UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Cinema and Decolonization:

Rethinking Incarceration, Immigration, and the Police(d) State

in the Post Civil Rights Era

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Film and Television

by

Aruna Ekanayake

2019

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Cinema and Decolonization:

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by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Film and Television

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Professor Chon A. Noriega, Chair

In this dissertation I consider how independent cinema of the post civil rights era represents and negotiates tropes of internal colonialism in the United States. Though earlier filmmakers address issues related to domestic subjugation, a subset of films made by marginalized-identity filmmakers from the post civil rights era stand out because they work to expose socio-political elements of a period where the subjugation of marginalized-identity citizens and residents within the United States continues in varying and often veiled ways in spite of new civil rights legislation. The outward and sometimes legalized racism that preceded civil rights movement in America was reformed only to make way for a deeper seeded legal infrastructure of apartheid and exploitation stemming from three main staples of coloniality:

incarceration, immigration control, and a police(d) state. In three chapters I conduct a phenomenological analysis of several films that directly and indirectly address tropes of internal colonization in the United States. I begin my analysis by considering the cinematic rendering of prison and home as interchangeable in the context of internal coloniality. I follow by considering the border-breaching / border-making practice of colonization, a practice that informs my interrogation of issues regarding, migration, autochthonous agency, and ethnographic filmmaking. I conclude with a look at films that seek to outline tactics for resisting the indoctrination or policing inherent in coloniality; and through this analysis I argue that at the root of resistance arising from the cinema is the affectuality of the marginalized-identity spectator—which I set out to define in an effort intervene in classical film theory, though not as an offshoot theory, but as a parallel and constant component of film theory in the service of the marginalized-identity filmmaker and spectator.

Colonialism is not a bygone phenomenon. It persists, mutates with time, and adapts to resistance. Internal colonialism describes the practice of coloniality within a nation. American Cinema of the 1970s often narrates themes related to internal colonialism—similar to the Latin American movement of Third Cinema—and so imagines hypothetical onscreen tactics for the decolonization of cultural citizens as well.

This dissertation of Aruna Ekanayake is approved.

Shelleen M. Greene

Robin D.G. Kelley

Jasmine N. Trice

Chon A. Noriega, Committee Chair

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2019

For Jessica

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VITA

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"Larry Clark's *As Above So Below* (1973): The Imagination of Insurgency." *Crank Film Society Screening:* University of California Los Angeles. Los Angeles, 7 May 2014.

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Anti-oppression workshop and screening of World Trust film: *Mirrors of Justice Making Whiteness Visible,* 10 Feb 2008.

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- Media Consultant – 2by4 Theater Company, San Francisco, CA, 2012
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Visual Art Projects

- *Caught* – Director of Installation Video, multi-media stage play written by Chris Chen and directed by Paul Cello, 2by4 Theater Company, San Francisco, 2012
- *A Game* – Director, Cinematographer, Editor—Narrative short film accompanying the play by Chris Chen and Paul Cello, 2by4 Theater Company. In collaboration with Carter Burwell, San Francisco/Oakland, 2012.
- *Bay One Acts Festival* Video– Director, Cinematographer, Editor, San Francisco, 2011.
- *The Bay Bridge, Discourse on Class* – Video Installation (Video, Fabric, Steel), Academy of Art University, San Francisco, 2011
- *The World is Good,* by J.C. Lee – Set Designer and Fabricator, San Francisco, 2010
- *Terminal, Protest: EU Immigration Policy* – Sculptural Installation (Fabricated Steel, Paper), Academy of Art University, San Francisco, 2010.
- *Green Card, Protest: SB1070* – Mixed Media Video Installation (Mixed Media, Video), Academy of Art University, San Francisco, 2010.
- *Rain*, *A Discourse on Race* – Sculptural Sound Installation (Fabricated Steel, Projected Sound), Berkeley/San Francisco, 2009.
- *The Oracle Project: American Propaganda* —Mocumentary Short (Video, Fabricated Steel, Found Objects, Academy of Art University, San Francisco, 2008.

Introduction

I knew that I could vote and that that wasn't a privilege; it was my right. Every time I tried I was shot, killed or jailed, beaten or economically deprived.

- Stokely Carmichael

I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. I refuse to live in other people's houses as an interloper, a beggar or a slave.

- Mohandas K. Gandhi

You *need a civil rights bill not me…I know I can live where I want to live.*

- Stokely Carmichael

In 1968 Richard Nixon was nominated as the Republican candidate for President of the United States. In his acceptance speech, he addresses the revolutionary atmosphere in parts of the country at the time, acknowledges the civil unrest caused by racism, war, and economic inequity, and tells his audience emphatically that the United States can overcome this is by focusing on domestic peace rather than global peace. Nixon then makes a pledge committing to economic progress, arguing that government spending and policy change in the areas of civil rights and social welfare had little effect, and in fact spurred the civil unrest in the country—as he states: "the past five years we have been deluged by Government programs for the unemployed, programs for the cities, programs for the poor, and we have reaped from these programs an ugly harvest of frustrations, violence and failure across the land. And now our opponents will be offering more of the same – more billions for Government jobs, Government

housing, Government welfare. I say it's time to quit pouring billions of dollars into programs that have failed in the United States of America." [1]

Curiously the available video of this speech cuts out just after he says "programs for the poor," and I have yet to find a copy of the video that includes the missing footage. What is also cut out in of the footage is a rather amazing, albeit roundabout, acknowledgement of a potential *internal* colonial condition in the United States. Nixon states, "Black Americans – no more than white Americans – do not want more government programs which perpetuate dependency. They don't want to be a colony in a nation."[2] Nixon was in some ways correct about many points in his speech. Yet he continued to perpetuate nearly all the ills he spoke against, and worked to negate the efforts and triumphs made by the revolutionary voices of the civil rights movement.

The laws of civil rights are often deployed by those who do not require these laws for their own liberties. Following the civil rights movement in the United States the implementation of new laws and policy changes that aimed to ensure constitutional equality for minorities were in some cases cloaked reconfigurations of the colonial staples of apartheid: mass incarceration, limited immigrant or colonized status, and a newly imagined police state—elements of coloniality that the Nixon administration depended on to its bitter end, and elements of cinematic discourse on decolonization that persist to this day.

This dissertation explores the theory of decolonization in relation to the United States—a nation that has symbolically and rhetorically imagined itself as exempt from the culpability

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[1] "Transcripts of Acceptance Speeches by Nixon and Agnew to the G.O.P. Convention," Accessed February 2, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/1968/08/09/archives/transcripts-of-acceptance-speeches-by-nixon-and-agnew-to-the-gop.html.

[2] Ibid.

placed on imperialist European colonialism—asking, how is the problematized theory of internal colonialism cinematically deployed in the American context? Though many scholars have conducted studies on films that address subjugation inside the United States, they have done so using identity specific categories of analysis. Other scholars have contributed to the creation of a framework that considers American cinema as a "polycentric" utterance—though their analysis has not been specific to a historical or political moment. By contrast this dissertation examines the tropes of cinema's relationship to internal colonialism from a perspective that *centralizes* the many facets of Americanism within a set historical period. Thus, using a textual and content analysis model for historical scholarship, and employing the work of contemporary social theorists, I argue that varying marginalized-identity independent filmmakers of the post civil rights era identify the difficulties of decolonization within the United States, offering a multicultural perspective that seeks to reveal otherwise masked or disavowed truths—marking a rupture in American studies that asks for a return to scholarship which considers internal colonialism as a persistent feature of the United States.

Certainly not all American films address subjugation directly, though many may be a reaction to oppression. Many of the independent films discussed here come from schools of thought stemming from the liberatory ethos of the Latina American anti-colonialist/anti-imperialist theory and practice of Third Cinema, while some are the result of new demographical economic markets opened up by desegregation and immigration reform, and others emerge because of film industry deregulation precedent in the period. The films examined in this project were chosen because they implicitly and sometimes explicitly outline and define tropes related to

internal colonialism. They also critically reflect on the many different ways that coloniality is manifested or represented across a spectrum of historical moments in the United States.[3]

The scholarship that informs this project is chosen according to interdisciplinary research I have conducted in the fields of cinema and media studies, critical race theory, gender studies, transnational studies, political science, psychoanalysis, and philosophy. I have employed much of this scholarship in previous projects on a smaller scale, and their outcomes have led me to the questions this dissertation asks. The theoretical hypotheses I compiled in my earlier work revealed that a multi-disciplinary research model is vital to create a framework that addresses the topic of decolonization in cinema from a broadly American context.

Beyond the films, primary and secondary sources for this project consist of an array of material. Written statements, government documents, and current historical scholarship inform how media makers and policy makers sought out their respective positions in relation to theories of decolonization. Primary sources such as interviews and news articles provide evidence of the cultural milieu in the post civil rights era, while identifying the powers and players that shaped it. Several key government policies of the 1960s and their corresponding documents will work to outline the way in which incarceration, immigration, and the police(d) state are deployed in the post civil rights era —both as literal elements of the transforming society, and as they play out in the poetics of cinema. Below is a list of major actions toward U.S. policy change during the civil rights era that I will consider in relation to thematics of decolonization addressed in the films discussed in this dissertation:

[3] See Appendix for definitions and categorizations of coloniality as it pertains to this project.

The Mccarran-Walter Immigration And Nationality Act Of 1952
The Food Stamp Act of 1964
The Civil Rights act of 1964
The Urban Mass Transit Act 1964
The 24th Amendment to the United States Constitution 1964
The Law Enforcement Assistance Act of 1965
The Immigration And Nationality Act Of 1965
The Voting Rights Act of 1965
The Economic Opportunity Act of 1965
The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965
The House Public Broadcasting Act of 1967
The National Crime Commission 1967
The Bilingual Education Act 1968
The Gun Control Act 1968
The Housing Act of 1968

These shifts in policy were designed to address struggles of social and economic apartheid, issues of labor and capital flows, fair housing, education, crime, and poverty—and some were created to silence resistance to the state. Certain scholars agree that these policies fell short of their goals and instead created a new system of social and economic segregation. The cinema of the post civil rights era is poignantly critical of the societal changes brought on by these federal policies.

Some of the films discussed here are overtly direct in their message, such as Bernard Nichols's *Daydream Therapy* (1977), which follows the day of an overworked and abused hotel maid, who dreams of escaping from her condition. Her struggle is narrated in the film's main song "Pirate Jenny" performed by Nina Simone, which tells of a mythical ship called the "Black Freighter" that sends a revolutionary force of assassins to the United States to eliminate the oppressors. Some films are more subtle in their approach, but only by their distance from dominant modes of storytelling, like Charles Burnett's neorealist film *Killer of Sheep* (1977), which contends with inclusion and exclusion in a so-called post-segregation period, where equality or granted participation in the market is counteracted by the limitations caused by

socially driven American apartheid. *The Spook Who Sat By the Door* is a longer more traditional interpretation of Larry Clark's student film *As Above, So below* (1973); two films that are both about an organized insurgency in the United States. Other films like *Bush Mama* (Haile Gerima 1971) use metaphorical juxtapositions that challenge the pejorative dominant narratives in mainstream cinema by presenting narratives that reconsiders the power structure of home, neighborhood, and prison as spaces of radicalization that nurture the waking voice of decolonization within them, in light of the brutality of the police(d) state. These films are a few examples of the diverse representations of internal colonialism in the post civil rights era, thus my longer term goal in writing this dissertation is to invite scholarship that further canonizes other films of decolonization in America, be it from independent or mainstream centers of production.

While most scholarship on 1970's U.S. cinema is limited to certain schools of filmmaking and identity specific auteurship, I intend to shift the critical framework to consider the onscreen cultural politics of internal colonialism and resistance to it in the United States by looking at cinematic interpretations of decolonization from more than one group. Therefore I join Robert Stam who argues that the problems in "ethnic" specific or identity specific scholarship in cinema rises from an argument for and against "realism," where the "question was simply one of pointing to 'errors' and 'distortions,' as if the truth of an ethnic group were unproblematic, transparent and easily accessible, and the lies about that group easily unmasked."[4] Stam addresses these issues of realisms through a study of Mikhail Bakhtin's theory that "human consciousness and artistic practice…do not come into contact with the "real" directly, but rather

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[4] Robert Stam, "Bakhtin, Polyphony, and Ethnic/Racial Representation," in *Unspeakable Images: Ethnicity and the American Cinema*, ed. Lester D. Friedman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 252.

through the medium of the surrounding ideological world"—or akin Deleuzian terminology and for the purposes of this project: the space beyond the screen, between screen and spectator.[5] Using this approach Stam argues that the language of cinema is therefore not indexical or translative of the socio-ideological world, rather it is "not only the instrument and material of representation; it is also the object of representation," and instead of being reflexive of "the real, or even a refraction of the real, [cinematic and/or] artistic discourse constitutes a refraction of a refraction, that is a mediated version of an already textualized and discursivized socio-ideological world."[6] Employing Stam's use of Bakhtinian theory here we can move away from a "'referential illusion'" or allusions that assume "some preexisting anecdotal nucleus against which a film's 'truth' can be checked" through the practice of cinema analysis, and instead formulate what Stam argues as a practice of looking at the interplay of discursive utterances and their "voices, discourses and perspectives."[7] In dialogue with Stam's more cinema-specific derivations of realisms and the interplay of diverging and converging voices, I employ the work of philosopher Slavoj Žižek in his exploration of a "parallax Real," in which parallel realisms that are never intended to converge or meet do, revealing truths that would remain otherwise masked.[8] Indeed my use of Žižek's theories on parallaxian "views" arrives from a desire to further locate shifts in perspective that come from both the cinema and the spectator, thus much of this dissertation applies, and in some ways challenges, Žižek's as and Stam's work.

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[5] Robert Stam, "Bakhtin, Polyphony, and Ethnic/Racial Representation," in *Unspeakable Images: Ethnicity and the American Cinema*, ed. Lester D. Friedman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 252.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006).

Why *not* the Civil Rights Era and why Coloniality?

Films made during the height of civil rights movement did address domestic struggles in the U.S., yet the development of this cinematic voice is more fully realized in the period following the civil rights movement amongst independent filmmakers who are of marginalized identity. Though their films were informed by the rhetoric and history of the civil rights movement, they were also, and maybe more so, informed by the failed U.S. policy regulations set in place to address civil rights issues. Additionally, content deregulation in the film industry, searches for more diverse demographic markets, and a more inclusive (though not nearly enough) film school and art-house cinema culture allowed for more subversive films from minority filmmakers to surface. The post civil rights era then, becomes a decade in which American cinema reimagines its artistic vision—both politically and aesthetically. Thomas Borstelmann historicizes the post civil rights era as a "moment when the United States fully embraced two profound yet in some ways antagonistic values: formal equality and complete faith in the marketplace."[9] Yet Borstelmann further argues that this formal equality is a falsity, and that American culture is based on "equality in word and inequality in deed around the world"—and I would add—within the United States. He further argues that this contradictory stance is reflected in the cultural aesthetic of the time—except in cinema.[10] For Borstelmann, cinema was the most pure aesthetic voice of the post civil rights era, from which emerges a critical voice that

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[9] Thomas Borstelmann, *The 1970S*. (Princeton NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2013), 4.

[10] Ibid., 2. "Basic matters of cultural taste also seemed out of whack, particularly in retrospect. The appeal of orange shag carpets, polyester pantsuits, wide ties, the 'happy face' logo, and disco music was mysterious to many Americans at the time and to more ever since. Only films seemed to improve in artistic creativity being often associated with periods of turmoil and uncertainty."

is not interested in the medium of film as merely a capitalist endeavor, rather, these often-minority filmmakers look to cinema as a weapon against their subjugation.

The post civil rights era surge in minority film production indeed took on topics related to internal colonization, specifically regarding three significant components of coloniality: mass incarceration, migration or immigration, and a police(d) state. Thus I employ elements of Lisa Lowe's comparative historical research, some of which considers masked social projects such as internal colonialism as a part of a postmodernist global phenomenon where "residual" elements of the past persist in new and often invisible forms.[11]

The critical notion of an "internal colonialism" has a longer history.[12] In 1852 Martin Delany acknowledges a functioning form of internal colonialism in the United States. In 1945 W.E.B. Dubois also acknowledges this form of segregation, followed by Harold Cruse who first uses the term "domestic colonialism" in 1962, in reference to the conditions African Americans faced in throughout American history. Then in 1965 Kenneth Clark argues that all elements of Black civic life in the United States are indeed colonized.[13] The theory of internal colonialism has also been an object of critique.[14] Some scholars are wary of the term because it can be imprecise, yet they also see it as a "framework that can integrate the insights of caste and racism,

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[11] Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacy of the Four Continents,* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2015). 19.

[12] While there have been other terms used-- domestic colonialism or semi-colonialism, for the purposes of this project, internal colonialism will be used Harold Cruse, *Rebellion Or Revolution?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

[13] Robert L. Allen, "Reassessing the Internal (Neo) Colonialism Theory, *The Black Scholar* 35, no. 1 (2005): 2.

[14] Michael Omi and Howard Winant, "Racial Formation," in *Social Class and Stratification: Classic Statements and Theoretical Debates,* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), 233-242.

ethnicity and culture, and economic exploitation into an overall conceptual scheme," with an understanding that the relationships between the internally colonized and the colonizer are unique to the state in question and their specificities do not exist elsewhere.[15] Robert Blauner argues that if this theory is focused on one group it "loses sight of common experiences" shared by other racial minorities.[16] Thus the aim of this project is to reconsider the theory of internal colonialism in the U.S. by looking to cinema as a more-cohesive historical document that can render the discursive and culturally intersectional nature of internal coloniality, which is why this dissertation aims to reveal a multicultural movement of cinematic representations of, and resistance to, internal colonialism from the 1970s into the 1980s. Indeed my goal is to rethink postcolonial film scholarship, which defines only identity specific representations of internal colonialism.

The historical origins of cinemas of decolonization, and/or Third Cinema, stem from liberatory movements of the global south. Therefore a return to Third Cinema theory will create the framework necessary to consider cinematic tropes of resistance to the aforementioned three specific staples of coloniality—prisons, borders and policing. The origins of theories regarding internal colonialism in the U.S. also stem from Black Nationalist groups who aligned with the struggles of colonized nations in Africa, and argued that the U.S. as was implicated in colonial power struggles both abroad and at home. Early explorations in internal colonial rhetoric were adopted by some and contested by many, mainly because the theory of internal colonialism seemed to stem from the ideological perspective that the United States did not function in any

[15] Robert Blauner, "Internal Colonialism And Ghetto Revolt," *Social Problems* 16, no. 4 (1969): 394.

[16] Ibid., 395.

way like traditional colonial powers—Britain, France, etc. Robert Blauner defines colonialism as "the establishment of domination over a geographically external political unit, most often inhabited by people of a different race and culture, where this domination is political and economic, and the colony exists subordinate to and dependent upon the mother country."[17] In the case of internal colonialism this "mother country" is instead a cultural center of power that exploits its minority non-white population for economic gain by the allowing the marginalized full participation in its market under limited citizenship, while ensuring suppression of resistance to these limitations by securing access to its *bordered sites* through the implementation of a police(d) state. I remind the reader that these *bordered sites* are not limited to those defined by national boundaries; *bordered sites* can include elements often not considered when trying to define totalitarian projects like colonialism—indeed the mind, body, and home are also *bordered sites* that are often invaded or colonized. Cinema representations of internal colonialism in the era following the civil rights movement often reflect challenges brought on by government policies that controlled these discursive *bordered sites*.

In efforts to secure further control of these *sites*, the U.S. drew up legislation that seemed to be inclusive yet in the subtext maintained the status quo. Policies created in the civil rights era that supposedly sought to end poverty also focused on the illuminating the crime that resulted *from* poverty. This shift corresponds to the largest rise in prison populations since the founding of the country and helps militarize a domestic urban police force unlike any ever seen. Additionally, changes in immigration policy occurring in the 60s and 70s correspond to a

[17] Robert Blauner, "Internal Colonialism And Ghetto Revolt," *Social Problems* 16, no. 4 (1969): 395. "The Colonial analysis has been rejected as obscurantist and misleading by scholars who point to the significant differences and history in socio-political conditions between our domestic patterns and what took place in Africa and India."

controlled influx of non-European immigrants allowed in to serve in the U.S. as participant-laborers in the burgeoning neoliberal economy, but without full access to citizenship. These immigrants now faced the struggles of segregation in new ways—let in under terms that sold the possibility of harmonious inclusion in the neoliberalist economic markets of the global north, then betrayed by social limitations that ensured and maintained their state of dispossession. This is the difficulty in the melting pot mythology of the United States—which only recognizes multiculturalism if there is a clear separation between colonizer and colonized. Meaning, the idea of multiculturalism excludes whiteness, because it is whiteness that creates "multicultural" or "ethnic" to differentiate between whiteness and all Others. Yet this is the raison d'etre for a multicultural or multi-identity approach to the study of internal colonialism in the United States, one that looks individually at those Othered-by-whiteness and the faceted multitudes of resistance to this Othering—which leads to a centralizing dialogue about the shared struggle against internal colonialism. Because whiteness is the dominating oppressive force that is addressed in the films considered here, I comparatively analyze several marginalized-identity filmmakers in the United States who are affected by this whiteness and colonial domination, and who speak to a unifying central issue of being colonized from within.

An American Cinema of Decolonization

The struggles of the civil rights, anti-war, feminist, and the burgeoning LGBTQ movements of the 60s and 70s created an environment where a liberatory aesthetic of decolonization had come to be a part of the fabric of American cinema. Indeed many mainstream films sought to capitalize on the ethos of the civil-rights era—yet this dissertation will look only at films that were either produced independently, had limited release screenings, or were not

commercially distributed. Addressed in three chapters, this project considers independent cinema representations of decolonization in dialogue with the work of contemporary and modern social theorists. The three subjects of representation that I employ; *incarceration*, *immigration* and *the police*(*d) state* are admittedly a symbiotic system, yet their deployment among disparate groups of people reveals an intersectional subjugation to these systems. Discussing each of the three subjects in individual chapters I argue that they are cinematically rendered as the foundations of internal colonial subjugation—rather than the results of law, order or democracy. Yet the chapters do not work to reveal a historic truth about each topic, instead the topics are employed as semiotic socio-historic elements that are touchstones for the more specific themes that arise in the films here. For example, chapter one considers incarceration, yet it does so in the context of prison vs. home vs. body, and the paradoxical representations that occur in the films where the controlled-corporeal, the constructed-domestic, and state imprisonment become interchangeable elements of coloniality. These elements are at once a place of confinement and a place of contestation, the former because of their relation to the colonial project of homogenization and the later because these spaces are inherently where the marginalized can contest assimilation.

Chapter two addresses the topic of immigration, migration, and the constructs of nation, where nation is created as a bordered site in which the marginalized cannot dwell and therefore exist in the liminal space of the border—indeed they become the border themselves. This embodiment is represented in the films disused in this chapter as again asking where home is for the marginalized, while also attempting to address colonial invasion and the discursive spaces that it infests. In addition, the second chapter considers *cinematic* invasions, or border crossings,

in which the marginalized are represented by a filmmaker from the dominant culture, a topic that considers authenticity, realism, and exploitation in defining cinemas of decolonization.[18]

In the final chapter I work out the parenthetical of the *police(d)* state of coloniality, a state in which the marginalized contend literally with the police, and another state of subordination in which the marginalized are sequestered into the defined-by-colonizer peaceful, or acceptable, forms and degrees of protest or resistance—arguably an element of Americanism that is a construct designed by those being protested. However, it is important to remember that many peaceful protesters in the 60s and 70s were still targeted and silenced by federal agencies as well (as are many today)—precisely because these peaceful, or non-violent movements were in many ways violent (though not in the traditional sense), since they worked to disrupt and dismantle the system that had been created to uphold white supremacy, thus were looked upon as an act of violence against dominant culture.

Also in the final chapter, I consider how the marginalized-identity spectator is constantly negotiating the state of being police(d) by the images and representations on the screen. Therefore, as a contribution to the project of decolonization in cinema I introduce the term *alterdiegetic* to fill a void in which screen theory (as authored by the dominant culture) omits the experience of spectatorship for the marginalized identity spectator—where their own reaction to what is seen on screen is often excluded from the dialogical rhetoric of Americanism.

In an effort to define where this project falls in the field of cinema studies another term needs to be considered: *Transcolonial Cinema*. The theoretical framework of this project is

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[18] It is important to note here that this dissertation more broadly considers the representation of the marginalized by authorial voices who do not explicitly experience what their subjects do, thus the racial and gender identities of the filmmakers play a complicated role in discussing the often difficult-to-see intersections of race, gender, and class—the latter because making films has often been a practice of the privileged.

rooted in Third Cinema theory, which aligns with anti-capitalist movements of the global south. If returning to Third Cinema is argued as a methodological imperative in the films discussed here, they are forced to function while bound to contradictory elements of Americanism, i.e. capitalism, a monolithic American identity, and a racially European seat of power. Therefore, rather than analyzing American Third Cinema with the multitude of identity specific scholarship on "multi-cultural" or "accented" cinema signifiers, an alternate polycentric term, *Transcolonial Cinema*, can be used to define a media that is deployed from within the colonial power center outward, and addresses third world conditions within first world borders, while acknowledging the broadly shared genealogy of colonization. The term *Transcolonial Cinema* also helps to situate this analysis as an American Studies project, where difference is predicated on the terms of inclusion and exclusion *within* the state's borders, rather than the more common identity-specific research in the field. [19] Some scholars have called for defining this form of cinema as a "Fourth Cinema," but I avoid the term because it contradicts the process of decolonization by linking these cinemas to the colonizers who coined the terms First, Second, and Third World.

I analyze the films here using a polycentric methodology that works in to shed light on the discursive iterations of Americanisms; and I explore these Americanisms by considering varied cinematic representations of contradictions inherent in American inclusion, citizenship and personhood. This dissertation does not aim to make equivalences based on coincidental themes shared by the films of the era. It also does not work only to reveal similarities between films. Rather, the goal of this project is to illustrate that the cinematic acknowledgment of

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[19] Partial citizenship refers to three different categories of Americans, 1) the forced citizen: African-Americans brought by slavery, and the Indigenous people of the U.S.; 2) the involuntary or reluctant citizen: the worker migrant who must leave their homeland for financial, physical, or medical security; and 3) the assimilationist citizen: those who choose American culture over their own.

internal colonialism in the United States is not difficult to find and is indeed a topic worthy of further scholarship.

Methodology

To achieve the goals outlined above I will utilize three interrelated methodologies: 1) close textual analysis of films and literature of the post civil rights era; 2) a theoretical interrogation of these texts from the perspective of postcolonial theory, cultural studies, and psychoanalytic philosophy; 3) and historical research, which looks at the inception of the films discussed, outlines the filmmakers' personal and professional backgrounds, and employs primary sources to frame the socio-political climate of the era .

This project is structured as a parallel ontological historical analysis between the three distinct functions of the state (as in nation) *and* state of being: incarceration, migration, and policing. Addressed as parts of the greater whole of the internal colonization, these three elements represent degrees and modes of confinement and contestation that differ only in name. Indeed the three parts work together to ensure that the homogeneity of the colonial project stays in place. Yet, when approached using a multicultural analysis, the project of homogenization is disrupted, though in different ways for different groups of people, it nonetheless points to the central issue of internal colonialism. Therefore, the methodology for this project will be rooted in a *content-analysis* model called for by Robert Stam in his study of three Bakhtinian categorizations— *dialogism*, *polyphony*, and *heteroglossia*—which Stam argues, are vital in theorizing "ethnic" representation in cinema and advancing "the common goal of formulating a more nuanced, dynamic and multidimensional model for the analysis of representation." Furthermore, and in relation to the historical evidence used in this project, Stam argues that this

mode of analysis “allows comparison of a film’s discourses…with the socially circulated cognate discourse forming part of a discursive continuum such as journalism, novel[s], network news, political speeches, scholarly essays and popular songs;” rather than a debate about a film’s reflection of reality, or how realist it is.[20] For the purposes of this dissertation, Stam’s categorizations applied to a content and textual analysis model will provide the methodological approach needed to discuss the discursive tropes and functions of incarceration, immigration, and the police(d) state, and frame their respective filmic representations as being in dialogue with the multicultural “socially circulated cognate discourse” of the era.

