism is different from the other three indicators in that the other three reflected on actual changes to society, while populism was the filmmakers' political ideology of choice when it came to reversing those changes and promoting their vision for society. This indicator presents the most explicitly; the filmmakers include plot and dialogues elements that expressly convey their desire for individuals in society to rise up against the injustices that are taking place around them. In the scenes that directly nudge audiences towards populism, the shot is typically filled with people. The on-screen crowd is representative of the audience; the filmmaker is calling the audience to action with the on-screen crowd serving as a surrogate or exemplar for the audience. In this way, the content and form of Dravidian films and Third Cinema films overlap on this fourth and final indicator as well. Naturally, some of the populist elements in the film are context dependent, but the call to action is not unique; instead, it appears to transcend region altogether.

Implications and Further Considerations

Ultimately, it is clear that the Dravidian Political Film movement from South Asia and the Third Cinema movement from Latin America can be considered part of the same film phenomenon, because both movements respond to the same societal changes in the same way. This indicates that there is reason to believe the postcolonial experiences of the communities in these two distinct regions are more similar than not. Moreover, it suggests that the respective societies were altered in such a way that the same types of individuals were left empowered to make such films in the first place.

To this day, the economic, social, and political landscape continues to evolve in Latin America and South Asia. Class, gender, religion, and populism persist as important themes both in the arts and in society itself. Nevertheless, politically inclined film movements have yet to break through into mainstream cinema dialogue. Even though many of the films from both movements were critically acclaimed, they have reached a fraction of the audience that commercial films produced in the United States reach with ease. As that dynamic continues on in the contemporary cinematic realm, analyzing what movements like these are able to accomplish *outside* the box office will continue to be a worthwhile and necessary endeavor.

One aspect of primary importance is that my results stem from the fact that they were obtained empirically rather than theoretically. The regional context of each film movement is privileged above a proposed theoretical postcolonial unity. Previous analyses of postcolonial film movements—and postcolonial movements as a whole—have often assumed some sort of theoretical unified postcolonial experience and then sought to define what that experience is. In my study, the only assumption made is that the films from the two movements analyzed sought to respond to concerns spurred by societal change. It was then the data obtained from these films that affirmed the similarity between these two film movements and thus the similarity of the concerns these films were responding to.

Another point of importance is that both Third Cinema and Dravidian Political Cinema both left lasting material impacts on their respective communities. Films like *Yawar Mallku* actually led individuals in Bolivia to protest against the Peace Corps, leading to their removal from the country. In Tamil Nadu, the filmmakers of the Dravidian Political Movement went on to become politicians in both the current and opposition political parties in Tamil Nadu. Both of these film movements surpassed the screen. They were oriented towards social change, and they

implemented social change. Whether those changes were successful is up for debate, but what is clear is that these films did serve a purpose beyond entertainment, and they did redefine what film can mean for society.

My results also reaffirm that film—and the arts as a whole—are integral to our understanding of societies. This is especially when artistic movements seem to transcend geography and time. Civil society discourse is so often ignored unless this discourse turns to violence. Even in the case of *Yawar Mallku*, it was not enough for the film to have been released. It was only following active resistance from Bolivians that the Bolivian government barred the Peace Corps from working in the country again. When a film movement embraces neorealism and actively denounces both commercial and director-centric films and instead seeks to empower and uplift the voice of local and regional communities, those voices are worth listening to. Art is a medium of communication, and art has been a medium of communication for thousands of years. Especially in communities where the written word is not as accessible as a film and other types of art, it is art that must be understood as one of the primary ways to consume information and share ideas. Indeed, historical documents can relay a series of events, but art can demonstrate how communities *experienced* these events.

At the same time, however, it is vital to recognize the shortcomings of movements like Third Cinema and Dravidian Political Cinema. It is incredibly telling that other revolutionary filmmakers in the years that followed the movement came forth with criticism that easily applies to both movements. One of the primary criticisms of these movements is the treatment of women in the films. Although both movements relied heavily on female characters to argue in favor of their revolutionary agenda, women were not actually empowered to make the films themselves. Instead, they had to wait several years before they could accumulate the resources to tell their

own stories, often criticizing the portrayal of women in these earlier postcolonial films. In Cuba, for example, it was not until the 1980s that pre-revolutionary prohibitions were lifted and that women were legally permitted to make films on their own.[104]

With these shared shortcomings, it may be possible to build a general timeline of film movements and filmmaking philosophies that rise during the postcolonial period. It is understandable that, after centuries of occupation by colonial forces that fracture societies with the institution of rigid economic, social, and political hierarchies, only a select group of people would be the first to obtain the resources to craft a narrative against these forces. Over time, people work to dismantle these hierarchies and gain access to those same resources along with the ability to tell their own stories, write their own manifestos, and formulate original filmmaking philosophies.