Beyond the historical analysis this project’s focus on cultural studies works alongside classical film theory to discuss (1) *spatiality* and psychoanalytic philosophy to discuss (2) *realism* as these two elements arise in cinemas of decolonization. As a theoretical approach to visual language, I argue that in media representations of decolonization the bordered and regulated-by-the-state “domestic” *spaces* of the mind, body, home, city and nation are often adopted as revelatory sites of contestation against internal colonialism, while also being spaces of confinement as *constructed* by the project of coloniality.[21] Indeed when looking at these elements of domestic space (mind, body, home, city) one must consider the intersectional

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[20] George Gerbner and Larry Gross, “Living With Television: The Violence Profile,” *Journal of Communication,* 26 (1976), 172–194; Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, (Minneapolis, University of Minneapolis Press 1984); Robert Stam, “Bakhtin, Polyphony, and Ethnic/Racial Representation,” in *Unspeakable Images: Ethnicity and the American Cinema*, ed. Lester D. Friedman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991). 258.

[21] "intersectionality, n.". OED Online. March 2017. Oxford University Press. Defined as, “The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage; a theoretical approach based on such a premise.”

elements of race, gender, class and power. Where Kimberle Crenshaw argues that the exclusion of one or more of the elements of "interdependent systems" of intersectionality often places marginalized identity into socio-political spaces of invisibility, I argue that cinematic spatiality becomes a revelatory site of these often invisible spaces. Therefore, scholarship on intersectionality,[22] informed by Gilles Delueze's theories of transitory cinematic spatiality, concludes that cinema's rendering of the intersectional is dependent on representations of space, i.e. the transformative spaces of the corporeal, the domestic, the public, *and* the cinematic. To define the relationships between these transformative spaces, I employ Žižek's theory of a "parallax Real"—which exists when a sociological shift in perspective exposes the dialectical collision between two opposing elements in the discursivized socio-political world.[23]

In an effort to outline multicultural filmmaking as it relates to Americanism I will detail below how the secondary sources employed in this project draw on several approaches to analysis that work to create dialogue between film theory, post-colonial theory, decolonization theory, internal colonialism, and realism. I employ scholarship in American studies to differentiate the phenomenological renderings of nationalism, citizenship, and assimilation in the United States. Research in gender studies is deployed as a counterpoint, and a lens through which to consider all aspects of this project. Spatial theory is foundational in considering the dialectics of space inherent in coloniality and cinema. A lens on the nature of transnationalism in American cinemas of decolonization serves as a way to explore the reach of Americanism—understanding that during this era many global liberatory movements influence, and are influenced by, struggles for liberation within the United States. Finally the philosophical inquiries made throughout this dissertation inform how all of the fields above will be synthesized

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[23] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26.

to ask questions regarding, cinema, space and realism. In sum, textual analysis of selected independent films—largely made by marginalized-identity American filmmakers in post civil rights era—informed by secondary scholarship, archival evidence, and oral histories will become the aggregate of this project.

Periodization

Since the inception of anti-colonial movements throughout the world, a handful of activists and scholars have sought to canonize decolonization studies. Cinema scholars have addressed decolonization in changing ebbs and flows over a period of nearly fifty years. Literature that historicizes cinemas of decolonization has informed many of the questions queried in this dissertation. Most recently, the anthology *L.A. Rebellion: Creating a New Black Cinema,* explores the role of Black filmmakers at UCLA who align with the theory and practice of Third Cinema to address socio-political issues in the United States and abroad.[24] Other marginalized-identity filmmakers in this project who address similar themes come from Southeast Asian, Chicano, autochthonous, African, and refugee backgrounds—and some have yet to be placed into dialogue within scholarship that addresses issues of internal colonialism.

Drawing from both historical and contemporary literature, this project returns to questions regarding internal colonialism and asks to reconsider a colonial condition in what others have termed the post-colonial era. In exploring implicit and explicit cinema representations of decolonization in the United between the early 1970s into the 1980s, I argue that this period exemplifies a time in which film becomes a central artistic medium employed to underscore the failures in political reform spurred by the civil rights movement. Therefore

[24] Allyson N. Field, Jan C. Horak, and Jacqueline N. Stewart, eds. *L.A. Rebellion: Creating a New Black Cinema*, (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).

periodizing literature from scholars such as Thomas Borstelmann, who helps define the political landscape and aesthetic conventions of this era, becomes key in outlining this dissertation's argument. Furthermore, if a colonial condition exists within the United States, it must be examined from a global perspective because events and movements stemming from outside its borders often define the political conditions within the U.S., thus I join scholars such as Shumei Shi, Francois Lionnet, and Franz Fannon who recognize the hand the United States has had in colonial struggles across the globe.

Borstelman's claim that cinema diverges from the esthetics of the post civil rights era is a broadly postmodernist claim that may too often refer to popular culture, yet is significant in light of the reciprocal cultural and political movements that manifest in this era, such as the "Post Soul" movement, the burgeoning postfeminist movement, and more broadly the ideals of neoliberalism.[25] Therefore, I join in certain aspects of Benedict Anderson's scholarship, which sets the stage for discussing issues regarding post modernism, and questions how boundaries are set between disparate social groups who may experience modernity parallel to each other but in divergent modes.

Other literature addressing the post civil rights era point to the shift away from the Keynesian welfare-warfare state of the 1960s, toward free market neoliberalism.[26] Yet I argue that the independent cinema of this era does otherwise. Because of deregulation in media censorship spurred by the 1951 Miracle Decision, and the abandonment of the Motion Picture

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[25] Mark Anthony Neal, ""It Be's That Way Sometimes 'Cause I Can't Control The Rhyme': Notes From The Post-Soul Intelligentsia," *Black Renaissance; New York* 1 no. 4, (1998): 8.

[26] Cynthia Ann Young, *Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class*, (New York: New Press, 2010).

Production code in 1968, the artistic voice of the era is more overt in its criticism of social problems—resurrecting some of the radical voices that were foundational during the civil rights movement. Additionally, government commissioned inquiries like the Kerner Commission Report,[27] (which led to the conclusion that misrepresentation and underrepresentation in the media was in part responsible for the civil unrest of the 1960s) in some ways contributed to the production of more inclusive content.[28] This new inclusiveness, parallel to attempted social and geographic desegregation in the U.S. should be considered as a component of the move toward neoliberal economics and social policy. Moreover, the neoliberal ideal of the individual as a component of the market ensures a *somewhat* desegregated market—that is, ostensibly, anyone is allowed to participate. While the market was capitalizing on a new consumer base of minorities and immigrants, there were social constraints that limited their inclusion. These limitations manifested from a heightened awareness of the presence of the "Other" within a once-white-dominant society who in many ways reacted from a ruptured sense of security, and in turn may have been an instigating component in the drastic rise of incarceration rates in the United States in the early 1970s; a topic that is central to the questions addressed in my research as it relates to the varying ways in which citizenship and market participation are limited by socio-economic apartheid.[29]

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[27] *Report of the National Advisory Commission On Civil Disorders*, (Kerner Commission, Washington D.C., 1968), 6.

[28] Philip Meranto, ed. 1970. "The Kerner Report Revisited," *Institute of Illinois Bulletin* 67 (1970): 121.

[29] Franklin E. Zimring, "The Scale of Imprisonment in the United States: Twentieth Century Patterns and Twenty-First Century Prospects," *Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology* 100, no. 3 (2010): 1225-1246; "Historical Statistics Of Prisoners In State And Federal Institutions Yearend 1925-1986" (United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Washington D.C, 1988. According to report by the Department of Justice, the

Prisons, Borders, and Realisms

Taking into account the prison rates of the 1970s helps this project frame the discursive colonial practice of inclusion and exclusion, where specific marginalized groups are granted *limited* access to the resources of the 'colony,'(i.e. citizenship, fair housing, employment, and education) even if they are *equal* (if not greater) contributors to it. Despite the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, forms of social and economic segregation persisted, partly through he unprecedented incarceration rates of minority groups in the years to follow. Therefore Michel Foucault's post-structuralist work on prisons serves as a broad but central referent regarding the historicity of prisons, specifically to address several films discussed here that refer directly to historical events involving jailing, imprisonment, and confinement—some are more indirect or abstract, and others are boldly explicit.[30] For example, Haile Gerima's *Bush Mama* (1975) theorizes two opposing spaces of incarceration: the prison and the home; whereas *Alambrista! The Illegal* (Robert M. Young, 1977) allegorizes the borders of United States as prison; and more abstractly, Charles Burnett's *Killer of Sheep* (1977) employs the four borders of the screen to physically and metaphorically illustrate the spatial and social confinement inherent in apartheid.

Though many films in this project address incarceration in varying ways, they all work to consider modes of imprisonment that are outside the dominant rhetoric of "jail" and are referential of an American internal coloniality. Therefore several more-recent works of scholarship used here historicize the creation of extreme mass incarceration in the U.S. and reveal the intricacies of both the prison system and larger federal policies that are linked to mass

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record high of prisoners between 1925-1974 was in 1961. This record was broken in 1975 and each year after a new record high was set.

[30] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

incarceration. Elizabeth Hinton outlines how the parallel "war on crime" and "war on poverty," which saw the militarization of the U.S. police force beginning with the Law Enforcement Assistance Act of 1965, is a shift from thinking that crime was a result of poverty and instead considers individual pathology and crime itself as the reasons for poverty—which in some ways came from a need to address the mass protests and uprisings in the country. According to Hinton, Whitehouse policy that sought to alleviate the issues of poverty victimized and criminalized the same marginalized groups. And often the very social reform programs that addressed poverty were forced to align with law enforcement agencies to survive, creating a system that worked to ensure that the *control*—not the alleviation—of poverty, or those affected by it, came in the form of policing and incarceration.[31] Then if the "War on Poverty" is linked to the "War on Crime," the neoliberalist inclusion of those once physically or socially segregated is met with a reimagined economic and judicial discrimination—a theme that is addressed in the films of Larry Clark, Haile Gerima, Bernard Nichols, and Charles Burnett.

The title of Michelle Alexander's book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness,* helps to summarize some of the issues that this project aims to address in cinema—apartheid that is married to capitalism, or what Andrew Dilts describes as the limitations of inclusion within the neoliberalist context.[32] Hence, *limited inclusion* is a central point to consider in regards to citizenship, because it is also a component of immigration policy

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[31] Elizabeth Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass incarceration in America* (Cambridge, MASS & London, England: Harvard Universtiy Press 2016).

[32] Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: Recorded Books, 2012); Andrew T. Dilts, *Punishment and inclusion: race, membership and the limits of American liberalism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014).

in America. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 put an end to majority white immigration that had been in place since 1790; a significant act in the move toward a more rigorous market driven political landscape.[33] Though immigrants were not guaranteed citizenship, they were essential to the burgeoning neoliberalist economy, thus the rise in Asian, Eastern European and Latin American migration in the twentieth century is a significant component in considering the American empire and its position as a *new* colonial power. Instead of invading other lands, the American liberalist control of wealth begins to harvest, or takes labor away from those Other lands. Where once a free, then underpaid, domestic labor force of slaves, former slaves, and autochthonous peoples was used, a new non-citizen group enters the foray in hopes of participating in the American community (or economy) and are subject to conditions similar to the ones the original exploited domestic labor force endured.

Here, Benedict Anderson's theory of the nation as an "imagined community" becomes part of a discussion that asks who is associated with multicultural Americanism, and what is their relationship to the formation of the state and citizenship?[34] Anderson argues that the nation works as an "imagined" entity in which peoples who may never interact socially live under the banner of unity created by identifying with a nationalism. Yet it seems that the construction of nationalism depends on dis-integration, or disenfranchisement as much as it does national rhetoric, thus the imagining of this constructed state is turned on its head when unity is obstructed by social apartheid. In light of this, Louis Althusser problematizes the idea of an

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[33] Gabriel J. Chin and Rose Cuison Villazor, *The Immigration And Nationality Act Of 1965* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[34] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 2006). Anderson's work is problematized here because I argue that it only works within a colonialist paradigm.

imagined nation when deconstructing the mechanisms of the state and the work of its functionaries (or public servants), who, in the United States, now begin to include marginal citizens who are responsible for the deployment of regulations, policies, and learned American cultural practices that fortify their own subjugation.[35] Thus the implication of marginalized-identity immigrant as a functionary of the state creates a situation in which the marginalized are pitted against each other in an intersectional race toward citizenship. This scenario is often addressed in films of the era in regards to The Vietnam War, employment, social welfare and police intervention/misconduct—where a person or group is pitted against functionaries of the state who are of the same cultural demographic—as is rendered by filmmakers such Haile Gerima, Charles Burnett, Robert M. Young, *Efraín Gutiérrez*, Larry Clark, and Ivan Dixon.[36]

The factors regarding inclusion and exclusion become unifying elements when applied to American coloniality, which is why I argue that it is important to reconfigure identity specific modes of analysis and adopt a mode of analysis that considers the common multicultural goal of assimilation or inclusion—or resistance to it.

Nationalist anti-racist movements in the 60s and 70s later adopt broader multicultural strategies which begin to consider the "interdependent systems" of race, gender and class, leading up to early theories of intersectionality. Therefore several works of scholarship that inform this dissertation look at the way in which these interdependent systems converge to resist

[35] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatus (Notes Towards and Investigation)," *La pensée,* (1970): 5. I feel it important to understand that functionaries do include the likes police, government officials, and state workers, but also includes doctors, teachers and regular citizens-at-large as part of a system which ensures the imagining of a state.

[36] As a brief example; in Haile Gerima's film *Bush Mama* (1975), the main character Dorothy contends with a situation in which she may lose agency over reproductive rights when a social worker of her race demands that Dorothy get an abortion or lose state welfare.

or represent issues of internal coloniality. The work of Kimberle Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins speak more to the contemporary issues regarding minorities and spaces of invisibility, informing my own argument that these invisible elements can be more readily rendered in cinema. The work of bell hooks further aligns with theories of intersectionality and the way in which class is more often a contradictory element in society, where one group (specifically in media representation) is often positioned as a lower class than an equally oppressed "Other" economic group because of race and gender stereotypes and their subsequent relationship to state or national mythologies of that group.[37] Aligning with this theory, I approach the analysis of differing social groups in this project with an understanding that in several ways they are all working from within the state, toward a center of citizenship, inclusion or equality; even though they may be in opposition to the conditions of that state or in opposition to a social class above or below them. Interestingly the driving theme in many of these films portrays the draw of inclusion met with an equal, reactive, and centrifugal force of neoliberalist apartheid as it relates to the limited inclusion discussed earlier. Therefore, as Robert Stam and Ella Shohat describe, a "polycentric multicultural" approach to the analysis of films in this project will ensure that the intersectional nature of the varying degrees of colonial apartheid within the U.S. can be seen as all reaching toward a common and often oppositional center that defines inclusion and citizenship.[38]

Contributing to the broader argument for a multicultural study and the global impact of resistance to colonialism, Cynthia Young's work discusses the creation of a "Third World Left" in the United States, and identifies key players who adopted the idea of domestic colonialism

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[37] bell hooks, *Where We Stand: Class Matters,* (New York: Routledge, 2000)

[38] Ella Shohat, and Robert Stam. *Unthinking Eurocentrism* (New York: Routledge 1994).

from other nations and bring it to a marginalized multicultural public in the U.S., which supports this project's acknowledgement of global decolonization movements and their impact on movements of resistance in United States.[39] By looking at disparate figures and their and roles as functionaries and revolutionaries, Young seeks to create a unifying scholarship regarding internal colonialism that tells at how global movements for decolonization helped create a new political and artistic language in the United States.

In regards to visibility and inclusion Chon Noriega's research is a central point of reference that offers a historical overview of film and television coming out of the national Chicano Movement of the post civil rights era. In much of his work, Noriega outlines that the relative invisibility of Chicano cinema is indicative of a decentralized American Third Cinema aesthetic and practice, one which positioned itself as "a weapon" against social apartheid, while developing a "formula" for inclusion in dominant cinema.[40] I argue that the outcome generated by this "formula" is a revelatory liminal spatio-temporal event in which the totalitarianism of European coloniality is met with the oppositional force of what it attempts to render invisible—a phenomenon that Žižek outlines in varying degrees throughout his book *The Parallax View*, which is the binding philosophical literature that is employed here to consider, realism, Realism, reality, authenticity and authorship.[41]

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[39] Cynthia Ann Young, *Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

[40] Glauber Rocha, "An Aesthetic of Hunger." *New Latin American Cinema*, (1997): 59-61. Rocha offers that in this cinema of hunger the "Latin American neither communicates his real misery to the civilised' [sic] man, nor does the 'civilised' man truly comprehend the misery of the Latin American."; Chon A. Noriega, 1992. *Chicanos And Film*: "Between a Weapon and a Formula: Chicano Cinema and Its Context." (New York: Garland Publications, 1992), 141-167.

[41] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26.

Colonialism and Space

This dissertation is also informed by postcolonial studies, therefore I employ works by scholars who address how nationalisms inform the spatial and political flows that define what a post civil rights era America is. In *Discourse of the Other: Postcoloniality, Positionality and Subjectivity,* edited by Teshome Gabriel and Hamid Naficy, several scholars discuss the way in which "Otherness" is coopted by media, in turn erasing the immediate differences between marginalized "others" and dominant culture; arguably creating a homogenized multi-culture through the imaginary process of assimilation—a process that informs my work by pointing out the way that line-blurring or erasure of identity is deployed to argue for a "post" in dealings of coloniality, which may be an attempt by the dominant culture to drive forth an ideology of a post-multicultural society.[42] It is then important to also consider multiculturalism from the perspective of the colonizer, who often interpret all "Othered" cultures as a monolithic entity, which is why I consider two films by white male filmmakers: *Alambrista! The Illegal* (1977) by Robert M. Young, and *In MacArthur Park* (1977) by Bruce R. Schwartz.

Still, a post-multicultural society may be important to consider if it is stemming from the marginalized-identities' perspective as a centralized source of decolonization politics. Regarding this, I again refer to Ella Shohat and Robert Stam who explore the nuances of media multiculturalism as a marked shift toward decolonization.[43] For the purposes of this dissertation their arguments surface as a way in which *national* is addressed from an internally colonized

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[42] Hamid Naficy and Teshome H. Gabriel. *Discourse of the Other: Postcoloniality, Positionality and Subjectivity*, (London, Routledge, 1991).

[43] Ella Shohat and Stam, Robert, *Multiculturalism, Postcoloniality, and Transnational Media* (New York: Rutgers University Press, 2003).

perspective, where those within the nation work to express difference through a common status of marginality within the United States. Shumei Shi and Francois Lionnet further this perspective in their anthology *Minor Transnationalism*, in which several scholars point out that studies in globalization, multiculturalism, and transnationalism must move beyond the binary "model of minority cultural formations" in post-colonial studies—arguing that minorities engage and resist both marginalized and dominant cultures in varied ways, and all point to a persistence in coloniality and its relationship to global capital.[44]

In light of a filmmaking movement in the United States that is concerned with decolonization, a return to Third Cinema theory becomes a central component in unpacking the notion of internal colonialism and its representation in American cinema. The roots of Third Cinema are deep. Coming from the earliest masters of cinema, this highly ideological form works to dissolve the rigidities inherent in a mechanized system using that very system; a paradox that has left the study of Third cinema incomplete. The Third Cinema manifestos of Julio Garcia Espinosa, Gabriel Rocha, Fernando Solanas, and Octavio Getino work as another set of foundational texts that leads this project into an analysis of cultural theories regarding internal colonialism by scholars and activists such as Franz Fanon, and later Stokely Carmichael.[45] Where Fanon in many ways influenced (and was influenced by) the first multi-cultural movements in the struggle for decolonization, Carmichael becomes the American example of the

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[44] Françoise Lionnet and Shumei Shi, *Minor Transnationalism*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

[45] Frantz Fanon , Jean-Paul Sartre, and Constance Farrington. *The Wretched of the Earth*, (New York: Grove Press, 1965).

transition from issues of classical colonialism to a discussion of internal colonialism.[46] Contemporary film scholars who address liberationist cinema and its relationship to Third Cinema, such as Hamid Naficy and Teshome Gabriel will also be foundational in discussing representations and definitions of internal colonialism between different social groups. The scholarship of Naficy and Gabriel is directly linked to my research, and their respective approaches synthesize the multiplicities of outcomes when observed from a polycentric American perspective. The book *Third Cinema in the Third World* by Gabriel frames the way in which the films of the era in question will be approached from a Third Cinema context—although Gabriel's analysis of Third Cinema theory is not applied to a purely American context as this project aims to do. Hamid Naficy's work on identity specific filmmaking defines the many modes in which filmmaking functions among displaced or diasporic communities within the United States and other dominant nation states—yet considers each identity separately while employing a multi-cultural approach to define the nuanced subcategories of diasporic filmmakers. Other scholars have produced revisions of Third Cinema theory addressing its precarious position as a "neglected" theory and practice in a postcolonial world—yet their approach is identity specific, and not national-polycentric-multicultural—meaning Third Worldisms are only observed in the context of post-colonial Third World national identities rather than that of those same identities functioning within a multicultural polycentric environment such as the United States. Therefore this project's reification of Third Cinema theory will work as guide used to contextualize Third Cinema in an American context, specifically in regard to the bordered and invisible spaces between the First and Third Worlds (not to be mistaken for the "Second World" of industrialized socialist nations).

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[46] Stokely Carmichael, *Stokely Speaks: From Black Power to Pan- Africanism,* ed. Mumia Abu-Jamal. (Chicago, Chicago Review Press, 2007).

Colonization is inherently linked to issues of space, as is cinema. The colonial space and the cinematic space both work as sites of occupation, contestation and representation. Cinemas of decolonization seek change, and "the need for this change exists in a raw, repressed, and reckless state in the lives and consciousness of [the colonized]."[47] This "reckless state" that Fanon describes is a source of collective energy against oppression that does not have a defined space within the colonial project—it is not welcome. In cinema this energy manifests in several different modes of diegesis. And because the cinema of decolonization is related to the "reckless" energy of the oppressed, it often finds itself functioning in off-screen space. As, Gilles Deleuze argues, there does indeed exist a transitory space beyond the screen—what I would argue is a place in which the "reckless" energy of a rebelling marginalized-identity can be placed. In Deleuze's theory of spatiality he describes a "radical Elsewhere," in which—as interpreted for the purposes of this project—the often-invisible nature of the colonized consciousness can find a forum, or simply be forged.[48] Noel Burch argues that there are six areas of off-screen space; (1-4) the four boundaries of the screen, (5) the space behind the camera, (6) and the space into which a character object enters but the viewer does not. Considering the role of the marginalized-identity spectator, I argue that there is indeed a seventh space beyond the screen—the space of the *alterdiegetic*—a term that is explored extensively in the third chapter, where I consider cathartic films about retaliation against the state, such as Ivan Dixon's 1973 film *The Spook Who Sat By the Door*. [49] Films like Dixon's work to ignite this "reckless energy" within

[47] Frantz Fanon , Jean-Paul Sartre, and Constance Farrington. *The Wretched of the Earth*, (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 1.

[48] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-image*, (London: Athlone, 1986.)

[49] Noel Burch, *Theory Of Film Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2016).

an alterdiegetic space where the often disavowed affectuality of those who are subject to state violence and marginality can be decoded, processed, and possibly re-placed in an effort toward decolonization.[50]

Spatiality in cinema must also be considered from the micro to macro beginning with the space of the aforementioned corporeal, then moving outward into domestic (home), territorial, bordered, national, and globalized spaces. When considering this, I again emphasize that an analysis of space in the cinema of decolonization must also include the spaces of the corporeal, and domestic as the primary sites of contestation, because they are strategic spaces that can be disconnected from the colonial project—meaning the body and home can be altered outwardly to suit the demands of the colonizer, while they are also maintained as private spaces from which resistance is manifested.[51] Chapters one and two look deeply into the bordered sites of body and home in an effort to understand how a cinema of decolonization recognizes these sites as spaces of contestation against the internal colonial project, and chapter three concludes with an exploration into the cinematic space of contestation by the marginalized-identity spectator.

This dissertation aims to consider independent cinema made largely by marginalized-identity filmmakers in the post civil rights era as an artistic touchstone that works to urge a return to a dismissed political movement against internal colonialism in the United States. Though not all the films I discuss directly challenge or discuss internal colonialism, they are informed by the

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[50] Ivan Dixon, *The Spook Who Sat By the Door*, Directed by Ivan Dixon, Performed by Lawrence Cook, (1973; Gary Indiana: United Artists). The film was nationally distributed, and was pulled from theaters. According to Samantha Shepard the film was may have been removed by the "influence of the FBI's Counter Intelligence Program."

[51] Sarah Upstone, "Domesticity in Magical-Realist Postcolonial Fiction: Reversals of Representation in Salman Rushdie's 'Midnight's Children,'" *Frontiers: A Journal of Woman's Studies* 28, no. ½ (2007): 260-284.

cultural discourse of the era, which stems for a desire to uproot and change a system that is oppressive and separatist. With a lens on the three staples of American coloniality—prisons, borders and policing—I argue that the films discussed here attempt to unearth buried truths about how a nation that defines itself in terms of inalienable rights, continues to practice exclusion, derision, and disenfranchisement in the project of nation building—or more broadly making, taking, and defining space. It is this broader political exploration of space that is applied to my discussion about cinematic spaces—ones of resistance, rebellion, and possibly reconciliation—which drives the philosophical inquiries made here about spaces in which the authenticity of constructed truths like democracy, are contested and exposed by parallel masked truths, such as the fact that America is built on stolen land and then was made powerful and wealthy with the labor of stolen people.

Chapter 1: Is this Home or is this Prison? – Coloniality, Incarceration, and Cinematic Space

Don't be shocked when I say I was in prison. That's what America means, prison.

- Malcolm X

My brothers are notorious. The have not been to prison. The have been imprisoned. The prison is not a place you enter. It is no place.

- Claudia Rankine

Incarceration was a founding element of the Americas; millions of indigenous, and African peoples were in effect kidnapped or forced into slave labor, displacement, and death. The European liberalist ideals of nation and freedom created a workforce and an underclass that would be the sanctified sacrifice that ensured, for Europeans, a representative government, free market and private property, while largely denying these rights of "free men" to those of the foundational underclass whose "residual" indenture ensured that the project of colonialism would thrive.[1] I refer to Lisa Lowe who considers Raymond William's use of the term "residual" in relation to historicity as "elements of the past that continue, but are legible within a contemporary social formation." Lowe further argues that "residual processes persist and may even deepen, despite a new dominant rendering them less visible." Indeed visibility is a topic that arises throughout this dissertation, addressing the invisible forms of coloniality that persist into the civil rights era and up to this day.

[1] Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacy of the Four Continents,* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 19; Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 123-125.

In the era spanning between the independence of the United States to the early 1960s the colonial project of the Americas saw to it that incarceration and slavery transformed from free labor to cheap labor to exploited labor while maintaining an underclass into the contemporary moment that is limited by its access to equal participation in a liberalist system forged by colonial conquest. In this context, home for the underclass in colonized space ontologically becomes prison and vice versa—as the rhetoric of American liberalism alters the definition of home to mean nation. For marginalized peoples of the Americas, home is established in the only constant spaces of domesticity: the mind, and then the body or the corporeal. Epistemologically the colonial construct of home works to create boundaries and borders while ensuring an ongoing project of homogenization and assimilation within the nation/state that it occupies. If one is to contest the power of the colonialist state, then it begins in the home, more so it begins at the original space of being, the corporeal, and thus the mind. When the privileged ideal of domestic or private sovereign space of either nation or home (a purported "freedom" of liberalist ideals) is not fully accessible to the marginalized, the nation is no longer home, and instead works to incarcerate them with a promise of the liberalist ideals of representation, sovereignty, nation and home/land, while denying them full access to the benefits of such ideals—thus the proverbial "home," the private domestic space, becomes a site of contestation of these very ideals—and for the marginalized the proverbial "home" is not four walls and a roof, it is indeed the only sovereign space they can maintain, again, the mind and the body.

The epigraph above describes both Malcolm X's time in prison, and that he believes that America, his home, itself works like a prison—yet when he says, "I was in prison," *was* becomes a binary operative word; 1) he's no longer in any sort of prison, and 2) he has liberated himself from the prison that America is. In the second epigraph Claudia Rankine poeticizes the

decolonization of the idea of prison, her "brothers are notorious" because the recognize the liminal space of prison as one created not by them, but for them, meaning they do not have representation within the system that that has imprisoned them, thus the prison does not exist, it is a space that only exists for the one who creates it and maintains it—a liberating thought, which negates the power of incarceration by erasing it's materiality, however futile this may be.

Liberation from the confining ideologies of Americanism is a central trope of many of the films discussed in this chapter. Decolonization and its cinematic manifestation inside the United States is the central topic of this dissertation. Thus, this chapter does not look to explore how prisons or incarceration is represented; rather it works as a phenomenological study of the literal, abstract, and spatial renderings of imprisonment, in both the onscreen film and the off-screen spaces of production, exhibition, and reception—or lack thereof. Many of the films in this chapter are contribute to topics addressed in the following chapters, yet I choose to start with a discussion on incarceration because this historical period sees the world's largest spike in mass incarceration, and it helps lay the ground work to explore other elements and forms of coloniality and confinement that will later arise in this dissertation.

In this chapter I look at films that address incarceration in varying ways, and approach elements of the topic that are literal: cells, uniforms, guards; while also addressing elements of incarceration that are more abstract: confinement, embodiment, dislocation, disappearance, and visibility vs. invisibility. Other elements of these films prod at the nuanced ideal of home as it exists as part of the colonial project of homogenization, and its rules, borders, and manufacturing of difference. Opening my inquiry in this chapter is an introduction to my methodological approach and a review of the scholarship that has informed my work, followed by a brief periodization section that discusses the shift in U.S. prison policy. I begin my analysis with

Christine Choy and Susan Robeson's documentary film *Teach Our Children* (1972), leading into a survey of Haile Gerima's early films including *Hour Glass* (1971), *Child of Resistance* (1972), and *Bush Mama* (1975). I will follow with an analysis of Efraín Gutiérrez's *Please Don't Bury Me Alive* (1976), and concluding with Charles Burnett's 1977 film *Killer of Sheep.*

It is important to note here that the scholarship of Cynthia A. Young significantly contributes to the work done in this chapter. I employ Young's analysis of three films, beginning with *Teach Our Children,* then *Bush Mama* and *Killer of Sheep.* In a chapter about "Third World Newsreel" Young canonizes *Teach our Children* alongside other political and philosophical works that inquire about internal colonialism in the United States.[2] Yet where Young's in-depth historical analysis describes much of the film's content and socio-political significance, I place *Teach Our Children* in direct dialogue with all films in this chapter, which include *Bush Mama* and *Killer of Sheep*. In a chapter separate from the one where *Teach Our Children* is analyzed*,* Young considers *Bush Mama* and *Killer of Sheep* as contrasting texts that render 1960s and 70s Watts Los Angeles as an internal colony; pointing out that though both films were part of a school of filmmaking seeking "to fill in certain gaps left in [Franz] Fanon's seminal text"—*The Wretched of the Earth* (1961)—they are somewhat "ambivalent" about revolution (I address this last point in chapter three, where I discuss films from the same period that are not so ambivalent).[3] Thus I use Young's work to articulate my own ideas and questions regarding how all of the films in this chapter manipulate and represent elements of space in relation the constructs of prison, home, and revolution.

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[2] Cynthia A. Young, *Soul Power: Culture and Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left,* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 101-183.

[3] Ibid., 213; 228.

The social and spatial construct of imprisonment should be considered against its dialectical opposite—the spaces of non-imprisonment or liberation, though not in such relativist terms. This dialectic can be interpreted using what Slavoj Žižek (borrowing from Lacanian theory and in line with Lisa Lowe's notions of visibility) defines as a "parallax Real," which arises when the constructed codes and symbolic imagined realities of social structures manifest "fissures," in turn revealing truths that are constant but otherwise masked by these very constructs.[4] As Greg Burris argues, these masked elements that exist before and after their "fissured" emergence are "nothing less than a disavowed antagonism, an ever-present trauma that stains all attempts at representation."[5] Indeed the challenge of representing the masked or invisible is often taken on cinematically and arises from elements both on and off screen—and it is important to consider off-screen space as a potentially visible diegetic element. Therefore any attempt to reveal the invisible in cinema requires a close reading of constructs and interpretations of a "parallax Real" existing between the onscreen and off-screen space as well as between opposing socio-political elements within a film and beyond.[6]

Žižek's focuses on elements of Lacanian theory, which dictate that normative reality is a construct regulated by symbolic rules and limitations. Building on this theory Greg Burris posits that these symbolic limitations "can never fully constitute [themselves] as a cohesive, seamless

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[4] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26; Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan,* book 11, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1998), 53-60; Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-ization' of Resistance, "*Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015), 29.

[5] Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining andGagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-ization' of Resistance, "*Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015), 29.

[6] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26.

totality," and they "[depend] on fantasy (the Imaginary) to cover up [their] holes and gaps" or "fissures," which contest constructed realisms.[7] Therefore what arises as "the parallax Real…the traumatic point at which the Symbolic fails," is a failure that ensures that the "totalitarian projects of social engineering," such as colonialism—in turn incarceration—remain incomplete.[8] What becomes apparent in this scenario is that the "fissures" that emerge from this failure alter the Symbolic and "allows for a radical conception of resistance"—meaning that resistance against any or all of these "failures" allows a glimpse into the alternate multitude of mechanisms, which drive the emergence of the "fissure"—outside of the center of resistance to be revealed.[9] In relation to the films discussed here, I argue that these "fissures" can manifest from what Gilles Deleuze describes as a cinematic "out-of-field" existing beyond the screen in an "elsewhere, to one side or around," while testifying "to a more disturbing presence, one which cannot even be said to exist, but rather to 'insist' or subsist,' a more radical Elsewhere outside homogenous space and time"—a cinematic "residual."[10] Although Deleuze describes this phenomenon as an element "beyond" the screen, I would emphasize that this "beyond" is not purely an off-screen space, rather it arises from the screen and points to something that isn't visually tangible within

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[7] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26; Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-ization' of Resistance, "*Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015), 29.

[8] Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-ization' of Resistance, "*Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015), 29; Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image.* Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Hammerjam. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 17; Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of BobbySeale and the 'Real-ization' of Resistance, "*Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015), 29.

the normative diegesis. Indeed there persists a masked element of the socio-political world that is revealed when a failure in the constructs of state symbolism occurs. For cinema it may not be so much a failure of the medium, rather it is in the process of the medium speaking to the off-screen that the “parallax Real” emerges.[11] Therefore, for the purposes of this dissertation, cinema can work as a mechanism that employs “the parallax Real” as praxis—as this “Real” arises between exhibition and reception—revealing elements where the referential symbolism of reality on screen, breaks down and is disrupted by biological, physical, spatial, and socio-political “fissures” existing around or beyond the cinematic space of the screen.[12]

The films that I discuss in this chapter and throughout this dissertation work to reveal and produce “fissures” that make visible elements of coloniality, and I employ them as representative of a polyphonic intersectional amalgamation of differing social and racial identities whose unified voice against coloniality seek to render the American project of coloniality—in turn, the masked project of decolonization.[13]

The Nonplace of Incarceration

Many of the films discussed in this chapter may address incarceration directly, yet some offer a glimpse into the variants of social confinement or punishment that employ the corporeal, domestic, civic, and state, as agents or vessels of confinement. Regarding the punitive

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[11] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26.

[12] Greg Burris, “Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining andGagging of Bobby Seale and the ‘Real-ization’ of Resistance, ”*Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015), 29; Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26.

[13] Greg Burris, “Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining andGagging of Bobby Seale and the ‘Real-ization’ of Resistance, ”*Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015), 29.

confinement of the body I look to the work of Michel Foucault, whose questions regarding modernity's stake in prions and punishment asks whether we have "entered the age of non-corporeal punishment."[14] It is important to note here that Foucault's understanding of subjugation is problematically informed by a dominant cultural perspective—as Ella Shohat and Robert Stam attest, there is a "relentless Eurocentrism of Foucault's work not only in terms of his focus of study—European modernity—but also in his failure to discern the relations between modernity as lived in Europe and as lived in the colonized world."[15] Ann Stoler also questions the use of Foucault's perspective in colonial studies asking why "Foucault's elusive and suggestive treatment of race still remains so marginal to what colonial historians take from him today."[16] I include Foucault's perspective for these very reasons—because he mainly considers punitive incarceration and examines its historical manifestation through liberalist ideals of personhood and freedom in the context of the colonizer. In his inquiry Foucault describes how punishment in the centuries preceding (European) modernity made spectacle of the body or the corporeal as the vessel to endure punishment for crime. He further argues that contemporary punishment in the form of mass incarceration, though confining the body, also confines the mind and thus the "soul."[17] Therefore I argue that in the context of Americanism the mind becomes the

[14] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* (New York: Random House, 1977), 101.

[15] Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Multiculturalism, Postcoloniality, and Transnational Media,* ed. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003). 14.

[16] Ann Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 141.

[17] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* (New York: Random House, 1977. 16-101.

first site of the internal colonial project of confinement, as a means toward assimilation, homogenization, and control—and naturally there emerges resistance to this project. Greg Burris argues that Stuart Hall's critique of Foucauldian "resistance as being 'summoned up from no-where' turns out to be exactly right. Resistance *does* come from nowhere. It emanates from a nonplace, from the zone of nonsubjectivized negativity that remains beyond power's reach"—indeed this is akin to the "no place" that Claudia Rankine writes of in the epigraph above.[18] Burris also argues that this "nonplace" or "nowhere" is what Žižek terms "the Real."[19] Thus it seems that this "nowhere" exists first as an extension of mind, and more ethereally, the soul—specifically a subjected soul that continually works against a vortex of subjectivization, or more materially, incarceration.

If in the United States we have moved further away from the traditions of 19th century corporeal punishment practices (as Foucault asks), then it has been in a lateral direction, to one end the psychological, economical and social, and in the other direction toward repressive mode of homogenization against the marginalized non-European within the home, city and state. This process continues to this day, defined by problems of race. As Lisa Lowe argues, "*race* as a mark of colonialist difference is an enduring remainder of the process through which the human is universalized and freed by liberal forms, while the peoples who created the conditions of possibility for that freedom are assimilated or forgotten," or imprisoned/alienated either literally

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[18] Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-iszation' of Resistance," *Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015): 30; In Lawrence Grossberg, "On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10, no. 2 (1986): 48.

[19] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 26; Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-iszation' of Resistance," *Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015): 30; In Lawrence Grossberg, "On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10, no. 2 (1986): 48.

or symbolically by their resistance to totalitarian projects that colonize the soul, the mind, and the body.

From Civil Unrest to Civil Rights and Back

Though the symbolic iterations of incarceration are a significant portion this chapter, a more literal cinematic rendering of prison will be the starting point of my analysis. Yet to further discuss prison in the post civil rights era we must first unpack key social reform movements of the 1960s—allowing us to look at their subsequent failures and the adoption *decolonization* from Third World liberation movements as a rhetorical trope amongst social justice advocates and scholars in the U.S. in the years to come.

As a result of the uprisings in the early 60s in the urban marginalized communities of the U.S. Lyndon B. Johnson signed executive order 11365, helping to create the *National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, also known as the *Kerner Commission*, which was formed to investigate the cause of such civil unrest. The *Kerner Commission Report* sought to outline the causes of this unrest in the urban "ghettos," and offer solutions to them. Arguably the commission's report is an element in the formation of "gaps," or "fissures"—as postulated by Žižek and Burris respectively—in that the report recognizes the failures of the constructs of state and it attempts to address masked truths, yet does so to not much avail as history shows. After all, the Kerner commissions founding's did lead to simply more police.

An example of a sort of self-awareness or admittance by the U.S. government can be read in a footnote in the report that defines what the commission meant when using the term "ghetto," stating: "The term 'ghetto' as used in this report refers to an area within a city characterized by poverty and acute social disorganization and inhabited by members of a racial or ethnic group

under conditions of involuntary segregation."[20] Terms "ethnic" and "racial" are of significance here because they point out to the existence a non-ethnic and non-racialized class defined as "White." Rather than stating non-white initially, the Report lends to the interesting notion that white is a non-ethnic and non-racial identifier. A contradiction and an oddity in many ways indeed, since the opening summary of the report describes how whiteness is an element of the civil unrest in the so called "ghetto," stating: "What white Americans have never fully understood—but what the Negro can never forget—is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, what institutions maintain it, and white society condones it."[21]

What the *Kerner Commission Report* offers is the documentation of a "fissure" created by the failure of the state, where the very hegemonic majority that elects a government to fight against apartheid sees its own hand in the creation of the very same barriers of that apartheid.[22] The (gratuitous) self-aware rhetoric of the U.S. government is countered by the desire for change that can only occur (according to said government) if order is maintained—yet for the marginalized the idealization of order is what places them within the margins. The desire for "order" is summarized in the opening pages of the Kerner Commission Report where President Johnson is quoted stating:

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[20] *Report of the National Advisory Commission On Civil Disorders*. [Washington: United States, Kerner Commission : U.S. G.P.O., 1968, 6, (Footnote 1).

[21] Ibid., 1.

[22] Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-ization' of Resistance," *Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015): 30

> ….The only genuine, long-range solution for what has happened lies in an attack—mounted at every level—upon the conditions that breed despair and violence. All of us know what those conditions are: ignorance, discrimination, slums, poverty, disease, not enough jobs. We should attack these conditions—not because we are frightened by conflict, but because we are fired by conscience. We should attack them because there is simply no other way to achieve a decent and orderly society in America….[23]

Though LBJ ceremoniously decries change, it is this very change that brings on what will become the most grotesque wave of mass incarceration in global history. The "orderly society" that this administration calls for doesn't come from the inclusionary vision of the *Civil Rights Act* (1964) the *Voting Rights Act* (1965) and the 24th Amendment to the U.S Constitution, nor does it come from efforts to pursue a "War on Poverty" such as the *Urban Mass Transit Act* (1964), the *Food Stamp Act* (1964), or the *Economic Opportunity Act* (1964); rather these social reforms are countered by opposing mandates set forth by Johnson's "War on Crime," such as *The Law Enforcement Assistance Act* in 1965, or the *Omnibus Crime control and the Safe Streets Act* of 1968.

Government efforts that focused on ending poverty, transformed into policies that sought to fight what was often the result of poverty—crime, as defined by the dominant culture. In other words, those who suffered from poverty driven by social and economic segregation were often criminalized for their attempts to integrate into white American society or simply to survive

[23] *Report of the National Advisory Commission On Civil Disorders*. [Washington: United States, Kerner Commission : U.S. G.P.O., 1968, Title Page.

within it—meaning the conceptual constructs that define incarceration did not only apply to prison populations, they also were applied to those not in prison.[24] Instead of addressing the issues of crime, crime itself became the focus, and crime was defined so broadly, many were (and are still) criminalized because of their race or gender before they commit any act of crime. In the 100 years leading up to Johnson Administration's policies on crime only "184,901 Americans entered state and federal prisons." Between the Johnson Administration and the Reagan Administration 251,107 Americans were incarcerated. Since the Johnson administration "2.2 million [Americans were put] behind bars—representing a 943 percent increase" in prison populations to this day[25]. Also within this period an upsurge in police activity in neighborhoods of color ensured ballooning arrest rates and prison populations across the nation. Attica Prison in upstate New York was one prison that saw its population begin burst at the seams by the late 1960s. In 1970, when the population of Attica stood up in revolt, the constructed symbolism of incarceration vs. freedom failed and we see the emergence of a "fissure" in the form of one of the most significant prison uprisings in history.[26]

The Attica prison uprising wasn't an exactly an anomalous event. It happened as a result of overcrowding, poor living conditions, lack of adequate medical care, prison guard brutality,

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[24] *Report of the National Advisory Commission On Civil Disorders*. [Washington: United States, Kerner Commission : U.S. G.P.O., 1968. 2: "What the rioters appeared to be seeking was fuller participation in the social order and the material benefits enjoyed by the majority of American citizens. Rather than rejecting the American system, they were anxious to obtain a place for themselves in it."

[25] Elizabeth Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass incarceration in America*. (Cambridge, MASS & London, England: Harvard Universtiy Press 2016), 5.

[26] Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-iszation' of Resistance," *Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015): 30.

and poor legal representation in prisons across the nation. Yet the revolt at Attica stands out for four reasons: 1) this level of political mobilization within the prison system was never before seen, 2) it received widespread media coverage, 3) it ended in a massacre, and 4) it was filmed. Christine Choy and Susanne Robeson captured some of the Attica events in their documentary film *Teach Our Children* (1971), which looked at the struggles of the prisoners of Attica parallel to the struggles of marginalized groups on the outside. I argue that this film works to reveal the emergence of a "fissure" or many "fissures" at Attica and beyond. In my analysis *Teach Our Children* becomes a text that exemplifies how the invisible becomes visible through the process of filmmaking—both the invisibility of the marginalized and the invisibility of the malady of colonialist constructs.[27] By employing cinema's ability to juxtapose the opposing symbolisms of the state against each other, and allowing us to explore multiple "fissures" for more than the moment of their occurrence, Choy and Robeson imbricate the narrative of prison with that of freedom, and challenge their foundational representation, rhetoric, and politicizations in the context of Americanism.[28] Therefore it is not enough to say that this film exposes what happened at Attica prison, because the uprising that happened there was far more than a symbolic, physical, or political event, it exposed what Žižek argues as "the Real"—a reality that challenged the constructed symbolism of the state project of incarceration vs. freedom—which could have only arose through the alchemy of the failures within the state.[29] *Teach Our Children* works to document the emergence of an utterance of "the Real."[30]

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[27] Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-iszation' of Resistance," *Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015): 30.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26.

Choy and Robeson met in New York where the two of them lived and worked in the attic of the Robeson family home. Choy recalls how neither of them had any formal training in filmmaking, but were inspired by filmmakers from UCLA at a Howard University conference.[31] After making their film it was bought and broadcast on Dutch television, which according to Choy was a windfall, because no such radical film had ever been bought by a national media outlet at that time. This film was also the first film out of Third World Newsreel, and was made solely by people of color. But as Choy laments, after a few screenings and the TV broadcast, the film was "lost, because at that time [Third World] 'Newsreel' has some kind of belief that no single filmmaker should receive credit."[32] Though Choy was the founder of Third World Newsreel, she struggled to get an archival copy of *Teach Our Children* in the years to come. As Choy describes, "ultimately years later I tried to get a copy from Pacifica Archive and they wouldn't give it to me because the film doesn't have my name on it. It's crazy! And NYU had a conference called *Orphan Films* and somehow somebody found the film and they digitized the whole thing and reconstructed it and now it's available."[33] Indeed the film itself struggled for visibility, and filmmakers themselves had to process much of the film in secret, away from potential confiscation by agents of the state, as Choy describes, "we never used commercial laboratories, for security [reasons], so we built an underground lab in Boston, so all the films at newsreel, we developed [ourselves]….if people were sent to Boston to work in the lab they were

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[30] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26.

[31] Christine Choy (Professor, New York University), interviewed by Aruna Ekanayake, 02/14/2018, Los Angeles CA.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

not allowed to tell anybody what kind of work they do. Yeah, because we were terrified. A lot of progressive organizations were infiltrated by the FBI, such as Vietnam Veterans Against War. The same thing happened to the Black Panthers, so we were really paranoid about that you know."[34]

Teach Our Children is a montage of narratives from both within Attica prison at the time of the uprising and outside of it. Consisting of interviews, footage of everyday life, and self-made animations (done by Christine Choy), Choy and Robeson weave together a story that highlights the political figures and the institutional failures responsible for the rebellion that ensued. The film begins with the intertitle: "This film was made with the help of our people… Some of us are forced to fight inside America's prisons and the rest of us take care of business on the outside," followed by footage of Attica prison and a voiceover from an inmate who cites the prison population's demands in regards to their act of resistance:

> The following are the demands of the prisoners of Attica: We demand the constitutional right of legal representation at the time of all parole board hearings. We demand an end to the segregation of prisoners from the main line population because of their political beliefs. We demand an immediate end to the agitation of race relations by the prison administration of this state.[35]

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[34] Christine Choy (Professor, New York University), interviewed by Aruna Ekanayake, 02/14/2018, Los Angeles CA. Many of the films in this dissertation struggled for visibility—meaning some were, lost, censored, or prematurely taken out of exhibition circulation.

[35] Christine Choy and Susanne Robeson, *Teach Our Children,* Directed by Christine Choy and Susanne Robeson (1971; Third World News Reel).

The film then cuts to shots of Black children at play, as a song begins with Donny Hathaway's 1970 song "This is the Ghetto." Here the filmmakers allude to the film's title while challenging the notion of a ghetto, presenting it as a place where young people indeed do grow and thrive. This scene and several others like it work to reveal more than the realities of incarceration within the walls of prison, it begins to position the film as a (non-white) feminist critique, pointing out that the troubles of prison work far beyond its boundaries, and, of the majority male population of prisons, there is an equally affected group of women and children. By including these images of the outside world in contrast to the footage of Attica, the filmmakers invoke the potentiality for an *intersectional* 'Elsewhere' to arise where the invisible becomes visible.[36] Meaning, if the film was purely a document of the Attica uprising, it would fail to ignore the broader issues leading to incarceration itself and the affects it has on those on the outside who are connected with those on the inside.

I emphasize intersectionality above because it is a discursive theoretical framework that looks closely at visibility, yet because this theory is largely refined in the late 1980s (an era that constitutes the emblematic height of neo-liberalist capitalism) it fails to take into account its genealogical link to colonialism. As Ashley Bohrer points out, there are diverging schools of intersectional feminist thought, one "attempts a nascent proto-intersectional account of class and gender, generally [saying] nothing of race, sexuality or colinisation [sic]," and another which

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[36] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image.* Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Hammerjam. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991). Deleuze introduces a notion of an off-screen "radical Elsewhere" in cinema where subjugated knowledges do exist. I cite Delueze's "Elsewhere" here for the reader to take note of the term, as it will become a central topic later in this dissertation. The term situates itself inside of screen theory, although I would argue that because it speaks of an off-screen element, it works as an element of cultural or socio-political theory as well.

developed a platform where "sexism or patriarchy and capitalism were one and the same."[37] Bohrer further argues that this divergence omits any account of the "multiple ways in which gender as a structure and as a concept was raced [by capitalism] and sexualized [by patriarchy], [while being] deeply embedded in histories of colonialism and imperialism," leaving many stones unturned, which *Teach Our Children* attempts to address by looking across boundaries of class, race, nation, and gender, and placing these elements into dialogue, while imbricating them with the politics of visibility.[38]

Revealing the invisible for Choy and Robeson was a matter of contextualizing and rethinking prison as not merely the dialectical opposite of the idealized liberalist notion of freedom. When the film cuts between the Attica rebellion and those on the outside demanding similar rights, one is guided into the liminal space between parallel and equally affected components of the normative binary of prison and not. Followed by the earlier mentioned opening scenes, the filmmakers address the uprisings in urban neighborhoods in the 1960s with footage of the 1967 Newark New Jersey uprising. Then cutting to footage of the Tombs Prison rebellion in 1970, as a man is seen speaking in Spanish to the camera, and a voiceover translation in English begins. The speaker critiques the criminal justice system and outlines that from the moment his (Puerto Rican) people are arrested "in the eyes of justice, or so called justice, they are guilty." He goes on to discuss the many discrepancies that people of color face while in prison—most significantly he argues that their legal support comes from employed agents of the state, public defenders, who "are paid by the state…people [who] *want* to work for the state." In

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[37] Ashley J. Bohrer, "Intersectionality and Marxism: A Critical Historiography," in *Historical Materialism,* 26, no. 2 (2018): 50.

[38] Ibid., 51.

other words he believes that even those whose job it is to defend marginalized people have more inherent loyalty to the state, and work to ensure that its symbolic power is maintained—what Louis Althusser has outlined as the role of the "functionary."[39] That is, the judiciary component that sets out to help those disenfranchised by the state, are undoubtedly a product of the ideology of that very state. As Althusser describes, these functionaries are taught in in schools designed by the state, which are "agents of production, exploitation and repression," then they are "steeped in this ideology in order to perform their tasks 'conscientiously'—the tasks of the exploited (the proletarians), of the exploiters (the capitalists), of the exploiters' auxiliaries (the managers), or of the high priests of the ruling ideology (its 'functionaries')."[40] Althusser further makes a distinction between "state power" and "state apparatus," and the "ideological state apparatus"—arguing that the "state power" is a singular repressive element that "'functions on violence'" (the purveyors of the prison system for example) it is neither a public or private element, and does not answer to the multiplicities of "state apparatuses" (schools, military, churches, etc.) which work to maintain said "state power."[41] In contrast the "ideological state apparatus" is by design a private entity of society, existing in the multiplicity of different religions, families, attorneys, partisan politics, the free press, and entertainment. Although having its roots in the "state apparatus," the "ideological state apparatus" is distinct because it

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[39] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatus (Notes Towards and Investigation)," *La Pensee,* (1970): 5.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid., 13-14.

functions on ideology—an ideology that again maintains state power—which is the charge our speaker makes against "the eyes of justice" and those who maintain its ideology.[42]

The speaker discusses further the injustices brought upon his people and other marginalized groups by elements of both the "state apparatus" and the "ideological state apparatus;" but what is most significant about his soliloquy is how he describes the rather sinister reality of living in urbanized ghettoized areas of the United States. He states:

> In Brooklyn, in that part in the south is where most Blacks and Puerto Ricans live, They're condemned to live in those places, which are slums, because they're poor they are discriminated against to the fullest extent of the word. As for jobs, we have the worst jobs, the worst paying jobs; jobs that no white people want to do. The salaries are the lowest, and you take it or leave it. And because we are parents, and we need to support our families we are forced to take these low paying jobs. We don't have sufficient money to pay for the rent, which is high in those decent apartments. Where only upper middle class people, with good salaries are able to live in. But we can only afford to live in apartments that are infested with rats and roaches. We are condemned to live in these places. There's really no difference with the places we live in and the way we live to the life in prisons. There's no Difference. Only difference may be that in our communities the bars are invisible and you don't see them, and in the prison you do.[43]

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[42] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatus (Notes Towards and Investigation)," *La Pensee,* (1970): 14.

[43] Christine Choy and Susanne Robeson, *Teach Our Children,* Directed by Christine Choy and Susanne Robeson (1971; Third World News Reel), Film.

Including interviews like this, Choy and Robeson work to reveal some of the underlying causes of mass incarceration in the era, and the above statement allows us to move beyond the binary construct of freedom and imprisonment. The speaker is clearly aware of the discriminatory practices of the criminal justice system, its failure, and the failure of its "functionaries" who uphold the system through a shrouded ideological practice; he is also bringing to light the "ideological state apparatus" of "family," or the domestic space of home as a site of confinement and repression.[44] Indeed the home for much of the marginalized in America, though idealized as part of the liberalist American dream, is in fact one of the very first spaces in which the marginalized are subject to the regulatory confinements of colonial practice—which is an overarching difficulty that this chapter and the next addresses: how the notion of Americanism's *home* is deeply tied into the *continuing* practice of coloniality within the borders of the United States and against its forced and pseudo-voluntary migrant population.[45]

Therefore, as I argued earlier, if the mind is the primary site of the internal colonial project, then the second becomes the construct of home. Regarding the intersectional relationship between coloniality and domestic space, I further argue that notions of oppression amongst discursive marginalized groups can converge at the site or idea of home in the context

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[44] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatus (Notes Towards and Investigation)," *La pensée,* (1970): 13. Althusser lists several tips of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA): "the religious ISA; the educational ISA (the system of the different public and private 'schools'); the family ISA; the legal ISA; the political ISA (the political system, including the different parties); the trade-union ISA; the communications ISA (press, radio and television, etc.; the cultural ISA (literature, the arts, sports, etc.).