This shared timeline of "undoing" societal changes makes it increasingly clear that the occupying forces in both South America and South India employed several of the same tactics and built several of the same hierarchies. In both regions occupying forces were found empowering a land-holder class above a working class—a hierarchy depicted quite clearly in *Nallathambi* and *Las aventuras de Juan Quin Quin*. In both regions, women were stripped of much of their autonomy by the occupying state. They were sterilized in some regions and forced to work under dangerous labor conditions in others. Ultimately, their autonomy was so diminished to the point that male filmmakers in both regions, despite seeking to empower people regardless of gender, may not have even realized that they may be performing a disservice to their female characters by under-developing them outside their allegorical representation of the

[104] See Diana Maury Robin and Ira Jaffe, *Redirecting the Gaze: Gender, Theory, and Cinema in the Third World* (SUNY Press, 1999), 5..

nation. Both regions also experienced the destabilizing effects of religious impositions with religious elites gaining more and more power along the way. Finally, both regions also saw the imposition of a political structure that disenfranchised so many people that populism became the chosen ideology of those seeking to dismantle that structure.

What these film movements reaffirm is that colonization strove to be a total social project of replacement but that occupied communities were dedicated to opposing that project using the artistic methods introduced to them by that occupying power itself. Third Cinema manifestos clearly demonstrate the movement's dedication to utilizing film in ways that commercial Hollywood films could not. Though Dravidian Political Cinema did not state that intention so explicitly, it is telling that the movement's first films were much more dedicated to sharing political ideas than they were to becoming box office successes. Indeed, part of the colonial project *was* to introduce films to new audiences, but these audiences were able to repurpose the medium in ways that honored the regional context and the regional artistry.

In comparing Third Cinema and Dravidian Political Cinema, the regional context becomes increasingly clear in the *differences* between the movements. In Dravidian Political Cinema, for example, many of the films have the aspects of musicals and plays, because Tamil Nadu had a theatre tradition before it had a film tradition, and various filmmakers from the movement, like C.N. Annadurai and M. Karunanidhi, were actually playwrights before they began writing screenplays. In the case of Third Cinema, regional context is particularly visible in *La hora de los hornos*. The film is explicitly tied to Peronism, an explicitly Argentine political movement. Indeed, in comparing these two movements it becomes increasingly clear which experiences are shared experiences and which experiences are distinct to the region in which a film was produced.

The final significance of my findings lies in the potential for future communication between distinct regional communities. This is distinct from the notion of communication between nations or states. These regional communities exist separately from the states in which they are located, and they are, in fact, often in conflict with those states. This communication is also distinct from notions of global solidarity because it involves distinct communities speaking from their own regional contexts rather than involving communities seeking to be part of the global working class. There are individuals already working toward building that global working class and encouraging others to see themselves as parts of a whole. My findings, however, present the possibility of communication between the parts as distinct from the whole. Most importantly, this trans-regional communication has the potential to be one centered on art as a universal medium. These movements have already expressed how film is a medium that communities can employ to reflect on their own histories. Bringing these movements into communication has revealed the parallels between two distinct histories. Now, I propose that there is potential for these communities to enter into their own dialogues outside the academic realm. There is potential for civil society discourse to stand at the forefront of a global exchange.

CONCLUSIONS

It is clear that the Dravidian Political Film movement from South Asia and the Third Cinema movement from Latin America *can* be considered part of the same postcolonial film phenomenon. This is because both films respond uniformly to the four chosen thematic indicators—indicators that evaluate each movement's response to societal changes incurred during each region's respective colonial period. In both movements, the indicators more or less present as follows:

- Class: Films advocate for the working class to be empowered to counteract domestic economic inequality (and work to oppose foreign economic intervention).
- Gender: Women are presented as an allegory for the nation. She is brutalized in the film to make a point about both the plight of women and the plight of the nation.
- Religion: Organized religion and religious elites are actively denounced in favor of rational pursuits.
- Populism: Individuals must organize a political system that empowers the masses rather than the few who currently hold power. The film is a political call to action.

Moreover, each movement actually employs the same technical methods to develop its themes. In other words, these two film movements were actually unified in both content *and* form. The key takeaway from these findings is that the societal changes that took place in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, and Cuba were so similar to the changes that took place in Tamil Nadu to the point that one might even be able to argue that those changes were the same. Moreover, it suggests that the respective societies were altered in such a way that the same types of individuals were left empowered to make such films in the first place.

Ultimately, what I have created over the course of this study is a framework through

which other postcolonial films can be analyzed to gauge the extent to which they, too, can be considered part of this larger postcolonial film collective. Areas for further research include analyzing the film movements that succeeded Dravidian Political Cinema and Third Cinema to see if future movements diverge or continue to diverge; exploring the works of women filmmakers from each region whose voices were not heard within these two movements; and conceptualizing ways in which communities can make use of their shared postcolonial experiences to enact tangible change.

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