[45] Forced meaning slaves, and pseudo-voluntary referring to migrants who come to the U.S. both legally and illegally to seek work—seeing that the U.S. maintains a vortex in the distribution of global wealth.

of internal colonialism in the U.S.—and because of the ubiquity of *home* as a construct of society, it becomes a vital component in establishing a common language of resistance. As Sara Upstone argues, coloniality "cannot be considered only in terms of 'public' structures, such as the nation or city, but must also be debated in terms of its construction through the private lives of both colonizer and colonized, and that colonial discourse analysis focuses frequently on the home as a [symbolic] site of power contestation."[46] Meaning, the domestic space of the colonized is at once a space that they nurture, a space in which they are confined to, *and* a space in which can contest the project of colonial homogenization, resisting the construct of what home, as defined-by-colonizer is: an "ideological state apparatus."[47] Thus the idea of home or the American 'home' is problematic because nation is often constructed in popular rhetoric as 'home,' even though acceptance into this 'home' is a constant struggle for a large non-white majority of its occupants. Then if the model for home in the United States is to stay true to the way it segregates and disenfranchises their citizenry, home becomes more a site of confinement and restriction, in turn manifesting as a site of resistance.

Choy and Robeson's film edifies this notion of home as a potential site of resistance as well as a site of confinement. A segment in the film juxtaposes women and children habituating in housing projects in New York with hand drawn diagrams of how slave traders arranged Africans in their cargo ships—like sardines. During this sequence the filmmakers cut to an interview with a young Black woman who tells us:

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[46] Sarah Upstone, "Domesticity in Magical-Realist Postcolonial Fiction: Reversals of Representation in Salman Rushdie's 'Midnight's Children,'" *Frontiers: A Journal of Woman's Studies* 28, no. ½ (2007): 260-284.

[47] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatus (Notes Towards and Investigation)," *La pensée,* (1970): 13. Accessed February 2016. Althusser describes this as the "family ISA."

> I have five children, I have to think about genocide, every aspect you can look at it in. I live in a housing project. We have no facilities here. The Children, they're playing, they have a [parking] lot out there, concrete, a [parking] lot about twenty-five or forty feet. We have here in this one building about seventy children. Can you see those kids out there playing in the concrete lot with glass and everything? Kids aren't supposed to play on there grass [here]. They are being forced to get out in the back yard and ride their bikes; so-called back yard, which is the parking lot. Last year a little boy got hit by a car, got his leg broke and everything. These are some other problems that we are going to have to face as genocide. Genocide in its fullest extent is putting people on top of people. Packing them up like rats. Keeping people from knowing who they are, what they are, and what they should be about doing.[48]

The orator's invocation of genocide is jarring, yet she exposes a way of thinking that is uncommon in an American context.[49] She isn't speaking of genocide in terms of an occurrence; instead she speaks of it as a process, slow and blunt, grinding away the very (Foucauldian) 'souls' of those subject to it. Her call to think in terms of genocide points to her own living conditions but also alludes to what this film is centered around—Attica

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[48] Christine Choy and Susanne Robeson, *Teach Our Children,* Directed by Christine Choy and Susanne Robeson (1971; Third World News Reel), Film.

[49] Uncommon unless referring to the genocide of Indigenous American peoples. Although genocide is not often the first words brought up in the jingoistic rhetoric Americanism.

prison. Indeed the filmmakers equate her struggle with those in prison at Attica and elsewhere.

As discussed in the introduction, Robert Stam argues that cinematic language is "not only the instrument and material of representation; it is also the object of representation," and instead of being reflexive of "the real, or even a refraction of the real, [cinematic] discourse constitutes a refraction of a refraction, that is a mediated version of an already textualized and discursivised socio-ideological world."[50] The imagery and testimony of the Black woman speaking of genocide is a version of this doubled refraction, inside her home, inside this film about prison, as a voice emerging from "fissures" manifested by the dialectic meeting point between incarceration and freedom, between home and city, between the inside of her own self or soul and the outside which seeks to take away that soul.[51] By employing the term 'genocide' this woman in her home, on the screen, places herself outside of the home she is sequestered in *and* she addresses the world of the off screen in protest, as Upstone describes, "against anthropological tradition's repetition of the patriarchal division of public and private spheres—treating the [domestic as well as the cinematic] as a 'self-contained world,' the globe split between an inside of emotional dialogues and an outside of political negotiation."[52] Indeed this

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[50] Robert Stam, "Bakhtin, Polyphony, and Ethnic/Racial Representation," in *Unspeakable Images: Ethnicity and the American Cinema*, ed. Lester D. Friedman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991). 252.

[51] Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-iszation' of Resistance," *Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015): 30.

[52] Sarah Upstone, "Domesticity in Magical-Realist Postcolonial Fiction: Reversals of Representation in Salman Rushdie's 'Midnight's Children,'" *Frontiers: A Journal of Woman's Studies* 28, no. ½ (2007): 260.

woman's invocation speaks beyond what is rendered literally on screen and we are asked to see or seek the invisible—while relating it back to the Puerto Rican speaker's charge that where he lives is like a prison.

Revealing the invisible has been an imperative in Third Cinema, which was developed in Latin American as a type of cinema that sought to subvert dominant narratives and immerse itself in the struggles for liberation of the Third World. Though the United States is not considered a part of the Third World, it does maintain Third World conditions for many of its marginalized inhabitants—an internal Third World. And as our orator notes, the internal Third World is a vessel of genocide that begins often in the home or domestic space, which is a domain that is problematically feminized by modernity, and continues to make invisible the political economy of (involuntary) domesticity and thus women's struggles. If, as Teshome Gabriel writes, a significant component of Third Cinema is the "emancipation of women," then we must look to the way in which these struggles are rendered in the American cinematic context with an understanding that visibility is a key difficulty in those struggles.[53]

Kimberle Crenshaw's work on unmasking the intersectional nature of marginalized women's challenges in the United States points out that they are often faced to choose between the cause of feminist liberation (which popularly has been interpreted from a white context) and the struggles for anti-racism (which is coded by the marginalized male

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[53] Teshome Gabriel, *Third Cinema in the Third World: The Aesthetics of Liberation*. (Ann Arbor, Michigan. UMI Research Press). 18.

person of color) leaving the woman-of-color *concealed* in a socio-political invisible nowhere.[54]

As Michel Foucault points out, the prison often works to conceal rather than reveal punishment,[55] and the sequestering of the woman or the feminine in the space of the domestic is often rendered in several films in this chapter as a place of incarceration, where one is a part of a private inside but concealed from the outside by the outside.[56] Thus the cinematic rendering of "liberation" or emancipation in the feminist context of this era is rooted in liberation from this very domestic space—charging it as a space of incarcerating confinement—while at the same time moving it beyond the gendered notion of domesticity by equating it with the universality of prison-like living conditions in the urban "ghettos" and the prison system itself.[57]

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[54] Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 3 No. 6, (July 1991): pp. 1241-1299, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1229039.

[55] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* (New York: Random House, 1977), 16-101.

[56] I must note here that there is a problem with this singular notion of a woman's struggle against domesticity. The struggle for emancipation from the ideologies of post WWII domesticality is deeply rooted in white feminist struggles, which play into the binary of the feminist vs. the patriarchal, and often does not look beyond the privileged sphere of hegemony and consider race, class, or citizenship.

[57] The discussion of domesticity can be problematically gendered as topically *feminine.* Yet my approach is based in the theoretical framework of "Third Cinema Theory" and its role in addressing issues of gender. Teshome Gabriel reminds us that a "reoccurring theme in Third Cinema" is that of the struggle for the emancipation of women." And that in dealing with the oppression of women "one is confronted with the liberation of all humanity, not just women. The liberation of women from stereotypical roles presupposes, therefore, that men must also be liberated from their confining macho roles."

Elements of Incarceration in Fictional Narratives

Before I continue to discuss other components of *Teach Our Children,* I want to place the film in dialogue with fictional narrative work coming out of this era that also address themes of imprisonment and critiques coloniality and institutionalism. I begin with the work of Haile Gerima who, within the same few years that *Teach Our Children* is released, releases his films *Hour Glass* (1971) and *Child of Resistance* (1972),

Haile Gerima left his home country of Ethiopia in 1967 and moved to the United States to study theater in Chicago. His experience in Chicago serves as the counterpoint to his own radicalization. Gerima describes his desire to go to America as a love affair and a fantasy with a country that was imagined in contrast to the struggles of his home, his world, where he says it was a "prestige" to speak English and wear "hand-me-down American cloths."[58] These ideals would be challenged in Chicago where he discovers the deep seeded racism of the post civil rights era. In an interview conducted at UCLA he describes the confusion he felt, coming to a country that was marketed as the "best place on Earth," only to find more acute occurrences of the oppression he'd seen in his homeland.[59] After several negative experiences in Chicago Gerima left for California in 1970 and began his filmmaking career at UCLA, where he would work with other filmmakers there as part of a filmmaking diversity initiative stemming from the ethno-communication department that would later be known as "The L.A. Rebellion." As L.A.

[58] Haile Gerima, Interviewed by Jacqueline Stewart and Zeinabu Davis at the UCLA Bunch Center Library, Attended by Allyson Field and Christopher Horack, Cinematography by Robyn Charles, Transcribed by Robyn Charles and Michael Kmet, *UCLA Film and Television Archive Oral Histories Collection Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A. 2008-2012. L.A. Rebellion Oral Histories Interviews, 2010-2011 [sponsored in part by the Getty Foundation*, September 13th 2010.

[59] Ibid.

Rebellion filmmaker Clyde Taylor remembers of the period in which it all began, "The scene was a laboratory for film insurrection." For or over forty five years Gerima has continued to contribute to the ethos of The L.A. Rebellion as a filmmaker, historian, activist, and professor of film studies at Howard University.[60]

Gerima's first film at UCLA, *Hour Glass* is a narrative short about a college basketball player who becomes radicalized by reading the works of decolonization theorists like Frantz Fanon. In this film there are several scenes where *home* is rendered as a dream and/or nightmare of incarceration. The lead character flashes back to an indecipherable childhood where, he, the Black child, sleeps, and is woken by a white woman abruptly removing his bed sheet, revealing his naked body. The bedroom where the child sleeps replicates a prison cell—a small cot is placed too-close to an exposed toilet (Image 1). After removing the sheet from the child the white woman hangs it on the wall. This scene is repeated three times. In the first instance the hung sheet has an image of Malcolm X, in the second an image of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In the third instance, the sheet bears an image of Angela Davis, but this time the child, standing now, holds the sheet up against his body, covering his nakedness, choosing the revolutionary matriarchal replacement over the domestic (patriarchal) whiteness he is imprisoned by (the white woman, although a woman, I argue is still maintained as a member of the white male patriarchy because she represents the white-colonial-constructed domestic space). I would not suggest that the film contests the positions of Black male activists, rather, the images of Malcolm X and Dr. King stand in contrast to the ethos of the Black woman's role in social change—that which is *absolutely* not aligned with the white patriarchy. The final sequence ends with a zoom-in on an

[60] Clyde Taylor, "Once Upon a Time in the West…L.A. Rebellion," in *L.A. Rebellion: Creating a New Black Cinema,* edited by Allyson N. Field, Jan-Christopher Horak, and Jacqueline N. Stewart, (Oakland California: University of California Press, 2015), xvi.

image of Angela Davis with the caption “A Natural Woman” (Image 2: Angela Davis’s image appears throughout Gerima’s films, often as a poster in the background).

Image 1: Still from *Hour Glass,* directed by Haile Gerima, Images of Three Revolutionaries [61]

[61] Haile Gerima, *Hour Glass,* directed by Haile Gerima, (1971; University of California Los Angeles Film and Television Archive, L.A. Rebellion Creating A New Black Cinema DVD Anthology 1971-2006), DVD. Screenshot by Aruna Ekanayake.

Image 2: Still from *Hour Glass,* directed by Haile Gerima Poster of Angela Y. Davis, "A Natural Woman" [62]

Gerima's use of Davis's image, it is not necessarily employed as a feminist trope (at least in the context of white feminism), it instead positions us to think beyond patriarchal and somewhat globalist voices in the struggle for liberation at *home* in the United States. As Cynthia Young reminds us, Franz Fanon believed that issues of colonialism should begin with the national and spread outward into international, and "Davis's path troubled that prescription."[63] Considering Davis's physical and intellectually trajectory toward radicalization "she moved from the local to the global and then back to the local"—referring to Davis's academic career abroad then her return *home* to the United States. Young describes Angela Davis's early life by

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[62] Haile Gerima, *Hour Glass,* directed by Haile Gerima, (1971; University of California Los Angeles Film and Television Archive, L.A. Rebellion Creating A New Black Cinema DVD Anthology 1971-2006), DVD. Screenshot by Aruna Ekanayake.

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[63] Cynthia A. Young, *Soul Power: Culture and Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left,* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 185.

distinguishing between her accumulation of theory abroad and praxis at home reminding us that Davis had "spent much of her time between the 1960 and 1967 far removed from the modern civil rights movement, living in the northern United States and traveling and studying in Europe," and that "Davis's early internationalist orientation impacted her domestic racial politics, rather than the other way around."[64]

Davis's return home to the U.S. was imbued with political persecution and imprisonment, and Haile Gerima's second film *Child of Resistance* (1972), "parabolically examines the frame-up of Angela Davis," underscored by the voiceover soliloquy of the Davis-esque main character who describes imprisonment as a prescribed state of Blackness.[65] In the opening scenes we see the main character in a prison cell being watched by a white guard, whose attire caricatures the colonizing European: a pith helmet and tall boots. In a metadiegetic voiceover we hear the prisoner state:

> My people me, Black men and women, prisoners of a long fight. Since the day I was snatched, abducted from my mother's land, I've been a prisoner of war. Shit. No one understand [sic] me. Not even my own people. Not even my own skin. They call me convict. Shit what do they know? How can they know? They're blind folded. Already set definitions, created for them: How to walk and how to talk, when to sit, what to buy. Convict. Shit. Thief. Property. Criminal. We're all

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[64] Cynthia A. Young, *Soul Power: Culture and Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left,* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 185.

[65] Clyde Taylor, "Once Upon a Time in the West…L.A. Rebellion," in *L.A. Rebellion: Creating a New Black Cinema,* edited by Allyson N. Field, Jan-Christopher Horak, and Jacqueline N. Stewart, (Oakland California: University of California Press, 2015), xiii.

born into their definitions. I'm their criminal, they're my criminals. God damn it, how can I get to my people? They believe and do everything they're told about themselves.[66]

Next Gerima cuts between scenes of the prison cell in black and white and an all color scene in which Gerima takes the viewer into a black-box collage of outside-of-prison scenarios where groups of people are sitting around spending money, drinking, smoking, chatting, surrounded by vices like alcohol, cigarettes, cloths, cars, and televisions. Here the main character, chained and being escorted by the white prison guard through the crowd personifies Upstone's "inside of emotional dialogues" that manifests the "outside of political negotiation, 'intimacy and exposure, of private life and public space'" as her mind sees it, which Gerima renders in color, offering a cinematically rendered parallaxian "Real" of the main character's experiential interiority, which is otherwise masked by the institutional constructs (like prison) that see to the silencing of such a shift in perspective.[67] Hence, we are given the radicalized prisoner's perspective, which exposes the multiplicities of imprisonment—all the people in this scene are not in a prison, though they are literally wearing shackles. Shackled to the vices of capitalism, consumption, and political distraction. Notably, the crowd doesn't notice the prisoner—she is invisible. Thus we have Gerima's earliest manifestation of the trope of invisibility vis-à-vis political imprisonment,

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[66] Haile Gerima, *Child of Resistance*, Directed by Haile Gerima (1973; Los Angeles, University of California Los Angeles, Film and Television Archive), Film.

[67] Sarah Upstone, "Domesticity in Magical-Realist Postcolonial Fiction: Reversals of Representation in Salman Rushdie's 'Midnight's Children,'" *Frontiers: A Journal of Woman's Studies* 28, no. ½ (2007): 260. Here Upstone cites the two following entries: Sharon Marcus, *Apartment Stories: City and Home in Nineteenth-Century Paris and London,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 1.; Yi Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), 107; Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 26.

where our main character cannot escape—even in her mind—the invisibility she has endured in physical reality.

Gerima's work is informed by his own experiences of visibility in the home and displacement from it. When Gerima tells the story of his youth he calls himself a troublemaker, and describes that when he was creating a "chaotic situation at home" his parents would "banish" him to his sister's home.[68] Curiously he also describes his banishment as being "deported."[69] The rhetoric of banishment and deportation is ever present in the themes of Gerima's cinematic work, where his characters are constantly negotiating their space between spaces—the liminal space where Žižek's "Real" emerges—problematizing the idea of home and otherwise.[70]

I discuss *Child of Resistance* and *Hour Glass* here as an examples of Gerima's first interpretations of visibility, and domesticity. Though his style is abstract in his first films, he refines this avant-garde mise-en-scène in his next film and first feature length production *Bush Mama* (1975), which also looks closely into the imprisoning limnality of domestic space.

Bush Mama tells the story of Dorothy (Barbarao) a young Black mother, who is pregnant with her second child and negotiating the difficulties of state welfare in Watts Los Angeles. Over the course of the film Dorothy becomes radicalized through her struggles to protect her daughter

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[68] Haile Gerima, Interviewed by Jacqueline Stewart and Zeinabu Davis at the UCLA Bunch Center Library, Attended by Allyson Field and Christopher Horack, Cinematography by Robyn Charles, Transcribed by Robyn Charles and Michael Kmet, *UCLA Film and Television Archive Oral Histories Collection Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A. 2008-2012. L.A. Rebellion Oral Histories Interviews, 2010-2011 [sponsored in part by the Getty Foundation*, September 13th 2010.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26.

and unborn child from a system that has imprisoned her male partner without explanation, and is forcing her to get an abortion so she can maintain welfare benefits. Reminiscent of Italian neorealist cinema, *Bush Mama* is designed to be an observation of life in Watts rather than a document of it. Dorothy provides us the lens from which to witness life as a Black woman in America, and through her we are given glimpses into the many facets and functions of her home: a domestic space, a prison, and as a site of resistance. Though the visual narrative tells a story of radicalization, I would like to focus more on the margins of this narrative—the invisible or, what is not shown on screen.

The invisible is rendered as inaccessibility, disappearance, and exile in *Bush Mama*. In an early scene, while Dorothy is waiting at the welfare office a clerk runs out into the lobby and announces, "That man is here again!"—referring to a Black man wielding an axe in front of the building. In the next scene he is surrounded by police and shot while Dorothy and others watch through the window. Following this sequence no other mention of the murdered man is made. Not only does Gerima limit our knowledge of the man's motives, he also redirects our attention away from the murder. Dorothy, now walking through the halls of the welfare office, makes no further mention of the event. What has happened to the man outside plays out as inconsequential, though one cannot help but wonder what led him to wield an axe in the first place, and what circumstances lead him to this moment. Unlike normative Hollywood narratives, our questions go unanswered. What we don't ever see is the circumstances of this man's plight. He has been erased. The film puts us in a place where access to this information is limited by Dorothy's needs, to get her welfare check, feed her family and fulfill her domestic obligations.

In a following scene we are taken to Dorothy's apartment, where her boyfriend T.C. and her daughter talk with her about a job that T.C. just got. Here the film offers an often-made-

invisible rendering of *home*; that is, 'home' as a private space where one relates "to the body and to the provision of physical necessities,"[71] rather than the colonialist rendering of home as a metaphorical place for the colonial project of "mass marketing empire as an organized system of images and attitudes."[72] Dorothy's 'home' is imperfect, the discussion amongst family banal, and the topic of employment never concluded. In the film, the teleological *home* is rendered as "a transformative one: as an interstitial space, it delimits an area in which specific practices create the distinctions between two territories, the natural and the cultural or the physical and the social."[73] Dorothy at home isn't the same person as she is when she's out in the world. Yet her invisibility, framed by domestic space defines her inaccessibility to the natural, cultural, and social spaces that surround it as imprisonment.

In the next scene T.C. leaves home for his new job in the morning. Immediately after this we are abruptly taken into a jail where we see T.C. walking down a corridor with a prison guard. When I first saw this scene at a screening, I found myself desperately searching for continuity, wanting to rewind the film and make sure that I hadn't missed something. Was he visiting a friend in prison? Was this a flashback, or flash-forward, or a dream? No. T.C. was in prison and without explanation. Why? How? When did this happen? I couldn't get my head around it. He had left that morning for his new job. And now he was in prison? What had I missed? I had no access to this section of time—this vital piece of information. Dorothy would explain, I thought.

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[71] Kathleen A. McHugh, *American Domesticity: From How-To Manual to Hollywood Melodrama,* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 179.

[72] Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 208-209.

[73] Kathleen A. McHugh, *American Domesticity: From How-To Manual to Hollywood Melodrama,* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 180.

But she doesn't. When we next see Dorothy she comes home and lies on the couch. We never know why T.C. went to prison.

By removing any narrative or visual explanation regarding T.C.'s incarceration, we are placed inside of a cinematic "Elsewhere" generated by Dorothy's inaccessibility. Her relative poverty binds her to the obligations of the domestic space, where she must try now to fend for herself and her child without T.C. What is not shown is what Dorothy cannot access: the police, the judicial system, and T.C. Because she can't *see* what happened, neither can we. Like the man wielding the axe, the circumstances that lead to T.C.'s confrontation with the police are invisible. Yet T.C. keeps in contact with Dorothy by mail, and his letters are read as voiceovers in the film where he narrates his own radicalization while in prison. In a close-up shot of T.C. behind bars his voice is heard reading a letter to Dorothy, promising her what money he has, and encouraging her to not depend on the system, while describing the consequences of political blindness when he writes/says, "They don't give a damn if one stays blind, since that is death in itself." Gerima visually juxtaposes T.C.'s imprisonment with Dorothy's domestic imprisonment when the camera pans across prison cells and returns to T.C. then cuts to a close up of Dorothy behind the bars of her window at home. Following this scene there are several sequences in which Dorothy negotiates with neighbors about her political plight. Some neighbors and friends are sympathetic, some are reductivist, and others propose solutions inspired by armed feminist militancy in the Third World. Yet, as Kara Keeling describes, all of them offer "a glimpse into the range of mechanisms whereby transformations within and alternatives to existing organizations of life might be affected."[74] In other words, Dorothy's engagement with other

[74] Kara Keeling, *The Witch's Flight: The Cinematic, the Black Femme, and the Image of Common Sense,* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007), 1.

women who face the same issues, works as a mechanism that agitates the onscreen and off-screen constructs of domesticity. By placing the political negotiation inside a space that is often framed as a-political, the home becomes the center of transformation for Dorothy. The negotiations that Dorothy encounters mirror the process of radicalization that T.C. describes in his letters. Gerima's didactic juxtaposition of home and prison as a place of invisibility *and* contestation gives us a point of access to the visually inaccessible portions of the narrative by offering an alternate result of their invisibility: critical militant radicalization from within, where neither prison or "home" is a permanent place because it is a construct of the colonizer. Clearly prison is not thought of a permanent place, one hopes to leave—in turn home for Dorothy bears impermanence because she must negotiate how to keep it, and keep it safe.

Later in the film, a welfare worker comes to Dorothy's home to coerce her into getting an abortion. A medium-shot of the worker and Dorothy fill the screen. The welfare worker who is a Black woman too, stands over Dorothy lecturing her about the significance of the state's financial contribution to her welfare, berating her about drinking (though Dorothy doesn't drink), telling her that she's got two main problems: "There's no man in this house, and you're pregnant!"[75] She goes on to scold her about being sexually promiscuous, and then tells her that she—an agent of the ideological state apparatus—will give her a chance to continue receiving her welfare payments as long as she gets an abortion. At this moment Gerima cuts to an extreme close up of Dorothy then cuts back to the medium shot where Dorothy imagines hitting the welfare worker over the head with a glass bottle. Dorothy's private space, the home, has been violated by a person who wishes to further violate her more-private space, her body—thus

[75] Haile Gerima, *Bush Mama,* directed by Haile Gerima (1975; University of California Los Angeles Film and Television Archive), film.

rendering the home and the body as spaces of contestation, and evermore justifying militant resistance. Thus the home and the body become transformative metaphors for visibility/invisibility, becoming more visible when they are violated. Indeed we do not see the private spaces of home or the body of those in the public space, on television, or in the news unless these spaces are subject or murder, rape, burglary or any multitude of violent acts.[76]

At this point in the film Dorothy's radicalization has begun. She finds in herself the power to imagine violent resistance against the welfare worker and continues to refine this new self throughout. In the following scene Dorothy sits in her bedroom window and the soundscape is filled with the sermonizing of a radio evangelist who claims to "have a weakness for Rolls Royce's," proclaiming, "if you want to become wealthy, become fascinated with wealth!"[77] Gerima then cuts to a drunk in the street also sermonizing, proclaiming, "you're damned if you do, you're damned if you don't. I ain't going to go sit in that church!"[78] Following this scene Dorothy is reminded of a time in church where the preacher tells the congregation that the true God has "been locked up," in a "closet."[79] It seems here that Gerima is also charging the institution of the church as a prison or space of confinement as well—where the very central ideal and benefits of God are also sequestered away from the marginalized. A few seconds into

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[76] It is important to note that Gerima casts a black woman as the welfare worker—one of Dorothy's own—but she has no name—like all the white characters in the film she is an agent of the state. When Gerima uses white actors, they are rarely rendered intimately; instead they are props in a film that works to challenge visibility by making visible what is often left at the margins, in this case the struggle for black women.

[77] Haile Gerima, *Bush Mama,* directed by Haile Gerima (1975; University of California Los Angeles Film and Television Archive), film.

[78] Haile Gerima, *Bush Mama,* directed by Haile Gerima (1975; University of California Los Angeles Film and Television Archive), film.

[79] Ibid.

the scene the preacher in his black suit is replaced in Dorothy's imagination as the radicalized and disappeared T.C. in street cloths who tells the congregation to grab their "tools and liberate God" themselves. T.C. then reminds them that in "1900, 105 Negros was lynched in the Republic of America and their cries still didn't penetrate god's closet where he is kept." [80] Gerima suggests that God is "kept," and that the ideal of god is a part of a system that allows *limited* access, though it requires *absolute* assimilation. T.C. continues, telling of lynching throughout recent history. When he says that the cries of the lynched didn't "penetrate God's closet," the closet he speaks of is prior referred to as the place that is also "filled with the rich man's clothes, all stitches of a variety of animal's furs."[81] Indeed the metaphor of these "furs" in this "closet" with God puts God in the same likeness as those expensive furs; inaccessible except for the few and wealthy. T.C. goes on to outline a central trope in this chapter; that the colonial elements of control have transformed in a Foucauldian sensibility, from the spectacle of gallows, to the sequestered "electric chair" and the "gas chamber" then back out into the public view using the "firing squads of the boulevards of America"—indeed referring to police brutality.[82]

After the imaginary T.C.'s sermonizing Dorothy is seen running to the pulpit and collapsing on the ground where she imagines a Black man masked, gaged, and crucified. Gerima cuts between images Dorothy and the crucified, then inserts images of the police killing an

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[80] Haile Gerima, *Bush Mama,* directed by Haile Gerima (1975; University of California Los Angeles Film and Television Archive), film.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* (New York: Random House, 1977), 101. To further consider Foucault's question of whether we have moved away from the 19th century practice of corporeal punishment, it seems relevant to say that the state institutions of prison have left the spectacle of punishment out in the open, in the hands of the police—though as a mechanism of war rather than that of trial and punishment. ; Haile Gerima, *Bush Mama,* directed by Haile Gerima (1975; University of California Los Angeles Film and Television Archive), film.

unarmed Black man, followed by a scene in the church where a white shrouded Klan-esque figure, standing over Dorothy, takes an axe to her throat. It is clear that Gerima is critical of the institution of church, yet his criticism isn't a inquiry into whether there is a God—it is instead a look into the limited access the marginalized have in relation to the privileges of the institution of God. The Klansman wielding the axe over Dorothy also looks like a white shrouded image of the grim reaper, and represents a sort of sentinel who will ensure that Dorothy remains without access to God or the church as a sanctuary from the state's invasion of her home and body. It is here that in a search for answers Dorothy is reminded that even the church works to confine, and is something she has to abandon.

In the following scenes Gerima builds up to Dorothy's moment of radicalization as she paces back and forth in front of a poster of an African woman from an unnamed Third World nation holding her child and an assault rifle. It is as if Dorothy is looking for her own self in the image of the armed woman in the poster. Her meditation is interrupted when she hears commotion outside her window and witnesses a Black man getting shot dead by the police. In the next scene Dorothy is seen performing domestic chores while listening to other radicalized women in her community who discuss the histories of colonial oppression in the Third World. We see Dorothy reading Langston Hughes's "Something in Common", while the film cuts between Dorothy and T.C.'s "cells," parallel contrasting their radicalization. Indeed what they "have in common" is the confinement they endure; T.C.'s imprisonment is the literal construct by which we can identify with Dorothy's own imprisonment, yet still we never visually see the processes of T.C.'s change, his process is invisible and not shown because Dorothy has no access to it, therefore, neither do we. On the other hand, Dorothy is made visible in an often-invisible space, the home, where she begins to do domestic chores for the first time in the film. Indeed the

idea of domestic chores can be viewed as a return to the white feminism's charge that it is an oppressive element of modern post-colonial domesticity—yet because we have witnessed her radicalization Dorothy problematizes the colonialized version of home, from a space promotes the colony and reflects its values, to a space that cannot be colonized because it has now become a space for resistance and transformation where Dorothy reads and thinks and sees in herself change. By performing domestic labor, Dorothy prepares for the arrival of change, a new visitor—the unborn child—to a space where it has never been, as space that is radicalized and one which Dorothy is entering for the first time too. Therefore, as Sara Upstone describes, in the process of decolonization the "focus on the home is the desire to unravel and undermine the processes central to the colonial home, asking for the idea of 'home' to be examined not metaphorically…but, instead, literally. In such a distinction are two opposing representations of domestic space: the *dwelling* of the postcolonial…and the home as a force of colonization. In the dwelling of the postcolonial… this later metaphorical 'colonial home' is an unspoken intertext," which bears at its center a rendering of domesticity as a "reversal of representation, in which home is no longer presented in denial of its political status to construct a colonial ideal but is instead explicitly political."[83] Certainly, Dorothy's domestic space is politicized because she is a Black woman, and often space that is occupied by the colonized works as a representational chamber for the "disavowed antagonism" where the invisible cries against oppression meander till they are unleashed by a "fissure"—in this case, one created by the failure of the state to allow

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[83] Sarah Upstone, "Domesticity in Magical-Realist Postcolonial Fiction: Reversals of Representation in Salman Rushdie's 'Midnight's Children,'" *Frontiers: A Journal of Woman's Studies* 28, no. ½ (2007): 261.

Dorothy access and agency over her life.[84] In *Bush Mama* it is in the confining space of colonial domesticity—where there is little distinction between home and prison—that we are made to witness the emergence of a "parallax Real," bringing out from the interstitial space between home and prison, the failures of colonialist social projects; homogenization without inclusion, assimilation without access, domesticity without freedom—a slow and persistent genocide.[85]

It is the teleological genocide that the Black woman in *Teach Our Children* speaks of, persisting out from history into the space of cinema in the post civil rights era, where the newfound access to the mechanisms of filmmaking speak of the inaccessibility endured by the marginalized. These occupied margins are a-temporal to the content in the films here, they subsist and persist in the interstitial space between and beyond the screen. Even in recounting a historical moment, there is a material poignancy in the cinematic of the post-civil rights era that transcends time. Gerima's *Bush Mama*, speaks to the troubles of many today, it carves out a narrative that persists and subsists, and works a-temporally to distinguish the phenomenon of confinement in dialog with its contemporary moment and out into the here and now.

Many of Gerima's films address the themes discussed here, however I chose to discuss scenes from these films specifically because of the way in which women are represented as cultivators of a site of resistance within the U.S. Other works by Gerima such as, *Harvest 3000 Years*, and *Adwa* take place outside of the United States and would warrant a modified methodology when dealing with international colonialism and it's intersection with the idea of 'home.' Additionally, I don't believe that the films discussed here set the parameters for defining

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[84] Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-ization' of Resistance," *Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015): 30.

[85] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26.

‘home,’ nor do they insist that ‘home’ is a place from which to seek liberation. Rather, *home* is coded as subjective self-determined space, which is created through a realization of a post-colonial self—or more precisely a decolonized self—one that carves out a space for itself in spite of ever encroaching subjectivity-consuming colonialism. Allyson Field describes this as it occurs in Gerima’s films:

> Gerima does not follow cinematic precedents of other politically engaged films that have aimed to problematize representation through avant-garde and abstract aesthetics, such as counter-cinema practices and political modernism. Gerima finds such an approach unsuitable for his project[s], as would be the use of conventional narrative techniques. Instead, he seeks a filmic form that reflects the narrative transformation of Black protagonists carving out an existence within a context that is hostile to the very idea of a centralized Black subjectivity.[86]

This “carving out” of an “existence” is the formula for approaching the “hostile” colonialist domestic space.[87] For the colonized, *home* no-longer has a subjective definition, it is a construct of the colonizer, yet also a space in which one returns to when seeking reprieve from assimilation to the national and cultural of the colony, or a space in which one is confined to for refusal to assimilate, i.e. prison. In the films of Haile Gerima, a call to politicize ‘home’ within the borders of a colonized state doesn’t function in the normative sense of home as an

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[86] Allyson N. Field, “To Journey Imperfectly: Black Cinema Aesthetics and the Filmic Language of *Sankofa*,” *Framework* 55, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 179.

[87] Ibid.

architectural construct of boundaries, borders, points of entry or exit. Boundaries "are characteristic of things [colonial] (lines, grids, not speaking till someone else has finished and so on), and also what keeps the" colonizer distinct from the colonized.[88]

At the end of the film Dorothy attacks and kills a police officer who is raping her daughter. Gerima renders this act of violence as the penultimate moment of Dorothy's radicalization. She cannot call the police on the police. That is, if the colonizer creates the laws, they are his laws, made to serve him; and when he breaks his own laws, there is no one to hold him accountable other than those who he has oppressed. Yet by killing this cop Dorothy puts her own life in danger, she could be killed, imprisoned, or executed for her crime. The allegorical component of this climactic conclusion to Gerima's film implicitly parallels life in Watts (as controlled by the state), life in prison, and death as equal. Indeed the idea of domestic, home, or dwelling gets altered here, and it becomes a part of the parallel equation between Watts, life in prison, and death. If we apply Upstone's theory of the post-colonial 'home' as a *"site"* of resistance, the site becomes less a physical space and more of a subjective interrogation of the imprisonment that the colonial 'home' represents. The colonial home hides, or makes invisible labor—the labor of survival within a colonized and bordered site. If for the colonizer, 'home' is where the colonial identity is cultivated, then for the colonized, 'home' can only be the site that challenges this identity by making visible the labor inherent in resisting assimilation to colonial culture. In other words, exposing the transformative process of radicalization taking place in the home negates the bordered site of colonial domesticity, revealing a diaphanous site from which a war cry makes the imprisoned-colonized visible.

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[88] Richard Dyer, *White*, (London: Routledge, 1997), 219.

Herein, colonial domesticity is a mechanism that insulates the resistance of those whose corporeality, labor, and death ensure the continuation of the colonial project—it is prison, and it is home.

Don't "You" Bury Me Alive

The struggle for and against home is a central yet discursive movement amongst colonized groups within the United States. African Americans were kidnapped and enslaved in the United States and elsewhere, and the African American identity in the U.S. is imbued with claiming their rights to equal citizenship in a place that the colonizing slave traders initially never meant to be home for Africans—considering slavery, the United States was a prison. Yet now, African American's struggle for their right to *home* to this very day in America, seeking liberation from the ghosts of slavery's prison and demanding a reclamation of home, as James Baldwin asks, "my freedom and my citizenship or my right to live [here], how is it conceivable a question now?"

The Chicano struggle for equal participation in the American colonial project works in many ways like that of African Americans in that Chicanos are arguably also forced into being here, and yet often are *from* here. Indeed the indigeneity of Chicano identity is a central part of the struggle against colonial apartheid in the U.S., and is certainly a marginal topic of Americanism and contributes to the "disavowed antagonism" that perpetuates the invisibility of indigenous rights.[89] This invisibility ensures that the discourse on the rights, or even the history of those who were here before colonialism remains in the margins of American historicity.

[89] Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-ization' of Resistance, "*Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015): 30.

Michel Foucault describes this phenomenon as "subjugated knowledges," which are "historical contents that have been buried or masked in functional coherences or formal systematizations."[90] When applied to the struggle for Chicano rights, the historical content of indigeneity is indeed often "buried alive" amongst the formal constructs of the liberalist ideal of the State. Which returns us to ask, in what interstitial space do these masked elements exist—amongst Žižek's "gaps" or Burris's "fissures" brought up by the failure of "systemizations" created by the state?[91] This could be too easy an answer—and is a moot point because the struggles of marginalized peoples stem from their marginality as defined by their marginalizer, therefore this dichotomy ensures resistance to arise from these "fissures."[92] Yet it is in these "fissures" that we must look to reveal the knowledges and histories that have been subjugated by the imperialist "negation of the historical process of the dominated people."[93] A primary component of resistance then is to reveal these "fissures," to make visible and audible the "subjugated knowledges" of marginality.[94] Haile Gerima's *Bush Mama* makes visible a feminist struggle on the margins of

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[90] Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France, 1975-1976,* (New York: Picador, 2003), 7.

[91] Ibid; Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-ization' of Resistance, "*Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015): 30; Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26.

[92] Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-ization' of Resistance, "*Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015): 30.

[93] Amilcar Cabral, *Unity and Struggle: Speeches and Writings.* (London, UK: Heinemann, 1980), 141; Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-ization' of Resistance, "*Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015): 30.

[94] Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France, 1975-1976,* (New York: Picador, 2003), 7; Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of

white liberalist feminism. His film also reveals the potentiality for militant resistance, yet concludes with the rather nihilistic parallel comparison between domesticity, imprisonment, and mortality.

The first feature-length Chicano film, *Please Don't Bury Me Alive* (1976) by Efraín Gutiérrez also addresses the parallels between home, prison and death, yet in a more traditional narrative cinema style. The main character is based on the story of Gutierrez's friend Alex Ayala, who was sentenced to ten years in prison for selling heroin to an undercover drug enforcement agent.[95] The film is about a young Chicano man named Alex Hernandez (Efraín Gutiérrez) who makes a living committing petty crimes. Throughout the film Alex is contending between the ways of his parents, represented in the film as living within the boundaries of coloniality's expected subservient immigrant identity, and his own developing radical Chicano self, who is in the process of discovering truths about his marginality. The film concludes with Alex being arrested, tried, and sentenced to 10 years in prison for drug trafficking, while another white defendant who commits a similar crime gets a far more lenient sentence.

The developing Chicano voice in Alex draws upon the history of his link to the land he lives on, understanding that his marginality is a condition created by an invader rather than a kidnapper. Alex makes clear the difference between Chicano and other identities in a somewhat

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the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-ization' of Resistance, "*Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015): 30.

[95] Newspaper clipping, *Chicano Times*, "Don't Bury Me Alive to be Released Soon," December 19th to January 9th 1976, Box 5, Folder 2, Dept. of Special Collections and University Archives Stanford University Libraries, Palo Alto, California; Newspaper clipping (source unknown), "Movie Portrays Chicano in Film First," (date unknown), Box 5, Folder 2, Dept. of Special Collections & University Archives Stanford University Libraries, Palo Alto, California.

problematic series of comments throughout the film where Alex describes a separation from the struggles of African Americans at the time, "what culture do the Blacks have? There's no difference between a negro and a gringo."[96] Though the rhetoric is separatist and prejudice, it may be that the filmmaker is trying to emphasize the next idea, which is rarely brought up when it comes to Chicano rights: agency over the land. "We have, Indian blood," says Alex, calling attention to the idea that Chicano also can mean indigenous, and plants the rights to American land right in the hands of those who are of Native ancestry.[97] He then states, "We are descendants of great people, but we let them steal this land."[98] He points to his surroundings, "All this land was ours and we let the white man take it! They have a legend that the brown people will take back the land from the white man - *Aztlán*. I just want to be around when it happens."[99] Alex invokes the mythical place of origin of the Aztec peoples, Aztlán, which was adopted by Chicano activists in the 1960s and 1970s in reference to the territory of northern Mexico that was annexed by the United States in the aftermath of the Mexican-American War. Indeed he refers to two places, one that is a mythical point of origin and one that is a reclamation or re-declaration of home-land. As Dylan A.T. Miner writes:

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[96] *Efraín Gutiérrez, Please Don't Bury Me Alive,* directed/performed by *Efraín Gutiérrez* (1976; Chicano Arts Film Enterprises), Film.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Ibid., It is my hope that the filmmaker was working to point out that all but the indigenous are invaders, but that might be too much speculation, and is not the scope of this analysis, yet I feel it important to point out the problem with this rhetoric, in that neither Africans nor indigenous peoples chose to be marginalized.

> Indigenous relationships to the land are vital, both for day-to-day realities of subsistence and for the continuance of ontological and political systems. From an Indigenous perspective, land is not purchasable, especially not Indigenous land. Land cannot be commoditized…Of course, through the structural and epistemological processes of colonization, this intimate land-based relationship has often been *ruptured* [my emphasis]. For Xicanos, this is particularly disconcerting, as disenfranchisement, detribalization, and diaspora have disconnected Xicanos from sacred lands."[100]

This "rupture" that Miner describes is the driving theme in Gutiérrez's film, it is what drives Alex to be a petty criminal who mistrusts both the old ways of his colonized people and is weary of the white colonizer.

The colonizer is often addressed in the film as an "Other" in the rather clever rhetorical use of the pronoun "you." The film opens with the funeral of his brother Ricardo Hernandez who was killed in Vietnam. During the ceremony, when Alex's mother is given Ricardo's war medals by a white military officer, she throws them to the ground and addressing the officer yells, in Spanish, "How much will *you* give me for this one?!" Then in English, "Let's make a deal right now!" Then again in Spanish, "*You* just want him for your stinking war!"[101] Chon Noriega points out two distinct features of this film, first the emphasis on "you" as the oppressor or colonizer

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[100] Dylan A.T. Miner, *Creating Aztlán: Chicano Art, Indigenous Sovereignty, and Lowriding Across Turtle Island* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014), 53.

[101] *Efraín Gutiérrez, Please Don't Bury Me Alive,* directed/performed by *Efraín Gutiérrez* (1976; Chicano Arts Film Enterprises), Film.

comes up throughout the film.[102] Secondly, Noriega reminds us that the film shifts from being "predominantly in Spanish to predominantly in English," arguing that this "shift matches the narrative trajectory from the main character's home to public life to state institutions (police, courts, prison)."[103] He also argues that this change in language marks a "rupture, which ends with a scene that is addressed to an implied audience of Anglo monolingual viewers and not to the *actual* Chicano and Mexican bilingual audience in the theater."[104] Again it is important to consider the term "rupture" that Noriega employs here, which I argue is parallel in meaning to the "gaps" that Žižek postulates will reveal a "parallax Real."[105] Noriega further argues that this "rupture" arises in this film off-screen as it addresses white people—the implied audience—the "other" of non-Chicano, the "you" Alex's mother speaks of, who, according to Noriega, is not addressed in the English translation of the title *Please Don't Bury me Alive,* but is in the Spanish version: *Por Favor no Me Entierres Vivo*; "please don't you (plural) bury me alive!"[106] Thus it is in the "radical Elsewhere" of interstitial off-screen space and the codified *you* in the Spanish title that these "subjugated knowledges" become Real—not so specifically Lacan's broad definition of "Real," which always returns to its point of origin, rather, and in the case of cinema—it is in Stam's "refraction of a refraction" that Žižek's "parallax Real" emerges, where what is unseen or

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[102] Chon A. Noriega, "The Migrant Intellectual," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 13.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Ibid., 13-14.

[105] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26.

[106] Chon A. Noriega, "The Migrant Intellectual," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 14.

unsaid persists and subsists toward a multiplicity.[107] For this film, the multiplicity is in the implied colonizer audience. As Žižek argues that "the status of the Real is purely parallactic and, as such, nonsubstantial: is has no substantial density in itself, it is just a gap between two points of perspective, perceptible only in the shift from the one to the other. The "parallax Real" is thus opposed to the standard (Lacanian) notion of the Real as that which 'always returns to its place'—as that which remains the same in all possible (symbolic) universes: the parallax Real is, rather, that which accounts for the very multiplicity of appearances of the same underlying Real—it is not the hard core which persists as the Same [sic], but the hard bone of contention which pulverizes the sameness into the multitude of appearances."[108] Applying this theory to the off-screen implied white audience, the plurality of the "you" in the title refers to the multiplicity of the colonizer—the many who are the "Same" [homogenous]—and in addressing the "you (plural)" in the audience—a "bone of contention which pulverizes the sameness" works to problematize the idea of this film as a Chicano film.[109] It is instead a film by a Chicano that speaks outward toward the sameness, working to fill the gap between two points of perspective—that of the colonizer and the colonized.

Alex addresses this "you (plural)" in his rebuttal of liberalist ideals of equality, when speaking to a white antagonist in the film:

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[107] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image.* Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Hammerjam. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991); Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France, 1975-1976,* (New York: Picador, 2003), 7; Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26; Robert Stam, "Bakhtin, Polyphony, and Ethnic/Racial Representation," in *Unspeakable Images: Ethnicity and the American Cinema*, ed. Lester D. Friedman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991). 252.

[108] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26.

[109] Ibid., 26; Chon A. Noriega, "The Migrant Intellectual," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 13.

> You white foreigners came to Aztlán, and you tried to change our language our names, our traditions, even our religion. Everything has to be white. You tried to change us because you don't understand us. Hell man we're not like the Blacks we don't want equality. If we ever became like you we'd end up in the gutter. But you know, it's kinda hard to admit to this cop-out. But this is the only way we can take it man! Or else we'll go insane.[110]

The "subjugated knowledges" which emerge here expose the failures inherent in the rhetoric of liberalist American civil rights ideals, as Stokely Carmichael once said, "I know I can live where I want to live. It is white people across this country who are incapable of allowing me to live where I want. You need a civil rights bill not me."[111] Alex implies this same sentiment, that the idea of *equality* is a construct of an uninvited guest, the colonizer. I quote Carmichael here to challenge the film's position regarding a difference between Chicano and Black struggles against colonialism. Though earlier I point out that there exists a difference in the geographical conflict between the outcomes of colonialism for indigenous peoples and African Americans, it is important to note that the materiality of land politics is transcended when the focus is on preventing (or surviving) genocide. Again, as Carmichael warns of European colonizers:

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[110] *Efraín Gutiérrez, Please Don't Bury Me Alive,* directed/performed by *Efraín Gutiérrez* (1976; Chicano Arts Film Enterprises), Film.

[111] Stokely Carmichael, *Stokely Speaks,* ed. Bob Brown, (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, Inc., 2007), 46; Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France, 1975-1976,* (New York: Picador, 2003), 7

> Check out the pattern in which they move, they came to this country, they didn't know a damn thing about this country, the Red Man showed them how to adapt to this country, he showed them how to grow corn, he showed them how to hunt, and when the Indian's finished showing it, he wiped them out! He wiped them out! He wiped them out. He was not satisfied, the Aztec Indians said this is our silver, this is our copper these are our metals, these are our statues, we build them for the beauty of our people, after the Indians showed it to him, he took it and he wiped them out! He wiped them out! He has been able to make us hate each other. He has transplanted that hate and the love for each other, for a love of his country.[112]

What I am outlining here isn't an attempt at showing how Blacks were aligned with Chicanos and Chicanos were not aligned with them—because that is simply not true—instead I include Carmichael's sentiments because they speak to the issue and common bond of survival. Still, it may be that the separatist sentiment Alex invokes stems from the broader Chicano community who felt that they were less represented in the struggle for civil rights than Blacks were in this era. A New York Times article from 1976 titled "Chicano's Death Stirs a Texas Region" rather graphically describes the murder of a 26-year-old Chicano construction worker by a police officer described as having "put the barrel of a sawed-off 12 gauge shotgun under the left armpit of Richard Morales and pulled the trigger."[113] Chicano activists at the time "charged that the treatment of the case by

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[112] Stokely Carmichael, *Stokely Speaks,* ed. Bob Brown, (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, Inc., 2007), 105.

[113] James P. Sterba, "Chicano's Death Stirs a Texas Region," *New York Times* (New York, NY), August 16, 1976, 59.

Texas courts was a flagrant example of unequal justice."[114] The activists also charged that the unequal treatment extended to a federal level where "The Department of Justice—which they said, once routinely entered such cases on behalf of Blacks in the South—had ignored similar injustices against Mexican-Americans."[115]

Indeed the broader injustice the Chicano community felt at the time was indicative of the invisibility they faced in their struggle for civil rights. Thus, Alex's resistance against cultural genocide is how one can unpack the film's title, which isn't only a metaphor for Alex's fate in prison, but is also a parallel metaphor for his presence here, as he identifies with his indigenous roots, that he is *alive*, and his history along with his right to claim *home* is being *buried* in front of him as he breaths. The film equates prison with the loss of home or homeland, which is defined as a source of life, of identity, one which is not implicated in the colonial project of commodification and homogenization, but exists as a source of cultural subsistence pointing out to an implied audience a "radical Elsewhere" that begs to exist in the here and now.[116] As in *Bush Mama,* prison for Gutierrez works as a metaphor for the body, the mind, the home, and the space outside of it in the context of coloniality. And for many non-white peoples of the United States, who are colonized as they live within the center of power, their skin color and difference works in their minds often as a prison from which to escape, though by assimilation, as Alex describes in his concluding soliloquy: "Now, how the hell, am I going to be

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[114] James P. Sterba, "Chicano's Death Stirs a Texas Region," *New York Times* (New York, NY), August 16, 1976, 59.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image.* Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Hammerjam. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 17.

Chicano, and competing in an Anglo world with you pushy people? Well, that's the part of a problem. That's part of a big problem. Who the hell said we had to be the same? That is ridiculous. There must be room in this country for me to be Chicano, in dignity. Americano in my own way." Certainly the question that Alex poses is one that many marginalized people must contend with: how do we maintain our identity in the way we want?

In 1977 Jack Slater, writing for the Los Angeles Times, reports on three generations of the Loera family and their story of Americanization in an article titled "Mexican American Version of 'Roots.'"[117] Interestingly Slater's column begins by describing Felix and Rebecca Loera's grandson's perspectives on internalized racism using the term *prison*, "For a long time, Richard Alvidrez viewed his Mexican heritage as though it were a prison from which he would never escape. As a child growing up in Los Angeles, he felt imprisoned by his skin color, the Indian cast of his features, his culture and the poverty he witnessed. Eventually he became deeply ashamed of those parts of him."[118] The article leans toward celebrating assimilation stating that "no one in the Loera family is deeply involved in Mexican-American cultural activities in this city, yet various members of the clan make occasional journeys to Mexico. Despite their Roman Catholic heritage, few in the family have maintained strong commitments to the church. Still, something Mexican remains—a sense of oneness, a sense of communality—some immutable spirit reborn perhaps with that relatively new term 'Chicano.' 'Whatever' it is, it isn't always seen but is always felt,'" says Alvidrez's younger brother Tim. Alex Hernandez's outlook in the film reflects this affectuality of the Chicano ethos, and does so to relay the

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[117] Jack Slater, "Mexican-American Version of 'Roots,'" *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), January 28, 1977.

[118] Ibid.

difference between his perceived or projected subordinate positionality in dominant culture and the agency he *feels* as a Chicano. It is also then the *prison* of identity that dominant culture places on the Other that Alvidrez describes in the news article, and the "fissure" that arises between perceived identity and a forming identity, where the very "Real" of Chicano identity persists and subsists.[119] The heteroglossic in Gutierrez's film is an allegorical reflection of the Alvidrez's challenges in wanting to be both, American and Chicano. The "parallax Real" in this instance of identitarian politicization is again the persistent and multiple ways in which one can be "Americano" rather than American.[120] It may be in this *persistence* that Othered identities can discover a path to being "Americano in their own way," meaning, if they continue to counter colonial boundaries of identity and assimilation, their identity in itself is formed as a "fissure", one that will continue to resist—an identity that is not only defined by its limnality, but more so by its continual confrontation with coloniality.[121] Still, the struggle between becoming American and assimilating to white American colonialist ideals are far more complicated than this binary dialectic can reveal. As for Chicano's their indigeneity may be a claim to certain rights that are different from Blacks or Asians, yet in the challenge of claiming home one cannot deny that each has a right to the land, a right to home. When home, in the context of Americanist rhetoric, presents itself as a haven and then mutates into a site of imprisonment for the marginalized, it

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[119] Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-ization' of Resistance, "*Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015): 30; Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26.

[120] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26.

[121] Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-ization' of Resistance, "*Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015): 30; Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26.

creates a cultural counter narrative that we see arising in cinema, and other art forms, as a contestation of home.

The Confining Space of the Screen

Up until this point I have discussed several dialogic elements of contesting home and prison. My textual analysis of the films by Choy, Robeson, Gerima, and Gutierrez was purely to elaborate on their critical perspectives, and much of this comes from dialogical elements in the films. Though I do elaborate on Gerima's film style, I approached the textual analysis of his work emphasizing visual elements that depend on filmic narration or dialogue that is sometimes overtly didactic. Therefore I turn to an emphasis on film form as it works to render confinement and alienation in Charles Burnett's film *Killer of Sheep* (1977). Rather than an overt didacticism, Burnett observes life in 1970s Watts. The city plays a character in the film and Burnett emphasizes the Watts urban landscape as a metaphor for the dehumanization occurring in the aftermath of social reform policies by the federal government and private citizens in the contemporary period. Within the confines of a three square mile section of Los Angeles, Burnett seeks to challenge the pejorative media notions of Watts, not by creating a fantasy, but instead allowing an intimate glimpse into the struggles, torments and small triumphs of life in this neighborhood. The film is not narrated, there is no clear story arc, and the main character is not a hero, or otherwise.

Killer of Sheep follows a slaughterhouse worker, Stan (Henry Gayle Sanders), whose distress about his banal and undervalued work becomes "an unspoken metaphor for the pressures

of economic malaise," in a post-civil rights era Watts.[122] Parallel to the metaphorical elements of the narrative, the film's form emphasizes an affectual confinement, a sense of prison formed and dictated by the four boundaries of the screen. Burnett employs a style borrowed from Italian Neo-realist cinema, in which there are non-actors, handheld camera-work, and an often-disrupted linearity. There is at once a torrid intimacy and discomforting constriction in Burnett's languid cinematography, where his use of space, or lack there of, is telling of a much darker underlying affectual interiority in the characters' struggles. Samantha Sheppard describes elements of affect in Burnett's film as putting in motion an "embodied dissonance of emotive reciprocity."[123] Sheppard's analysis of affect as an element of cinematic decolonization outlines a recurring theme in the films I describe here—that of longing, and loss and of intimacy hidden away in torment, while awaiting exposure. I emphasize *intimacy* here both as connection and dissonance, working as an outcome of the turmoil that arises in colonial domesticity and its relation to the intimacy made invisible by coloniality's constructed confinement of affect and personhood—the constructed assimilationist self and home. In my analysis here I refer to the textual elements of intimacy in the film, and look to the intimate in the terms of compassion, sexuality, marriage and home, but I also look at intimacy in the form of suffocation, too-closeness, and discomfort. Thus I join Lisa Lowe who considers intimacy as a "heuristic," but where Lowe employs this as "a means to observe the historical division of *world* processes into those that develop modern liberal subjects and modern spheres of social life [my emphasis]," I look more specifically into

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[122] Doug Cummings, "L.A. Rebellion: Killer of Sheep," UCLA Film and Television Archive, https://www.cinema.ucla.edu/la-rebellion/films/killer-sheep

[123] Samantha N. Sheppard, "Bruising Moments: Affect and the L.A. Rebellion," in *L.A. Rebellion: Creating a New Black Cinema,* edited by Allyson N. Field, Jan-Christopher Horak, and Jacqueline N. Stewart, (Oakland California: University of California Press, 2015), 227-229.

"processes" within *Americanism* that develop these "liberal subjects" by way of exposing intimacy to contain elements of alienation, confinement and suppressed interiority.[124] I employ the heuristic in my analysis of Burnett's work as a way to describe the cinematic rendering of discomfort associated with colonial domesticity and self, understanding that these two elements navigate coloniality's constant destruction and reconstruction of self and home. Lowe also posits that though we look at how coloniality divides space, and humanity within it, there is also a "colonial division of intimacy, which charts the historically differentiated access to the domains of liberal personhood from interiority and individual will, to the possession of property and domesticity."[125] In other words it is important to think of the way intimate elements of personhood are regulated by colonialist practices of suppressing access or agency over materiality (i.e. domestic space, land and the things within it) and other possessions, in turn generating social dispossession. In relation to my analysis, Lowe's postulation offers a way to discuss how coloniality deliberately separates intimacy from politicization by way of the corporeal, and domestic. Therefore, I employ Burnett's film about Watts as a text that challenges the dominant pejorative of the urban American neighborhood as a site of confinement and disassociation with dominant culture's definition of domesticity, by rendering for the viewer a familiarity with domestic desire/intimacy as it manifests domestic alienation. Where colonial domesticity provides the marginalized a space in which to live, it also works to make invisible the intimate realities of marginal interiority, bordering off that which does not or will not assimilate to the colonialist, liberalist, and neo-colonist ideals of homogenization.

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[124] Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacy of the Four Continents,* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 17.

[125] Ibid., 18.

For Burnett, the bordered urban neighborhood resists colonization, and his film challenges the idea of Watts as a sequestered "ghetto."[126] Like Gutierrez's film, *Killer of Sheep* speaks to an implied "you," the colonizer, who creates the condition for marginality. Yet it is not through narrative arc, stylized imagery, rhetoric or dialogue that this film challenges colonization and marginalization, rather, Burnett's use of mise-en-scène—framing, camera placement, and editing does this work. Burnett's technique is unique in that often the framed background of the scene is emphasized as subject. Though the background is static, it is the constant subject of focus, often remaining in the frame after the human subject has moved on, as if the camera's subject is less the characters and instead the diegetic, emotional, and political space they occupy. The cinematic framing often feels as if the screen is collapsing in on the subject—it restricts visibility and yet reveals a politicized interiority. Early in the film there is a sequence in which several adolescent boys are playing in an abandoned lot. There is construction debris strewn across the landscape, one young man shields himself from the onslaught of other boys throwing rocks—he is framed in center using a medium close-up, and we see his wood plank shield to the left of center while he barely emerges from behind it as he is getting assaulted. All the while the camera remains static (Image 3).

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[126] *Report of the National Advisory Commission On Civil Disorders*, (Kerner Commission, Washington D.C.,1968), 6.(Footnote 1). I remind the reader here who the U.S. government sought to define the term ghetto in the Kerner Commission report: "The term 'ghetto' as used in this report refers to an area within a city characterized by poverty and acute social disorganization and inhabited by members of a racial or ethnic group under conditions of involuntary segregation."

Image 3: Still from *Killer of Sheep*, directed by Charles Burnett, boy behind shield [127]

Burnett then cuts to a wide shot of the battle field, where we can see all the boys at play, followed by cutting to a medium close-up framing of the action, the character's heads, arms, and legs are cut off by the frame; the camera becomes a static observer, seemingly having been placed there before the boys arrived (Image 4). While the camera remains static, one young man is injured and a moment of intimacy occurs; the injured boy is cared for by a friend who calls for the war game to stop (Image 5).

[127] Charles Burnett, *Killer of Sheep*, directed by Charles Burnett (1978; Harrington Park, NJ: Milestone Film and Video), DVD. Screenshot by Aruna Ekanayake.

Image 4: Still from *Killer of Sheep*, directed by Charles Burnett, boys at play [128]

Image 5: Still from *Killer of Sheep*, directed by Charles Burnett, injured boy [129]

[128] Charles Burnette, *Killer of Sheep*, directed by Charles Burnett (1978; Harrington Park, NJ: Milestone Film and Video), DVD. Screenshot by Aruna Ekanayake.

[129] Ibid.

As the camera leaves its fixed position and frames the injured boy who is being held and comforted by his friend, the entire group gathers around them, they all check on him and then help him laugh it off. The camera then fixes on the space in which the boys all pile on top of each other and wrestle, cutting to a close up, again cutting off heads and arms and legs, the camera seems to more focused on the trash strewn ground (Image 6). When the boys all get up from their wrestling match the camera remains, fixed on the trash and the ground.

Image 6: Still from *Killer of Sheep*, directed by Charles Burnett, boys at play and the fixity of the camera [130]

The fixity of the camera occurs several times in the film; when it's focused on one space we are to be observational, when it seems to deliberately frame a subject, we are being allowed intimacy with a subject. I outline this early establishing camerawork in the film as a foundational

[130] Charles Burnett, *Killer of Sheep*, directed by Charles Burnett (1978; Harrington Park, NJ: Milestone Film and Video), DVD. Screenshot by Aruna Ekanayake.

reference point for the techniques used throughout the film to render discomfort, intimacy, and confinement.

When we are first introduced to the main character, Stan, he is crouched under the confining space of the kitchen sink at home. He emerges from there and on his knees speaks to a friend (Charles Bracy) who is standing in the frame with only his waist and hands visible. Stan doesn't seem to speak to his friend, he looks past him and speaks to an off-screen presence, a dialogism with an implied *you* is established here, when Stan says, "Just workin' myself into my own hell, I close my eyes, can't get no sleep at night, no peace of mind" (Image 7).[131] His friend responds, "why don't you kill yourself? You would be a lot happier."[132] Stan returns to his work on his home, and looks toward the kitchen entrance and says, "no, I'm not gonna kill myself," as the camera cuts to his daughter in the doorway wearing a latex dog mask, sucking her finger (Image 8).[133]

Image 7: Stills from *Killer of Sheep*, directed by Charles Burnett, Stan talking to friend [134]

[131] Charles Burnett, *Killer of Sheep*, directed by Charles Burnett (1978; Harrington Park, NJ: Milestone Film and Video), DVD.

[132] Ibid.

[133] Ibid.

[134] Ibid.

Image 8: Stan's Daughter in her dog mask sucking her finger[135]

In this sequence, we are introduced to the turmoil that haunts Stan, yet we are also given a glimpse into what elements of intimacy are often left out of the history of Watts when looked at as an example of American apartheid rather than a site of domesticity. Burnett accomplishes quite a bit here in three cuts, he establishes the main character and his condition, he introduces conflict, and points out what makes Stan *not* want to kill himself—his family. The conflict in Stan's story stems from despair, and when he tells the audience this, the framing and camera angle create a sense of confining intimacy while Stan speaks to an off-screen presence. The cutting off of his friends body without an establishing shot implies a dissonance from the diegetic dialogue, and lends to a sense that who Stan is addressing is the audience, *or* the implied "you" of the colonizer—who is responding to his woes through this unestablished voice asking Stan why he doesn't kill himself. Yet after this voice asks him why he doesn't commit suicide, the constricting intimacy of the framing ends and Stan is framed directly, not looking off screen, but diegetically addressing his reason for living, his daughter (Angela Burnett), who is also

[135] Charles Burnett, *Killer of Sheep*, directed by Charles Burnett (1978; Harrington Park, NJ: Milestone Film and Video), DVD. Screenshot by Aruna Ekanayake.

framed clearly from chest up, nothing is cut oddly off—the framing is intimate, but not suffocating.

These framings of intimate moments in the home occur throughout the film. In another scene Stan's wife (Kaycee Moore) prepares dinner and puts makeup on, while her youngest daughter sings to her doll. The scene lasts for several minutes, and we observe again a domestic space often not amplified in dominant cinemas, one that is deeply intimate, yet somehow distant—secretly observing the child's song and play—which is something we can relate to in our own here and now, where one would stay quiet so as not to disturb or embarrass the child into stopping. The following scene seems to answer the expression of love that Burnett renders in the scene with the child singing—Stan speaks with his wife about the future, a filmic dialogue that addresses the undeniable expression of love in the scene with the child—Burnett's camera is fixed with determined attention at the parent's discussion, the dialog is between Stan and his wife, *and* those in the audience who are affected by the intimate moment just shared with each person on screen. It is this intimacy that Burnett employs to rewrite any preconceived notions of life in Watts.

Throughout the film Watts plays itself, not as it is portrayed in the mainstream mass media, but as a home, where, yes, there is crime, and poverty, but there are also, children, and parents who work in spite of the dismal employment prospects created by apartheid, who resist criminality, who strive to build a better life. This is Burnett's message and it is delivered without a story arc that paints any character's apotheosis. The characters toil in despair, and continue on, as they do in one of the most difficult sequence to watch, where Stan and a friend go to someone's house to buy an automobile engine to get Stan's car running. After paying for the engine, the two attempt to haul it down several flights of stairs—again Burnett creates an

alienating but familiar tension, the framing is uncomfortably close as the two descend the staircase (Image 9). When they reach the bottom, they place the engine in a pickup truck then proceed to drive away. The engine falls from the truck onto the asphalt, cracking the engine block, and in despair they leave it behind (Image 10). There is a familiarity in this loss, which speaks to a more universal discomfort, one that we can all attest to, things worked for or fought for and lost or left behind.

Image 9: Still from *Killer of Sheep*, directed by Charles Burnett, moving an engine down a flight of stairs [136]

[136] Charles Burnett, *Killer of Sheep*, directed by Charles Burnett (1978; Harrington Park, NJ: Milestone Film and Video), DVD. Screenshot by Aruna Ekanayake.

Image 10: Still from *Killer of Sheep*, directed by Charles Burnett, engine falls from truck [137]

In this moment of despair, Burnett renders the intimacy of loss by taking the viewer through the long process of acquiring the engine, where the camera is placed in positions that convey struggle and discomfort, then climaxing reversely as the engine falls from the truck, rendered useless, in a moment of impotency, a sterilization of agency stemming from inequity.

Impotency and intimacy are more literally rendered in the following scene where Stan and his wife are filmed in a long slow embrace. Then, when his wife's sexual advances escalate, Stan abandons her. Burnett juxtaposes these two moments of impotency and loss to emphasize two very different forms of intimacy, one in which we feel familiar a discomfort (the engine purchase) and the other the familiar discomfort of alienation in the attempted and failed intimacy with a loved on. Referring to this scene Samantha Shepard points out the broader implications of impotency and alienation stemming from this moment, "Stan's feelings of alienation represents a

[137] Charles Burnett, *Killer of Sheep*, directed by Charles Burnett (1978; Harrington Park, NJ: Milestone Film and Video), DVD. Screenshot by Aruna Ekanayake.

personalization of the broader economic and historical crisis in Watts during this time."[138] Indeed Watts, in the post civil rights era, is a stand-in for the socio-economic and political struggles of marginalized groups throughout the nation, and Brunette approaches these broader socio-political topics by bringing us into the domestic space—which in the case of this film *is* representative of the colonial project—one that imprisons those who do not or cannot assimilate. Yet Burnett exposes us to an interiority often omitted from the dominant narrative of such places.

Broad stroke pejorative narratives about Watts abound in mass media, as an example, a 1975 *New York Times* article described Watts as a "city that was left behind," and a "compendium of urban failure," in which "ghetto youths in recent years have moved deeper into self-destructive pursuits," leading to a sharp rise in alcoholism and suicide.[139] The article continues to outline the vast unemployment, discrimination in hiring practices, housing inequity and muses about the possibility of another "riot."[140] Yet our main character Stan provides what he can in spite of the staggering unemployment rates in the community, and a humanization occurs outside of what the contemporary rhetoric of Watts is. Burnett's film does not buy into "pornotropic" imaginings to humanize his subjects—Stan is employed, he loves his family, and tries hard every day in spite of endless-but-familiar economic, spatial, and emotional hurdles.[141]

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[138] Samantha N. Sheppard, "Bruising Moments: Affect and the L.A. Rebellion," in *L.A. Rebellion: Creating a New Black Cinema,* edited by Allyson N. Field, Jan-Christopher Horak, and Jacqueline N. Stewart, (Oakland California: University of California Press, 2015), 227-229.

[139] Jon Nordheimer, "In Watts a Decade Later: Poverty in Ashes of Riots," *New York Times* (New York, NY), August 7, 1975.

[140] Ibid.

[141] Hortance J. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (1987): 67.

Killer of Sheep works to decolonize the notion of Watts as a place that no one on the outside can relate to, and makes its alienation familiar, and intimate—where one tends to the needs of the home and the body (however futile) despite the conditions of life created within the colonized imprisoning space.

Conclusion

Regarding the post-civil rights era Cynthia Young posits that the marginalized "cannot help but recognize their alien and alienated status, [understanding] that their citizenship is defined by restriction rather than freedom."[142] This restriction or imprisonment is what manifests throughout the films discussed here, a "disavowed antagonism" portrayed through the exposition of interiorities that are otherwise "subjugated knowledges."[143] I bring these films into the larger discussion about decolonization to move from the micro out to the macro of looking at a colony within the United States. I have considered several films that address a sense of imprisonment or alienation within the contexts of inclusion and citizenship. Yet citizenship and access to, and the struggle for, equal participation emerge in these films as a far darker and deeper struggle—one that questions the very ground on which illusionist liberalist ideals of citizenship emerge—the notion of nation. The films I have discussed in this chapter work to both contest alienation and confinement, and bring to light intimate details of those involved in the struggle for decolonization by way of a cinema that practices a commitment to representing the exteriority of

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[142] Cynthia A. Young, *Soul Power: Culture and Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left,* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 241.

[143] Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-ization' of Resistance, "*Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015), 29; Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France, 1975-1976,* (New York: Picador, 2003), 7.

marginalized communities, while exposing the affectual interiorities that are imbued into the space we inhabit, negotiate, and survive in.

I will conclude this chapter by returning to Choy and Robeson's film *Teach Our Children.* Though their film stands apart from others in this analysis because it is a documentary, the film is employed here as a starting point for a consideration about internal colonialism—as Cynthia Young reminds us, film projects like Choy and Robeson's "developed out of an extant internal-colony discourse equating U.S. Black, Latino, Native American, and Asian communities with Third World colonies."[144] Though *Teach Our Children* may not have been a direct catalyst for the themes that arise in the other films in this chapter, it is a primary document that gives way to thinking about home as prison *and* a site of contestation. Imprisonment for the marginalized in America indeed exists in the forms of embodiment, domesticity, and civic space, but is a product of the larger problems of nationalism—an idea that holds no ground for those left without access to the cultural capital of citizenship, link to the land, or agency over the very state that conducts violence against them.

As one orator in *Teach Our Children* chides, "There's really no difference with the places we live in and the way we live to the life in prisons. There's no Difference. Only difference may be that in our communities the bars are invisible and you don't see them, and in the prison you do." Indeed the bars are invisible for the marginalized in the United States, yet parallel to this is the broader invisibility of their communities, their peoples, and their feelings. These invisible bars are sanctioned by the state and are direct act of violence by said state or nation. The ideal of the colonialist-settler nation works to colonize not only the land that it occupies, but also the space of mind, body, and spaces of intimacy in which the marginalized can

[144] Cynthia A. Young, *Soul Power: Culture and Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left,* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 156.

contest the projects of homogenization and assimilation. Again, Young reminds us that for this form of "state violence to be successful, [it] must regulate and demarcate a community's psychic as well as physical terrain. This reformulation of state violence and its impact expands the definition of the internally colonized to entail a process of psychic domination," which I point out in the next chapter, is catalyzed and justified by the formation of land and cultural borders in the colonialist/liberalist demarcation of state.[145]

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[145] Cynthia A. Young, *Soul Power: Culture and Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left,* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 214.

Chapter 2: Invasion and Migration – The Screen and Crossing the Bordered Site of Difference

Why is my freedom and my citizenship or my right to live there, how is it conceivably a question now? What we are not facing is the results of what we've done. What one begs the American people to do for all our sakes is simply to accept our history. Until the moment comes, when we the Americans, we the American people, who are trying to forge a new identity for which we need each other. Until this moment there is scarcely any hope for the 'American dream," because the people who are denied participation in it by their very presence, will wreck it.

- James Baldwin, Speaking at Cambridge University, 1965

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Freedom is a word used in the rhetoric of the American nationhood as something fought for, *earned*, and kept sacred within the borders of this country. It is coveted by the left and the right both as the fundamental element of our democracy. Yet it seems that freedom is not something one should have to work for, it exists, is immaterial, and therefore ever-present, thus we are all born with freedom, albeit with consequence. Freedom is an obfuscation in the rhetoric of Americanism because it is something that can be both granted and taken away. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the America of the post civil-rights era saw to it that many who sought freedom and inclusion in the preceding historical era were repositioned into a same-but-new sequestered state-of-being, as not only subjects of the greatest mass incarceration in global history, but also as subjects of a cultural and economical division that severed them from participation based on their race and gender. Instead of the outright policy-driven blatant apartheid of the pre-civil-rights era, the marginalized were in effect sequestered into colonies, policed, and if non-compliant (or compliant)—imprisoned, either literally or by means often not associated with imprisonment.

Freedom in the United States is simultaneously being threatened and is a threat; specifically, when the freedom of those who do not assimilate is a threat to those who do, and the dominant culture that asks for this assimilation. Hegemonic discourse insists that, Freedom is threatened by terrorisms, immigrants, nuclear missiles, anti-gun advocates, the babies of undocumented immigrants, all the nations of the global south, climate change (or the right to deny its existence), women, abortions, environmentalists, scientists, academics, unions, the LGBTQ community, and God. Thus, the freedom of those who challenge the validity of the threats listed above (and many others) is always conditional, because those who believe that these threats are real in any way will do anything to ensure they are stamped out. Freedom for those in power is the right to take and *refuse* what they will—it is the genealogical cornerstone of "Manifest Destiny." There is no freedom for those who oppose or work in spite of this power. Freedom and access to it within the United States is limited. Those entering the United States in search of Freedom, as *marketed* by Americanism, are often met with opposition to their arrival and or stay—even if they are from *here*. Indeed the autochthonous peoples of the United States are sequestered into the liminal space of the reservation, robbed of their access to both land and representation within the liberalist state, treated as foreigners, or even "immigrants," and in effect, excluded from within.

Immigration has always been a contentious issue, and has always been regulated for the benefit of the state, or more specifically those who control the bordered site of the state. There have been times of mass immigration and waves of so-called "illegal" immigration where still many are allowed in despite their "illegitimacy." In the course of American history the allowance of migration from the global south has <u>always</u> been about cheap labor—it began with free slave labor after all.

Spurred by policy shifts such as the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1964, the post civil rights period sees more immigration (albeit with limitation) from non-western countries, fortifying the neoliberalist rhetoric of migrant legality within the borders of the U.S.[1]

In this chapter I set out to discuss freedom within the bordered site of the United States, and the legitimacy of identity in the eyes of nation, as it relates to immigration, migration, and assimilation (forced and otherwise). I look at several films that consider the plight of migrants and autochthonous peoples arguing again that the notion of Americanism builds within itself bordered sites of difference, from which arise identities who contest the nature of American liberalism. I return to *Efraín Gutiérrez*'s film *Please Don't Bury Me Alive,* and consider again the implications of indigeneity parallel to American Citizenship. I will further apply the theoretical work of Slavoj Žižek and Robert Stam addressed in the previous chapter in regards to authenticity and realism, when considering two other films about borders, migration, and labor; Bruce R. Swartz's film *In MacArthur Park* (1977), and Robert M. Young's film *Alambrista! The Illegal* (1977)—two films that signify a divergence in the representation of identity because they are both made by white men, which brings into our discussion the problematics of authenticity and exploitative ethnography vs. alignment with the struggles of the marginalized—a different type of border crossing if you will. Where earlier I discuss films that are made by the marginalized, I did not attempt to differentiate the filmmaker of marginalized identity from the film, yet the white filmmaker who addresses marginality becomes an element of off-screen space that is far different from an appreciation or interrogation of cinematic artistry and politicization. To scrutinize this issue I somewhat take a reprieve from Americanism (directly) as a subject and

[1] Gabriel J. Chin and Rose Cuison Villazor, *The Immigration And Nationality Act Of 1965* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

look into the Third Cinema practice of Vietnamese-born American filmmaker Trinh T. Minh-ha, who challenges the notions of realism, observation and ethnography. Indeed my analysis of Trinh's work is informed by her own migratory identity as colonized-within-from-without status—meaning, as a refugee of a war perpetuated by her new home nation, the identity of a filmmaker who crossed borders in 1970 complicates the notion of migration as it relates to the voice of one who is colonized and still using the colonizers implements of poetics (English, music, cinema) to deconstruct coloniality.

While considering identity politics as they relate to borders and crossing, I also address the problematics of *imagining* nationalism regarding migration, immigration and coloniality. Thus I join Benedict Anderson, who considers the "anomalous pathology" of nationalism and its link to the rise of "sub-nationalisms" within the liberalist nation, though not in the traditional sense of organized apartheidic jingoism—instead I explore what I term the *innoculative pathology* (pathology defined as emotion, rather than illness) of sub-nationalisms applying Anderson's framework of "love," in which the marginalized exist in a mode of resistance to *and* participation with what Anderson describes as the "products of nationalism—poetry, prose fiction, music and plastic arts."[2] Anderson argues that these products are about a "love" for nation and rarely a "hatred" of it.[3] Yet I challenge Anderson's further argument that it is "rare to find *analogous* nationalist products expressing fear and loathing…even in the case of colonized peoples" where the element of hatred is "insignificant" in "expressions of national feeling;" to which I counter that "national feeling[s]," imbued with a hatred of the colonizer, are a significant element of resistance in the films discussed in this study; in that hatred of

[2] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities.* New York, NY: Verso, 2006, pp. 3, 141-142.

[3] Ibid.

colonization itself works to create a sub-nation (although, "hatred" should be considered here as a placeholder for critical resistance).[4] Also, it may be that Anderson's scope is limited to the dominant definitions of imperialism and coloniality, which aren't often considered within a modern American framework and borders—as this dissertation considers them. Indeed, I cannot help but think of the multitude of marginal American voices that directly address a hatred of the power structures of the state, which helps affirm some of Anderson's theory; the more popular art of dissidence in the U.S. "hates" the government, not the land—land which translates to the bordered site of what constitutes 'nation,' and not the power structures that oversee its borders. Many cultural musical anthems come to mind as testimony of this conundrum, such as Woody Guthrie's *This Land is Your Land* (1940, Released 1951), which seeks common bond to the land while questioning the power structure that divides it; the often-misinterpreted Bruce Springsteen's *Born in the U.S.A.* (1984), which is critical of the struggles of Vietnam Veterans and the liberalist promises of economic freedom, while vehemently claiming a *land* of origin; the urgent *Fight the Power* (1990) by Public Enemy, which speaks nothing of any hatred toward America as a space, and in this silence assumes agency over the land. More recently Kendrik Lamar's *Alright* (2015) music video juxtaposes dreamlike positivist imagery of human flight and

[4] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities.* New York, NY: Verso, 2006, 146; Partha Chatterjee, "Whose Imagined Community?," in *Mapping the Nation*, ed. Benedict Balakrishan (New York and London: Verso, 1996) 214. Chatterjee reminds us that "simultaneously, as the new institutional practices of economy and polity in the postcolonial states were disciplined and normalized, under the conceptual rubrics of 'development' and 'modernization,' nationalism was already being relegated to the domain of the particular histories of this or that colonial empire." It is interesting to note that while the global north begins to forget their own stained histories of nationalism, forms of internal subnationlisms arise within the former colonial powers, which are then hated upon by the powers-that-be. In the United States subnationalisms such as the the Black Power movement, or the Chicano Movement speak of a hatred for the nation, while using the ideology of nationalism as their platform, as do some of the artistic products inspired by these movements.

police submission in a romantically filmed painting of the urban Oakland *landscape*. Certainly, it is the *land* we fight for, and our right to be on it as we are. Thus, Freedom is tied directly to a genealogical agency over the land.

In the films I discuss here "hatred," working as critical resistance against the colonizer, is the central perspective of some of the filmmakers and the subjects in the films—parallel to this, a narrative of "love" for, or *intimacy* with, the land is the overreaching subtext when addressing bordered sites or restrictions to land in these texts.[5] I argue that this expression of "love" is another element that arises from the phenomenon Slavoj Žižek describes as a "parallax Real."[6] As I outlined in the previous chapter, Žižek argues that this reality, or realism, reveals itself when the socially constructed symbolisms of the liberalist state fail to completely hide the realities of its failure, manifesting "fissures," in turn revealing constant truths that are often masked by the totalitarian social projects such as colonialism.[7] These masked truths are not limited to the sequestered voices of the marginalized, they are also the hidden voices of the hegemony's inner apartheidic imperative—the two sides of a coin—something even Žižek himself cannot escape (which I will discuss in detail later). More materially, the revelation of failure also arises when agency over the land on which the marginalized stand is continually threatened. Furthermore, perspectives of "love" and intimacy with bordered sites are revealed as resulting from the failure of the state to ensure assimilationist apartheid through the politics of

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[5] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities.* New York, NY: Verso, 2006, pp. 3, 146.

[6] Ibid, 145.; Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 9.

[7] Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-ization' of Resistance, "*Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015): 30.

dispossession of land and space.[8] In other words love of the land, in spite of the oppressor, is expressed unconditionally throughout the art and politics of the oppressed.

The Poetics of "Hatred"

I begin my analysis with a brief look at Luis Valdez's cinematic rendering of Chicano activist Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzalez's protest poem *I Am Joaquin* (1969)—self-proclaimed as "the first work of poetry published by Chicanos for Chicanos."[9] Gonzalez's political activism began in Denver Colorado, where he joined the Democratic Party as a community organizer, and in 1966 founded Denver's *Crusade for Justice*, which worked to provide "social services, cultural programs, and leadership education, organizing around educational opportunities, jobs and land reform, and building an urban power base for Chicano community control and liberation."[10] Gonzalez began his adulthood as a professional boxer and later a business owner. His entrepreneurship lead him into running a bail bond business, which he soon gave up because his political ideology didn't align with the work.[11] Self-employed most of his life, Gonzalez also served in several community advocacy positions with *The Neighborhood Youth Corps*, *The Latin American Educational Fund*, *The Colorado GI Forum*, *The Latin American Research and Service Agency*, *Jobs for Progress*, and *The Job Opportunity Center*.[12] He was president of *The*

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[8] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities.* New York, NY: Verso, 2006, pp. 3, 145.

[9] Silvio Torres-Saillant, "Paginas Recuperadas: Political Roots of Chicano Discourse," *Latino Studies 4,* (2006): 452.

[10] Ibid, 453.

[11] Ernesto B. Vigil, *The Crusade for Justice: Chicano Militancy and the Government's War on Dissent* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconson Press, 1999), 8.

[12] Ibid.

National Citizen's Committee for Community Relations, and member of the steer committee of the *Anti-Poverty Program of the Southwest*.[13] In 1965, Gonzalez was appointed as the head of *The Denver War on Poverty Commission* (a key element of Kennedy and the Johnson's agenda in the civil rights era, which I remind you, was counteracted by the administration's parallel "War on Crime").[14] Though he worked in the service of the dominant state power, Gonzalez became an outsider, clashing with the Democratic Party and soon turning toward an ideology of "ethnic solidarity," he discovered in himself an activism that was indeed *not* assimilationist—leading to the creation of *The Crusade for Justice*.[15] Because of his anti-establishment politics Gonzalez soon found himself under FBI surveillance for promoting anti-war sentiment and aligning with The Black Power Movement. Though early on his activism was compared to that of Martin Luther King and Cesar Chavez, Gonzalez admittedly aligned more with the militant anti-assimilationist politics of Malcolm X and Emiliano Zapata—this becomes very clear in his poem.[16] In 1967 Gonzalez's poem was published by Bantam Books bilingually in English and Spanish, and continues to be a cornerstone of The Chicano Movement.[17]

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[13] Ernesto B. Vigil, *The Crusade for Justice: Chicano Militancy and the Government's War on Dissent* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 8.

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[14] Ibid.; See the Chapter 1 section titled: From Civil Unrest to Civil Rights and Back regarding Johnson's policies and the "War on Poverty" vs. the "War on Crime."

[15] Ibid., 24-25.

[16] Ibid., 10. See Chapter 1, page 8 regarding Johnson's policies and the "War on Poverty" vs. the "War on Crime."

[17] Silvio Torres-Saillant, "Paginas Recuperadas: Political Roots of Chicano Discourse," *Latino Studies 4,* (2006): 453. According to Torres-Saillant the in the original 1967 print, book's title was only published in English—which brings up the question of intended audience, which I discussed in chapter one regarding *Efraín Gutiérrez* film *Please don't* (you) *Bury Me Alive.* See Chapter 1 pages 43-44.

The poem's film version made by Luis Valdez is a first like the poem, made by and for Chicanos, and considered the film that "initiates Chicano cinema."[18] It is a still-photography montage that meditates on Chicano origin and socio-political trajectory. The film is made up of images and paintings of Chicanos, the buildings in which they dwell, autochthonous peoples and their great cities, and American landscapes juxtaposed with photographs of paintings by David Siqueiros, Diego Rivera, and José Orozco.[19] The poem itself works to cast light on a history of colonialism against the autochthonous peoples of the Americas, while acknowledging the genealogical and ancestral link that Chicanos have to the colonizer. Valdez's film takes on much of this and offers a visual rendering of what Chon Noriega posits as "a mestizo historical genealogy," containing "hallmarks of a *rasquache cinema,*" a form that Noriega describes as "one in which poor means are transformed into a aesthetic style or cultural stance."[20] Though true to the spirit of Gonzalez's poetic vision, Valdez truncates the poem for the film and takes artistic license of it to steer more specifically toward a call to militant resistance within the Chicano Movement. Irfan Cenk Yay points out that Valdez, "like filmmakers in general, incorporated his ideological opinions into his adaptation, and in some instances took liberties with the original text in order to accentuate his specific political leanings."[21] Yay also notes that

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[18] Chon A. Noriega, *Shot In America: Television, the State, and the Rise of Chicano Cinema* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 8.

[19] Irfan Cenk Yay, "Capturing the Bronze Power on the Silver Screen: An Epic Journey in Twenty Minutes," *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture,* 30 (2012): 26.

[20] Chon A. Noriega, *Shot In America: Television, the State, and the Rise of Chicano Cinema* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 6.

[21] Ifran Cenk Yay, "Capturing the Bronze Power on the Silver Screen: An Epic Journey in Twenty Minutes," *Studies in Latin American Pop Culture* Volume 30 (2012): 27.

while Valdez "pretermits about a hundred lines," he also "metonymically exchanges them with pictorial equivalents."[22] In this truncation Valdez zeros in more closely on the contemporary Chicano Movement itself, creating a text that *envisions* the potentiality of action, moving forward into praxis Gonzalez's call to *identify* the history of the Chicano struggle. Moreover, Valdez incorporates the role of women into the poem by including images of militant Chicanas edited between images of the paramilitary group the "Brown Berets" (a Chicano organization founded by David Sanchez often compared to the Black Panthers). As Yay points out, "the role of women in this new revolution…is better highlighted in the film"[23]—a role the poem does not explicitly address.[24] Images of protesters holding up signs in both English and Spanish proclaiming, "Rebirth Chicano Culture," "True Representation, Si! Tokenism, No!," "Uncle Sam, Jobs Now Not Mañana ," "Justice or Revolution!," "20,000 Mex-Americans in Vietnam. Only a Token Few in Post Offices," "Queremos justicía y menos platica ," "Equality? Where?," "Viva la Revolucion ," and "Accept Me for what I am: Chicano!!!," work to mobilize a consciousness in the viewer of a movement already in motion. By employing revolutionary symbolism Valdez creates a visual narrative that compliments Gonzalez's poem, speaking to a contemporary consciousness and rendering the existence a movement for internal (or insurgent)

[22] Ifran Cenk Yay, "Capturing the Bronze Power on the Silver Screen: An Epic Journey in Twenty Minutes," *Studies in Latin American Pop Culture* Volume 30 (2012): 27.

[23] Ibid., 30-31.

[24] Chon A. Noriega, *Shot In America: Television, the State, and the Rise of Chicano Cinema* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 8-10. Noriega notes that two other films from the era challenge Valdez's vision. *Entelequia* (Juan Salazar, 1978) "offers and explicit parody of *I Am Joaquin* that challenges the nationalist and patriarchal context for poetry established by Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzalez. *Chicana* (Silvis Morales, 1979) "presents the first feminist critique of *I Am Joaquin.*"

nationalism, which in turn recognizes the existence of an internally colonized people.[25] Indeed the Chicano Movement's nationalist literati and academics acknowledged internal colonialism as an element of their argument for decolonization, as Yay posits, "Chicano scholars conveyed that due to the apparent impasse of total assimilation, their ethnic group should be considered and 'internal colony.'"[26]

The poem's namesake is derived from the story of Joaquin Murrieta, a miner in Sonora who "suffered unspeakable abuse at the hands of Anglos in California and decided to fight back."[27] Gonzalez begins his poem with:

Yo soy Joaquín,
perdido en un mundo de confusión:
I am Joaquín, lost in a world of confusion,
caught up in the whirl of a gringo society,
confused by the rules, scorned by attitudes,
suppressed by manipulation, and destroyed by modern society.
My fathers have lost the economic battle
and won the struggle of cultural survival.
And now! I must choose between the paradox of
victory of the spirit, despite physical hunger,
or to exist in the grasp of American social neurosis,
sterilization of the soul and a full stomach.

[25] Ifran Cenk Yay, "Capturing the Bronze Power on the Silver Screen: An Epic Journey in Twenty Minutes," *Studies in Latin American Pop Culture* Volume 30 (2012): 31.

[26] Ibid., 19.

[27] Silvio Torres-Saillant, "Paginas Recuperadas: Political Roots of Chicano Discourse," *Latino Studies 4,* (2006): 457. Torres-Saillant notes that the in the 1972 Bantam publication, an appended chronology by Gonzalez tells about Murrieta: "After Anglo miners raped his wife Rosita, drove him from his gold claim, and then whipped him in the public on a false horse stealing charge, Murrieta vowed revenge." Most interestingly Gonzales claims, "the California government offered a reward of $5000 for him, dead or alive, and—because his last name was not well known—California became unsafe for anyone whose name happened to be Joaquin."

Yes, I have come a long way to nowhere,
unwillingly dragged by that monstrous, technical,
industrial giant called Progress and Anglo success....
I look at myself.
I watch my brothers.
I shed tears of sorrow. I sow seeds of hate.
I withdraw to the safety within the circle of life --
MY OWN PEOPLE. [28]

In this introduction Gonzalez separates from what Anderson has described as a "pathological nationalism" and claims a new national identitarian site within his "circle" of "safety" from the "Anglo" virus of "monstrous" Americanism. He draws a border within, a colony of self-defense against further invasion—the beginnings of the *inoculative pathology* that will inspire Chicano nationalism. Again, I diverge from Anderson and use the term *pathology* not specifically as it relates to disease, abnormality, or anomaly—rather I consider its plural definition, that which leads to a knowledge of emotions or feelings as it relates to the love and hatred discussed earlier—a provocation of pathos in multiplicity.[29]

The colonized and tyrannized are a byproduct of the failures of colonialism, therefore are directly tied to the its pathological (in this instance pathology as illness) histories, but *pathology* in the rhetoric of decolonization is a reaction, a fight-back that works to reclaim what was stolen through and emotive cultural and artistic *inoculation*. When Gonzalez's poem explicitly calls out for sowing "seeds of hate," it recognizes the illness brought upon by colonization, and seeks to remedy it, while admitting to a self-inflicted culpability that can only be reconciled through

[28] Rodolfo Gonzalez, *I am Joaquin / Yo Soy Joaquin* (New York: Bantam, 1972).

[29] The Oxford English Dictionary defines pathology as: 1. In *plural.* Sorrows, sufferings. *Obsolete. Rare.* 2. The branch of knowledge that deals with emotions. *Obsolete. Rare.* It is important to note that this definition is marked with it interstitial position as an "obsolete" or "rare" occurrence—a "subjugated knowledge" indeed. Used as a plural of emotion, the term becomes a part of the often disavowed relation it has to marginality.

the process of decolonization. For Gonzalez this means that the colonized must recognize, as a first step, their link to, and blind participation in colonization by embracing the element of "love" (emotions) brought on by the poetics of resistance, like in Gonzalez's poem and Valdez's film.[30] Furthermore, and aligning with Anderson, "hatred" in the poem is never directed at the land, it is instead accusatory of the colonizer and his government that remains in control of the land. Proclaiming a self-awareness of his own duality, with the blood of both the colonizer and colonized, Gonzalez aligns with the latter and chastises his own people who do otherwise—ending the poem with, "I am Aztec prince and Christian Christ…tyrant and slave." In the film Valdez incorporates the symbol of the United Farm Worker's movement—an Eagle, yet with a Crucifix on its chest (Image 1)—which is emblematic of this duality of colonizer and colonized, of "tyrant and slave." In this identitarian duality, there is a persistent claiming of the land, which is the constant in the turmoil of colonized civilization, and Gonzalez claims absolute right to it—as both the colonizer and the colonized he justifies this in the passage below:

> I am the sword and the flame of Cortes the despot
> And I am the eagle and serpent of the Aztec civilization.
> I owned the land as far as the eye could see under the crown of Spain,
> And I toiled on my Earth and gave my Indian sweat and blood
> for the Spanish master who ruled with tyranny over man and
> beast and all that he could trample
> But…THE GROUND WAS MINE.[31]

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[30] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities.* New York, NY: Verso, 2006, pp. 3, 145.

[31] Rodolfo Gonzalez, *I am Joaquin / Yo Soy Joaquin* (New York: Bantam, 1972).

Image 1: Still from *I Am Joaquin,* directed by Luis Valdez, United Farm Workers Union symbol with Crucifix [32]

It is the governance over the land that Gonzales "sows his seeds of hate," a hate for the colonizer, and those who have been colonized and choose to assimilate. The hatred is also directed at the Church, who Gonzalez points out, exploited his people into believing that they had to work for salvation or Freedom:

> As the Christian church took its place in God's name,
> to take and use my virgin strength and trusting faith,
> the priests, both good and bad, took--
> but gave a lasting truth that Spaniard Indian Mestizo
> were all God's children.
> And from these words grew men who prayed and fought
> for their own worth as human beings, for that
> GOLDEN MOMENT of FREEDOM.[33]

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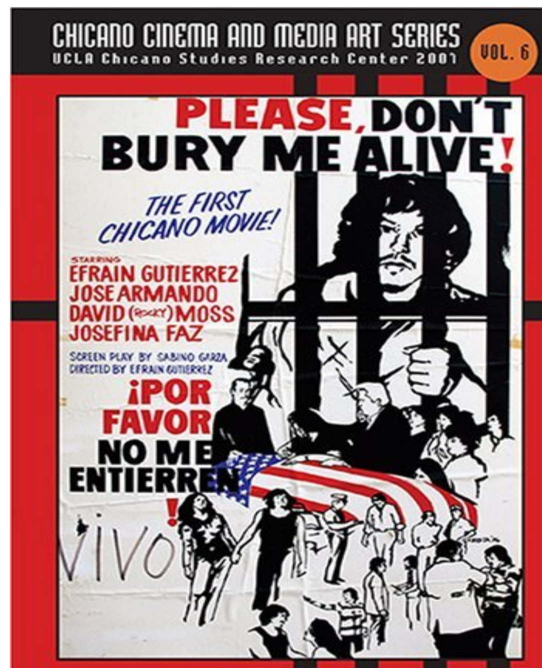
[32] Luis Valdez, *I Am Joaquin,* directed by Luis Valdez (1969, University of California Los Angeles Film and Television Archive), VHS. Screenshot by Aruna Ekanayake.

[33] Rodolfo Gonzalez, *I am Joaquin / Yo Soy Joaquin* (New York: Bantam, 1972).

The poem is at once a document of *love* of the self and the land and a *hatred* toward the assimilationist self and the colonizer, and is critical of the disenfranchised labor autochthonous peoples endured to obtain or "earn" *freedom*—again a problematic idea when there is one side granting it and other working for it, especially when it is the former side who came and took it away. Thus, I come back to our earlier discussion about freedom, labor, and love, and what these mean in the process of decolonization within the United States.

Image 2: Poster *Please Don't Bury Me Alive*, directed by *Efraín Gutiérrez*[34]



Efraín Gutiérrez's *Please Don't Bury Me Alive* (1976), which I also discussed in Chapter 1, is a film that is in dialogue with the work of Gonzalez and Valdez, and it contextualizes an

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[34] *Efraín Gutiérrez*'s *Please Don't Bury Me Alive* (1969, University of California Los Angeles Chicano Studies Research Center) DVD.

evolving singular voice in the Chicano Movement in its self-realizing contemporary moment. As Gutiérrez points out in a newspaper article about the film, it was his desire to reclaim agency over identity through self reflexivity—he is quoted stating; "They [Hollywood] work on a stereotype…we would like to stereotype ourselves."[35]

As I outlined in the last chapter the main character, Alex Hernandez, negotiates an internal conflict arising from a hybrid identity that seeks a reclamation of stolen land, and is critical of the colonized in the process of colonization. At the end of the film Alex meets one last time with his "gringo" co-conspirator who turns out to be an undercover cop. During this encounter, Gutiérrez cuts to a scene where Alex walks through his neighborhood, and in a voiceover soliloquy, Alex conveys a sentiment of resistance reflective of Gonzalez's poem:

> It's a strange thing, living in a world that makes you different than the rest of the people. Yeah I know, some of us are like you--I want to be like you, but only to a point. You see I'm old enough now to know that what I really want is some way of brining together both my worlds. There's a lot to be said for living a nice track house or for pullin' out of the barrio and heading for the suburb. Ha. The thing is I don't want that. That may be hard for some of you [again, *you* plural that Chon Noriega describes as speaking directly to the monolingual white audience, *and* an assimilationist one] to believe but I really like being Chicano. But its only been in the last few years that so many of us have had the guts to own up to the fact that we are Chicanos. And we're gonna stay that way. Now, how the hell, am I going

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[35] Newspaper clipping (source unknown), "Movie Portrays Chicano in Film First," (date unknown), Box 5, Folder 2, Dept. of Special Collections & University Archives Stanford University Libraries, Palo Alto, California.

> to be Chicano, and competing in an Anglo world with you pushy people? Well, that's the part of a problem. That's part of a big problem. Who the hell said we had to be the same? That is ridiculous. There must be room in this country for me to be Chicano, in dignity, Americano in my own way. We are the bus boys of your meals. Yet we cannot see the menu. We're the builders of your cities. Yet we cannot consult with the architect. Countless streets are named after me. Yet no one knows my name. [36]

The "worlds" Alex wants to bring together are analogous with the conflict Gonzalez addresses in his poem; the dichotomy between the colonized who bear the blood of the colonizer and work toward assimilation, and the colonizer who does not recognize the indigeneity of the mestizo peoples. Also, Alex deliberately doesn't recognize the "world" of the colonizer, stating "Americano" only to acknowledge his link to colonization as Gonzalez does—marking "Americano" as moniker for the colonizer *and* the colonized of North and South America. Alex goes on to challenge middle-class American assimilationist materiality, in a way accepting that there are those who choose to blend in, yet protesting the idea of losing his Chicano identity to such conformity. Alex then asks a the question of how he's going to be Chicano and compete in an "Anglo" world, which is in tune with Gonzalez's charge in the opening lines of his poem: "My fathers have lost the economic battle / and won the struggle of cultural survival. / And now! I must choose between the paradox of / victory of the spirit, despite physical hunger, / or to exist in the grasp of American social neurosis, / sterilization of the soul and a full stomach." Indeed physical, social, and political starvation is what drives the colonized to participate in their own

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[36] *Efraín Gutiérrez, Please Don't Bury Me Alive,* directed/performed by *Efraín Gutiérrez* (1976; Chicano Arts Film Enterprises), DVD.

colonization. A form of starvation that threatens erasure, as Gonzalez writes in his poem; "I look at myself / And see part of me / Who rejects my father and my mother / And dissolves into the melting pot / To disappear in shame."[37]

In the last chapter I outlined how the title of Gutierrez's film, when translated from Spanish, speaks to an implied 'you'—*Please don't* (you plural) *Bury Me Alive*; and This 'you,' as Chon Noriega argues, is directed at a monolingual Anglo audience.[38] There are other instances in the film where the characters address this 'you.' Yet in Alex's last soliloquy, he speaks of a *you* that is the colonized-assimilationist. He recognizes that there are those who choose to cross over the cultural border in order to fit in and abandon their Chicano identities. Indeed the politics of hunger vs. "sterilization," and the idea of a border that has crossed a people vs. a people who have crossed it, is a foundational element in immigration and migration identity dialectics. This problem exists for the Chicano as it does for other marginalized groups. It rises out from the materialism of nationhood, especially when that nation was created on the fundamental acceptance of robbery, murder, and want of the material of land while perpetuating a denial of the enslavement and labor of those who create, cultivate and maintain its wealth.

In the following section I consider how this process of sterilization occurs in cinema and other ethnography when the dominant colonizing group claims agency over the narrative of the marginalized—and how this border crossing, or more specifically, this invasion, can and cannot work.

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[37] Rodolfo Gonzalez, *I am Joaquin / Yo Soy Joaquin* (New York: Bantam, 1972).

[38] Chon A. Noriega, "The Migrant Intellectual," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 13-14.

Cinematic Invasion of Identity Borders: The Colonizer Representing the Colonized

The often disavowed cornerstone of the struggle for inclusion in the project of Americanism is the subject of autochthonous rights, not only in the form of access to land, but also access to the liberalist ideals and systems which brought about their displacement and disenfranchisement. Bruce R. Schwartz's film *In MacArthur Park* (1977), paints a dreary picture of the plight of an autochthonous man name Triam Lee (Adam Silver), who is forced to leave his reservation to find work in Los Angeles because of overfishing (by non-autochthonous elements) in the river near his home. Thus he is unable to sustain life on the reservation for his family, and must leave to find work in the city. Lee is introduced in the film living in a hotel in downtown Los Angeles. He hasn't found much work and is in debt to the hotel and some acquaintances who threaten him unless he pays up. In his desperation Lee mugs a man at MacArthur Park, when the man tells Lee he has no money, Lee stabs and kills him, leaving his body floating in the park's lake. Someone witnesses the incident and Lee runs away back to his room, where he has a panic attack and seeks desperately to destroy all evidence of his act. The film follows Lee as he seeks help from a friend, but cuts between the cinematic present of Lee's situation and his home on the reservation with his family—fishing, cooking, sleeping, eating, and negotiating his departure. It is a film about discomfort, anxiety and failure—a rather moribund story seemingly inspired by film noir stylization. I bring this film into my analysis because it addresses the encroachment of coloniality onto the space of the autochthonous, in two ways—textually in the narrative, and subtextually in the film's production. If we are to apply the euphemism, "I didn't cross the border, the border crossed me," it seems that the film portrays this penetration; that is, the border of nation in the context of Americanism, crossed into the life of Lee, it crossed into his livelihood, and simply it crossed him—betrayed him by taking away, disavowing and

disenfranchising him, an autochthonous person who, at the very least, claims right to the land. It is the same idea that Gonzalez brings up in his poem and Valdez and Gutiérrez articulate in their films—because of the infection of colonialism, the duality of the mestizo creates a liminal identity, existing not within the space between this duality, but *is* this duality, the very definition of the space of the border. In the case of Triam Lee, he represents the limnality of nation, meaning, as a member of a colonized nation that has been stripped of its sovereignty he can only exist as that nation—within the colonizer's nation. The colonized are at once the delineated and the line, the land and the struggle for it—an embodiment of border, and land lost. It is here again that Zizek's "parallax Real" can be applied yet again, as a "fissure" formed by the dialectical confrontation of a two-sided coin (understanding that no two sides of a literal coin are to ever meet), where the viral project of colonization is confronted by the expressive *inoculative pathology* of autochthonous existence, and persistence.[39] Again I remind the reader here that the *pathology* of the colonized is different from its common suggestion of "illness," it is rather the emotive occurrence of "love" that arises from the colonized through the language of the colonizer—in art, cinema, literature, and poetry. Yet *In MacArthur Park* is not a document as such.[40]

The film is made by Bruce R. Schwartz, a white man, marking the film with questions of authenticity in authorship (at least in comparison to other films discussed here). Indeed, rather than a cinema of dissent, it is a cinema of observation from a privileged perspective—and not one that comes out of what Anderson describes as "love." Although Schwartz's film may be a

[39] Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-ization' of Resistance, "*Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015): 30; Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26.

[40] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities.* New York, NY: Verso, 2006, pp. 3, 145.

document that is critical of the plight of autochthonous peoples, it leans toward exploitation and a questionable crossing of borders. Schwartz explains the inception of the film as a rather haphazard occurrence of convenience, rather than that of an ethnographic text that politicizes marginality. Thus I want to turn our attention to the supplemental "interview" of Schwartz on the film's DVD.[41]

In the interview Schwartz tells us that the film was funded by a three time attempt at an American Film Institute (AFI) grant, and that it was inspired by a news article he saw in the Los Angeles Times about a murder at MacArthur Park—which "haunted" him.[42] The inception of the film came after Schwartz had filmed a staged murder at MacArthur Park for PBS—inspiring him to make a film about the incident while drawing on the background of the actor Adam Silver, a Mojave Native American. The script was based on Silver's own journey to Los Angeles to seek work while not knowing anyone there to help him.

According to Schwartz he was asked many times what message the film intends; in the DVD interview he responds: "I have always been interested in the outsider in American society. Those who have fallen through the cracks, so to speak, and what happens to people of color in this society that has cultural diversity but does not reward many of its groups or people."[43] Schwartz also tells us that the character Triam Lee represented the many who work "to seek their lives in foreign soil, and what happens to them is that they get lost or unnoticed or can't find

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[41] Bruce R. Schwartz. *In MacArthur Park: Director's Interview*, Directed by Bruce R. Schwartz (1977; San Diego: Knight Mediacom, 2005), DVD.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

work. And how do they survive? What happens with desperation?" For the filmmaker the murder that Lee commits in the film "became a symbol of despair."[44]

The film engages in issues about autochthonous rights, yet because of the question of authorship and authenticity, it is difficult to consider it as a film associated with decolonization, instead, it leans toward ethnography from the perspective of the socially dominant. Schwartz's interest in the subject of marginality is an *interest*, and not an experiential utterance of subjectivity like that of the filmmakers discussed earlier. When Schwartz describes how the film was conceived, it seems an arbitrary culmination of circumstance—the news article about the murder at the park; the chance of Silver's racial background as an actor, and the "interest in the outsider in American society."[45] This last point is what problematizes the notion of "interest," which is different from the subjective experience of filmmakers like Gutierrez. When Schwartz speaks of his interest in the "outsider," or those who "fall through the cracks," he admits that he is not one of those who do.[46] He is not subject to the difficulties that his subjects in the film experience—nor will he ever be. Then can one constitute the work of this author as authentic? Is the film a "refraction of a refraction" of reality that allows for the emergence of a truth as a voice of "love?"[47] A voice emerging from what Žižek describes as "gaps," or as Burris argues as

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[44] Bruce R. Schwartz. *In MacArthur Park: Director's Interview*, Directed by Bruce R. Schwartz (1977; San Diego: Knight Mediacom, 2005), DVD.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York, NY: Verso, 2006), 3, 145; Robert Stam, "Bakhtin, Polyphony, and Ethnic/Racial Representation," in *Unspeakable Images: Ethnicity and the American Cinema*, ed. Lester D. Friedman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991). 252

“fissures,” which arises between two sides of a coin that inherently will never meet, do meet?[48] Žižek I believe, quite disruptively, argues that the question of authenticity based on race, or difference of race would, or should, not matter: He states:

> For a philosopher, ethnic roots, national identity and so on, are simply *not a category of truth*—or, to put it in precise Kantian terms, when we reflect upon our ethnic roots, we engage in a *private use of reason*, constrained by contingent dogmatic presuppositions; that is to say, we act as “immature” individuals, not as free human beings who dwell in the dimension of the universality of reason. This, of course does not in any way entail that we should be ashamed of our ethnic roots; we can love them, be proud of them; returning *home* may warm our hearts—but the fact remains that all this is ultimately irrelevant [my emphasis].[49]

Yet what if there is no *home* to *return* too? What if that *home* is not literal, and is instead an ideological space, as it is for many in this country? What if this *home* has been erased by (internal) colonization, forcing the colonized to live between an actuality and a mythological, imagined *home*? Žižek’s postulation is from the same perspective as Schwartz’s (though Schwartz, for Žižek, is an ‘immature’ who sees difference); he sees the *multi* in multicultural or multi-ethnic, as something other than himself. And from the privileged position as a

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[48] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26; Greg Burris, “Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the ‘Real-ization’ of Resistance, ”*Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015): 30.

[49] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 9.

"philosopher"—in the western sense—he is exempt from a position as the Other or Schwartz's "outcast."[50]

Admittedly I digress here, yet with closer consideration it seems worth addressing Žižek's inclusion in this study in light of his flippant stance on difference in philosophical discourse. Though his charge that ethnic difference *should* be of no consequence in philosophy—it is of huge significance in anything socio-political. If Žižek's work is indeed observational of the multitude of converging differences which make up the "parallax Real," then he is correct, race and cultural difference are irrelevant—for him—because he is an observer of conflict, and not necessarily one who is affected by it; and at the same time does not claim responsibility for it.[51] It is the same tired argument "all lives matter" people make in the U.S. today; 'Can't we just move forward and get over slavery?'/ 'Ignore race and we can move forward'/ 'Its not about race, they're illegal!'/ 'I'm not a racist.' Žižek does address the violence inherent in the conflict of difference, describing it as emerging from 'natural' instincts that are not for personal or financial gain—however his postulation seems rather narrow and relatively convenient. He argues that, as example, neo-Nazi's claims that immigrant's are taking their jobs is just a sociologically maligned interpretation for the simple fact that they enjoy seeing a foreigner hurt. In this distilled psychoanalytical perspective of violence, as Žižek puts it, there exists a "*jouissance*" in an act of violence:

> All the talk about foreigners stealing work from us, or about the threat they represent to our Western values, should not deceive us: on closer examination, it

[50] Bruce R. Schwartz. *In MacArthur Park: Director's Interview*, Directed by Bruce R. Schwartz (1977; San Diego: Knight Mediacom, 2005), DVD.

[51] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26.

> soon becomes clear that this talk provides a rather superficial secondary rationalization. The answer we ultimately obtain from a skinhead is that it makes him feel good to beat up foreigners, that their presence disturbs him. . . .What we encounter here is indeed Id-Evil, that is, Evil structured and motivated by the most elementary imbalance in the relationship between the Ego and *jouissance*, by the tension between pleasure and the foreign body of *jouissance* at its very heart. Thus Id-Evil stages the most elementary "short circuit" [or fissure] in the subject's relationship to the primordially missing object-cause of his desire: what "bothers" us in the "other" (Jew, Japanese, African, Turk) is that he appears to entertain a privileged relationship to the object—the other either possesses the object-treasure, having snatched it away from us (which is why we don't have it), or he poses a threat to our possession of the object. [Or he possesses an object that must be stolen for this "jouissance]"[52]

I insert my own thoughts on Žižek's tinkering with the notion of "jouissance," because he omits the notion that the taker, or the colonizer, wants something that hasn't been taken away from him, and does not belong, or has not belonged to him—a "jouissance" that occurs within philosophical, cinematic, and academic inquiry too—be it Žižek's, Schwartz's, or my own respectively. Thus I am implicated, or at the very least imbricated, in the observational non-participatory unaffectedness of white men, though I am not white. Indeed the violence of this

[52] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 300-301; Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-ization' of Resistance, "*Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015): 30.

"jouissance" is a cornerstone of coloniality, and is what this dissertation and the films discussed in it are attempting to address.

There is an inherent violence in coloniality, imperialism, racism, apartheid, etc. Yet there is also an inherent violence in our desire to discuss or observe the Other. Schwartz's "interest" in those who "fall through the cracks," isn't about resistance, or amelioration of a social problem, it is a violent observation, which sees what "object" another has or does not have and tries to make the "object" (in this case the plight of the autochthonous) their own, and in filming from this privileged perspective of white observer, Schwartz takes away the object of autochthonous subjectivity—their side of the story.[53] As Schwartz admits in his interview, he puzzled the film's production together as a way to get funding. The interest in marginalized peoples as a subject for his film seems an afterthought, and one of convenience. Thus Schwartz crosses a border, a border made by those in power—to take something from the autochthonous: the object of their indigeneity. It is in this meeting of two parallel elements that should not meet (the two sides of a coin)—the filmmaker who wants to make a film about marginalized people though he is not one, and the film that is the object of evidence of marginalization—that the "fissure" of a "parallax Real" emerges—where it becomes clear that the filmmaker is taking an object that's not his.[54] Yes, I do continue to incorporate Zizek's theory despite his universalist leanings, because it

[53] Bruce R. Schwartz. *In MacArthur Park: Director's Interview*, Directed by Bruce R. Schwartz, (1977; San Diego: Knight Mediacom, 2005), DVD.

[54] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26; Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-ization' of Resistance, "*Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015): 30.

points out several elements arising from the "fissures" explored in my study.[55] Indeed Žižek's theories, when applied to theories of decolonization, themselves (and himself) become elements of the 'failure of the state'—a European philosopher/psychoanalyst, who is a construct of European Marxism, liberalism and "democracy," a construct which would not have been possible without the colonial ventures in the global south, and the free and cheap labor that gave room for the post-industrial wave of European philosophy. In turn Schwartz is a white filmmaker, and a beneficiary of the same social liberalisms that created Žižek.

I do not intend to unearth a polemical argument about Žižek's theories on difference here, leaving it for another project. Indeed his examinations of a "parallax Real" are employed in this study because they bring definition to an occurrence otherwise difficult to articulate.[56]

Bruce Schwartz's representations and "racial imaginings," which attempt to point out the difficulties of racial difference in the context of coloniality, produce a parallaxian "fissure" in the meeting of the two sides of the coin—constructed symbolism vs. reality / Schwartz's film vs. the reality of autochthonous marginality.[57] Even the filmmaker's own interpretation of the identity of his main character is flawed. In the DVD interview Schwartz states that, his character Triam Lee, represented "those who seek their lives in foreign soil."[58] Simply put, if Lee is supposed to be an

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[55] Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-ization' of Resistance, "*Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015): 30.

[56] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26.

[57] Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar Production in the Age of Emancipation,* (Baltimore: Johns Hopikins University Press, 2006), 5; Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-ization' of Resistance, "*Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015): 30.

[58] Bruce R. Schwartz. *In MacArthur Park: Director's Interview*, Directed by Bruce R. Schwartz, (1977; San Diego: Knight Mediacom, 2005), DVD.

autochthonous person, how is he on foreign soil? Schwartz continues here stating, “and what happens to them is they get lost or unnoticed or can’t find work. And how do they survive? What happens with desperation?”[59] This inquiry seems a fantasy made up by a white person who has not or will not experience what an autochthonous person experiences. If Schwartz was inspired by Adam Sliver’s story, as he states, then why wasn’t the film about an autochthonous person struggling to make it as an actor? Indeed, Schwartz’s representation of the other is based on “racial imaginings,” familiar ones (see most Hollywood westerns), in which the autochthonous person is cast as a criminal, or a savage.[60] The only “foreign soil” that is trampled upon here happens as a filmmaker haphazardly crosses into the bordered-by-colonizer space of the autochthonous—a cinematic invasion of identity.[61] A filmmaker whose original attempt to portray the correlation between despair, poverty, and violence unnecessarily exploits identity.

Yet Schwartz defends himself. According to the filmmaker, he was asked by viewers at various film festivals (including Native American film festivals), "Aren’t you stereotyping Native Americans, or isn't this a negative image of Native Americans?”[62] In Schwartz rebuttal to these questions he states that the “murder is really a symbolic murder. It’s to show the frustration and anger that could lead to such a horrific act. If it’s troubling for the viewer then so be it. Because we’re in a society that doesn't pay enough attention the need for change, the need to

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[59] Bruce R. Schwartz. *In MacArthur Park: Director’s Interview*, Directed by Bruce R. Schwartz, (1977; San Diego: Knight Mediacom, 2005), DVD.

[60] Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar Production in the Age of Emancipation,* (Baltimore: Johns Hopikins University Press, 2006), 5.

[61] Bruce R. Schwartz. *In MacArthur Park: Director’s Interview*, Directed by Bruce R. Schwartz, (1977; San Diego: Knight Mediacom, 2005), DVD.

[62] Ibid.

incorporate those from without into the mainstream. Certainly this is a theme that continues to exist in American society and if anything, if it's troubling, if it's upsetting, it's necessarily so."[63] Problematically, in the filmmaker's attempt to make broad stroke assumptions about desperation, he sporadically incorporates Triam Lee's racial identity—a haphazard focal point—that seems unnecessarily exploitative in the point he's trying to make; that people can commit horrible acts in moments of desperation.

Schwartz also addresses the desire for authenticity, or realism. He explains, "My intention with the film was to make as real a film as possible. I want the audience to feel that that they're watching real events and happenings. Sort of a *cinéma vérité* style of filmmaking, where the attempt is to realistically stage events and happenings to the point that the audience feels that what they're watching they cannot distinguish between what's real and what's acted. You like the film at, all the acting shouldn't be visible to the eye."[64]

This portrayal that Schwartz conjures is difficult to interpret as real, because the authorship has no link to the identity it seeks to render, and because the intent of realism rather than epistemological observation and researched hypothesis is simply not there. Yet there do exist films that work to portray realism but are not so literal in their exercise of this intent—as I've outlined in the first chapter—films like *Teach Our Children*, and *Bush Mama* do not textually attempt to portray a reality, instead they work to unearth an otherwise "subjugated knowledge" about the realities of disenfranchisement.[65] Unlike these films *In MacArthur Park* is

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[63] Bruce R. Schwartz. *In MacArthur Park: Director's Interview*, Directed by Bruce R. Schwartz, (1977; San Diego: Knight Mediacom, 2005), DVD.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France, 1975-1976,* (New York: Picador, 2003), 7

not revelatory of a subjugated knowledge, instead it reinforces populist Americanist knowledges (or lack there of) that perpetuate problematic "racial imaginings."[66] Is there a way to cross this border that Schwartz crosses without disturbing or misrepresenting the realities of another's identity? Certainly we can look to the stylizing of Charles Burnett in his film *Killer of Sheep* (1977), which is an observational non-narrative that imposes on the viewer only (seemingly) what the camera is allowed to see by those on screen. Yet Burnett's film is not an example of one identity objectifying, or subjectivizing a different one. Thus in the next section, diverging in a way from the American context of this project, I look into the Third Cinema practice of Trinh T. Min-ha in her film *Reassemblage: From the Firelight to the Screen* (1982).

Speaking Nearby

A film about women in rural Senegal, Trinh T. Minh-ha's *Reassemblage: From the Firelight to the Screen* works to observe the Other in a way that challenges dominant ethnographic filmmaking. Her use of cinema as a medium of observation, attempts to negate the *speaking of* the Other in ethnography and instead employs what Trinh describes as a "speaking

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[66] Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar Production in the Age of Emancipation,* (Baltimore: Johns Hopikins University Press, 2006), 5. In comparison, Schwartz's attempt at rendering the pathos of despair among marginalized peoples is not as affective as a short experimental film by Gustavo Vazquez's *Mi Hermano, Mi Hambre* (1978), which portrays a loin-clothed man gorging himself on what seems to be raw meat. The film cuts between the man eating while madly wielding a knife, and a man portraying a crucified Jesus Christ. The sound is a cacophony of random noise until the end of the film when it turns to jazz. The title is in Spanish, the film made by a Chicano filmmaker, and the context of hunger, death, and the implication of the colonizer's god seem a more complete and authentic portrayal of the struggle of the marginalized in this country.

nearby."[67] I argue that Trinh's work objectifies the objectifier, the observer, the filmmaker, and the camera's lack of power (rather than celebrate its power to record and reproduce). Unlike the other films I've discussed here, this film isn't about the United States, but it does speak of power stemming form colonialist nations, and unlike the other films discussed here Trinh's film is an ethnographic documentary, though in some ways far from the Griersonian tradition, it does employ manipulative mechanics of cinema to tell or *create* a story—but this story is about decolonizing the practice of observational storytelling.

Trinh is a Vietnamese refugee who lives and works as a musician, scholar, and filmmaker in the United States. Her work has been celebrated in the academy and in the arts, and also criticized as "convoluted" because of her "infatuation with poetic lyricism" that lends to an "impossible classification of her films."[68] Yet, as Khadidaitou Gueye describes, Trinh's practice of "crossing borderlines and dismissal of rigid institutional bodies of knowledge set her off from many contemporary filmmakers and considerably shape her aesthetic paradigm."[69]

In her book, *Elsewhere, Within Here: Immigration, Refugeeism and the Boundary Event* Trinh describes the journey that brought her first to the United States, then Senegal and back again. She begins by describing the frightening silence of her first nights in the United States, and a gunshot ringing out in the night that made her realize why she wasn't sleeping—she was

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[67] Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Reassemblage: From the Fire Light to the Screen,* directed by Trinh T. Minh-ha (1982; New York: Women Make Movies), DVD.

[68] Khadidaitou Gueye, "Ethnocultural Voices and African Aesthetics in Trihn Minh-ha's Reassemblage: From the Firelight to the Screen," *Research in African Literatures* Volume 39 No. 3 (2008): 14.

[69] Ibid.

conditioned in Vietnam during the war to live knowing that "the enemy attacks at night."[70] She tells us that again she would experience something similar to the "American nighttime landscape" seven years later in Senegal where she "lived and taught for three years at the National Conservatory of Music of Dakar while doing field research in West African countries."[71] Trinh describes her interests and most important discovery while in Senegal, stating:

> The experience of Africa was a catalyst in my own journey. There are many aspects of African cultures for which I felt deep affinities—including the legacies of French colonization, which both Vietnam and Senegal had undergone. But the one dimension of the culture that profoundly struck me during my first year there was again the language of silence. In other words, silence not as opposed to language, but as a choice not to verbalize, a will not to say, a necessary interval in an interaction—in brief, as a means of communication of its own. With many years sent in the States before going to Africa, I had almost forgotten and given up on the importance of the role of silence in Asian communicative contexts, and had come to accept that silence could not be communicated unless it was a collective, timely produced silence.[72]

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[70] Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *Elsewhere, Within Here: Immigration, Refugeeism and the Boundary Event* (New York and London: Routledge, 2011), 11.

[71] Ibid., 12.

[72] Ibid.

It this notion of silence that Trinh employs which drives my analysis most, it is also Trinh's interrogation of "crossing borderlines" that I intend to use as comparison to the crossing attempted by filmmakers like Schwartz—later leading to the analysis of another work of ethnographic narrative cinema composed by a dominant identity about the Other.[73]

Reassemblage, doesn't seem to begin or end, it is a recursive text. The film opens with the title, "Senegal 1981" and the sounds of an unknown dialect set to rhythmic sounds interpreted as music.[74] Then there is silence as the first imagery is presented; that of a man sharpening a knife; another man smoking; trees in a forest burning; and children running down a dirt road, during which the filmmaker's voiceover states, "Scarcely twenty years were enough to make two billion people define themselves as underdeveloped. I do not intend to speak about, just speak nearby."[75] Throughout the film five elements recursively occur: 1) montage imagery of seven Senegalese ethnic groups; 2) the sounds of several different dialects (some more prominent than others); 3) music and beats created by instruments, voices, and agricultural/cooking tools; 4) voiceover narration by the filmmaker; and 5) silence. This last point, the silence, is uncannily prominent. Unlike ethnographic films that work to *tell* all that is seen, Trinh—in her *speaking nearby*—also celebrates the notion of not speaking at all. Rather than a cinema of inquiry and discovery or exposition, *Reassemblage* decolonizes the screen, first and foremost through what it says without saying.

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[73] Khadidaitou Gueye, "Ethnocultural Voices and African Aesthetics in Trinh Minh-ha's *Reassemblage: From the Firelight to the Screen*," *Research in African Literatures* Volume 39 No. 3 (2008): 14.

[74] Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Reassemblage: From the Fire Light to the Screen,* directed by Trinh T. Minh-ha (1982; New York: Women Make Movies), DVD.

[75] Ibid.

As Susan Sontag writes, "the art of our time is noisy with appeals for silence. A coquettish, even cheerful nihilism. One recognizes the imperative of silence, but goes on speaking anyway. Discovering that one has nothing to say, one seeks a way to say *that.*"[76] This "cheerful nihilism" is akin to the demonstrations of "love" using the tools of the colonizer (borrowing from Benedict Anderson, as described earlier), which I argue are the cornerstone of a cinema of resistance.[77] In the case of Trinh's film, the poetics of "love" and "hatred" become an *inoculative pathology* arising from silence, a distortion of the medium of film, and a critical interrogation of ethnography as a means to reveal what is "Real," problematizing Anderson's notion of "love."[78] In other words, instead of saying, or telling about; Trinh's work does not, it chooses not to follow in the footsteps of the dominant mode of production. The inoculative pathology that is exercised in this film is that of turning one's back to, and disavowing the tool of objectification (cinema) and the rhetoric of objectification through observing "nearby" in silence.[79] As Trinh describes, her surprise at the effectiveness of not speaking or telling allowed her to not only listen, but be heard, stating, "people there knew how to listen to my silences in all complexities and subtleties and I learned that this mute language could be effectively shared. *In their silences I returned home.*"[80] Indeed, a parallaxian home that only exists between the two

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[76] Susan Sontag, *Styles of Radical Will,* (New York: Picador, 1966), 25.

[77] Ibid.; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities.* New York, NY: Verso, 2006, pp. 3, 145-146.

[78] Ibid.; Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities.* New York, NY: Verso, 2006, pp. 3, 145-146.

[79] Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Reassemblage: From the Fire Light to the Screen,* directed by Trinh T. Minh-ha (1982; New York: Women Make Movies), DVD.

[80] Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *Elsewhere, Within Here: Immigration, Refugeeism and the Boundary Event* (New York and London: Routledge, 2011), 12.

spaces of noise and silence—meaning it is not the home of the colony, nor the domestic space of the colonized home, as explored earlier. The *home* for Trinh is not either Vietnam or the United States, instead home is a noumenon existing beyond the perception of the colonizer—a no place—beyond the phenomenon of noise arising from the colonial project of telling, or speaking and declaring boundary.

As noted earlier, *Reassemblage* objectifies the objectifier, the observer, the filmmaker, and the camera's lack of power—rather than celebrate its power to record and reproduce. The film does this in several discursive ways. First, and aside from the imagery, there is the filmmaker's voiceover, which does not speak directly about the contemporaneous imagery. Thus mise en scène is disrupted by incongruous sound—the voiceover does not align with the imagery, nor does what at first seems to be diegetic sound—in fact the sound sometimes seems out-of-sync. Alongside the out-of-sync diegetic sound, there are non-diegetic sounds and voices that are pre-recorded and placed amongst the imagery; some of which don't seem to be sourced from the diegetic elements in the film. The objectifier, in this case being the viewer, is not offered cohesive imagery and sound, so one is compelled to look into what may or may not be, question the realness of the intervening sound, and focus on the imagery as not something to observe, instead, something that is aware of our gaze and trying to shake it. In several scenes the camera seems unable to keep up with the action—a jerking panning motion occurs as it apparently struggles to follow its subject. The filmmaker's voiceover preceded by a long silence in the film states, "reality is delicate. My irreality and imagination are otherwise dark. [pause of silence] The habit of imposing a meaning to every single sign."[81] Here, Trinh makes the viewer

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[81] Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Reassemblage: From the Fire Light to the Screen,* directed by Trinh T. Minh-ha (1982; New York: Women Make Movies), DVD.

aware that she too is to be thought of as an objectifier—and through this awareness asks that we also recognize that we need not make sense of "every single sign"—in fact, it seems the signs are not ours to interpret.[82] Then, trying to answer how this is a film about *not* interpreting signs, the filmmaker asks (more than once), "A film about what? [pause of silence] A film about Senegal. [pause of silence] But what about Senegal?"[83] Indeed, what is it we are witnessing? It seems that the objective camera is returning our gaze onto our own reality, our own objectivity. It seems that what this film is about is in fact the audience, not the imagery on the screen or the tools of cinema. The presumed all-powerful camera loses its credibility, and its power to follow and give meaning to signs—as described by Trinh in the film, the camera "has no eye, it records."[84]

Between these often-repeated inquiries regarding what the film is about there are long silences—absolute silences. And bookended by these silences Trinh makes several repeated statements: The first of which is about women, and does not explicitly state that the subject is specifically a Senegalese women: "In numerous things, woman is depicted as the one who possess the fire. Only she knew how to make fire. She kept it in the worst places; at the end of the stick she used to dig the ground with, for example; in her nails or in her fingers."[85] The second repeated statement is, "First create needs then help."[86] This is followed by further articulation of this idea in the two statements below that occur at different points in the film:

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[82] Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Reassemblage: From the Fire Light to the Screen,* directed by Trinh T. Minh-ha (1982; New York: Women Make Movies), DVD.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Ibid.

> 1) Sitting underneath the fat roof which projects well beyond the front wall of his newly built house, the Peace Corps volunteer notes that several villagers who stop by to chat with him. While they stoop down beside him and start talking, he smiles blankly, a pair of headphones over his ears and a Walkman Sony cassette player in his lap. 'I teach the women how to grow vegetables in their yard. This will allow them to have an income,' he says, and hesitates before he concludes, 'I'm always successful, but it's the first time this has been introduced into the village, [Trinh repeats after a pause of silence] its the first time this has been introduced into the village.'" [87]

> 2) "First create needs then help. Ethnologists handle the camera the way they handle words. Recuperate, collect, preserve, the baboon the Bassari, the Bobo. 'What are your people called again?' And ethnologist asked a fellow of his." [88]

The next criticism of ethnology comes again after a long silence. Trinh describes an ethnologist who is sleeping next to his cassette recorder while a group of Senegalese men gather to tell a story and play music, she states, "He thinks he excludes personal values. He tries or believes so. But how can he be a Fulani? That's objectivity."[89] In her concluding remarks she first turns this same criticism onto herself:

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[87] Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Reassemblage: From the Fire Light to the Screen,* directed by Trinh T. Minh-ha (1982; New York: Women Make Movies), DVD..

[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid.

> I come with the idea that I would seize the unusual, by catching the person unaware. There are better ways to steal I guess. With the other's consent. After seeing me laboring with the camera. Women invited me to their place and asked me to film them. [*Silence*] The habit of imposing. [*Silence*] Every single sign. [*Silence*] For many of us, the best way to be neutral and objective, is to copy reality meticulously. [*Silence*] Speak about, speak about. [*Silence*] The Eternal commentary that escorts images. [*Silence*] Stressing the observer's objectivity, (*Silence*) circles around the objective curiosity. [*Silence*] Different views from different angles. The ABC of photography [*Silence*].[90]

Between the silences poetic montages of children and women doing daily tasks, cooking, eating, playing, and learning is repeated throughout, and rather unremarkable. Yet the final imagery stands out—a close up of woman speaking directly to the camera, but with no sound. And Trinh continues:

> What I see is life looking at me…I am looking through a circle in a circle of looks…A hundred and fifteen degrees Fahrenheit. I put on a hat while laughters [sic] burst behind me. I haven't seen any women wearing a hat.[91]

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[90] Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Reassemblage: From the Fire Light to the Screen,* directed by Trinh T. Minh-ha (1982; New York: Women Make Movies), DVD.

[91] Ibid.

Here Trinh describes in not so many words, Robert Stam's theory of cinema as a "refraction of a refraction."[92] That is, when she states that she sees "life looking at me," the filmmaker admits that in the practice of filmmaking, the gaze of the objectifying camera is returned, and it is the author of the text that must contemplate their own reality—that 'reality *is* delicate,' and what one imposes on the world through the camera is one's own "irreality," or inability to interpret for others what is "Real," because the "Real" of a parallaxian shift is subjective, emerging from an experiential interiority.[93] Though Trinh's work may not reveal a reality in the text, it does ask one to be critical of their own perception of reality, thus turning upon the viewer the ethnographic eye of the cinema.

In Žižek's study of 'parallax', the term is defined as "the apparent displacement of an object caused by a change in observational position."[94] Indeed, Trinh's work is a shift in perspective, practice, and modality, the later being apparent in what I've described as the camera's loss of power. By "speaking nearby" the filmmaker employs a "method of indirectness [which] forecloses on any totalitarian discourse and lays the groundwork for multiple interpretations from multiple angles."[95] This is similar to what Robert Stam has articulated in his

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[92] Robert Stam, "Bakhtin, Polyphony, and Ethnic/Racial Representation," in *Unspeakable Images: Ethnicity and the American Cinema*, ed. Lester D. Friedman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991). 252

[93] Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Reassemblage: From the Fire Light to the Screen,* directed by Trinh T. Minh-ha (1982; New York: Women Make Movies), DVD; Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26.

[94] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 17.

[95] Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Reassemblage: From the Fire Light to the Screen,* directed by Trinh T. Minh-ha (1982; New York: Women Make Movies), DVD; Khadidaitou Gueye, "Ethnocultural Voices and African Aesthtics in Trihn Minh-ha's Reassemblage: From the Firelight to the Screen," *Research in African Literatures* Volume 39 No. 3 (2008): 16.

inquiry on multiculturalism in cinema and the three Bakhtinian categorizations of content analysis, *dialogism, polyphony,* and *heteroglossia* (although Stam's argument is focuses on these categorizations as they apply to many films or a body of work at once). In his argument Stam posits that in theorizing "ethnic" representation in cinema, these categorizations allow us to advance "the common goal of formulating a more nuanced, dynamic and multidimensional model for the analysis of [multicultural] ethnic representation."[96] In this regard the complexity of Trinh's work might allow mainstream filmmakers and scholars a glimpse into the methodological requisite for multicultural representation.

To elaborate, Stam's chosen theoretical categories work as follows: 1) employing *dialogism* – acknowledges that cultural voices are in dialogue with each other and not only in the form of "utterance;" 2) allowing for *polyphony* – acknowledges that in this form of study there exists a "plurality of voices which do not fuse into a single consciousness, but rather exist on different registers [and generates] a dialogic dynamism;" and finally 3) *heteroglossia* applied here, helps reveal the multitude of possibilities of polyphonic dialogisms by looking at representations of stratified class structures and their relation to differing identity dialects which emerge from a social "fissures" rather than a desire for individuality.[97]

I argue that *Reassemblage* articulates Stam's categorizations in several ways. First I remind the reader that Trinh's film crosses three specific boundaries and/or political borders; 1) the filmmaker is a Vietnamese refugee who was forced to come to the United States (arguably,

[96] Lester D. Friedman, introduction to *Unspeakable Images: Ethnicity and the American Cinema*, ed. Lester D. Friedman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991). 8.

[97] Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-ization' of Resistance, "*Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015): 30.

because of the U.S. invasion of Vietnam); 2) she is also a foreigner in Senegal who is doing the work of ethnology, supported by the institutions and the practices she is critical of; 3) she is looking at Senegal through a camera, and capturing the daily life of several autochthonous ethnic groups in Casamance—the Diola, the Sereer, the Peul, the Bassari, the Sarakhole, the Manding, and the Toucouleur.[98] This last point is significant, though the film's visuals lump all these people together, Trinh uses imagery to bring attention to their presence, but employs sound as a way to both show commonality and difference—that is, the film's sound recordings capture many of the different dialects in the area (including her own), and yet Trinh does not presume or assume they are related, in fact, she says nothing of it in the film. Which is disturbing from an ethnographic perspective, it negates the purpose of recording and retelling. Instead of understanding something about this culture, Trinh shows us what she doesn't understand, and what she sees through the lens, and what she can interpret through her experiences. In relation to the *heteroglossic*, while Trinh is critical of the ethnographer/ethnologists, they are never shown, they are not allowed to exist in the cinematic frame, not allowed to defend themselves—offering that decolonization in cinema is a practice of removing the colonizer from the spaces of coloniality, and "speaking nearby" the colonized, while speaking *of* the colonizer and allowing for the multitude of dialogisms: the filmmaker with audience, the Senegalese with filmmaker and audience, the audience with itself; while omitting the colonizer in this dialogue. Thus applying Stam's Bakhtinian categorizations, *Reassemblage* employs them as follows: *Dialogism* and *polyphony* are practiced in the film by placing multiple ethnic groups into a visual and audible setting in the frame, and when Trinh's "speaking nearby" is applied it allows for her objective

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[98] Khadidaitou Gueye, "Ethnocultural Voices and African Aesthetics in Trihn Minh-ha's Reassemblage: From the Firelight to the Screen," *Research in African Literatures* Volume 39 No. 3 (2008): 16.

practice of cinema to become self-reflexive—looking into her role in the film, as well as the role of those like her: the ethnographer and the audience. Yet the ethnographer (colonizer) has no agency in this dialogue, although the audience can recognize the dialogism inherent in Trinh's critique. Furthermore we, the audience are seemingly in dialogue with the filmmaker, though not the Senegalese—yet it is not to take away agency from the Senegalese, rather it is to acknowledge that we are not *able* to perceive their subjective reality. Indeed the Senegalese are only there to offer us a visual and audible platform for ontological self-reflexivity. There exists in this film a *dialogism* rather than a *dialogue* between the filmmaker and audience, which is generated by the "nearby" presence of the Senegalese in the film—understanding that *dialogism* is not the utterance of binary communication, but the creation of multitudes of possible communications.[99] Working with these elements, *polyphony* is apparent because each voice—the filmmaker's, the audience's, and the Senegalese's—work to create a singular critique of ethnography. In other words, as we watch the film, while Trinh narrates an incongruous narrative, and the discursive editing of images and sounds of the Senegalese people enter the screen, we are forced to search for cognitive resonance—as is the case with cinema, the Kuleshov effect drives the audience toward a *dialogism* with the filmmaker and the reluctant, restricted, and powerless camera—but not necessarily the subjects, because it is their images and voices that speak to, though not with the audience, working as a binding element, making the Senegalese subjects the source of *dialogism*, in turn leading to the *heteroglossic*. *Heteroglossia* in this work is the multitude of utterances (as Stam outlines) of the class stratification of the many subjects of a film: the audience who is coming to pay and watch a film, the filmmaker,

[99] Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Reassemblage: From the Fire Light to the Screen,* directed by Trinh T. Minh-ha (1982; New York: Women Make Movies), DVD.

who is creating a living by observing those who are on the margins, the ethnographer and their tradition, which is accused by the filmmaker of "first [creating] the need then [helping]."[100]

The creation of need then bringing help. This is also how *In MacArthur Park* is actually functioning. The need for Triam Lee to seek work outside his (bordered by colonizer) homeland, parallel to the *help* that Schwartz is presuming to bestow upon "those who have fallen through the cracks" by making a film about them.[101] Indeed the notion that somehow help comes in the form of exposition and interpretation is problematic in many forms of art, literature, and journalism. And yes, those of us who are in a position to expose the marginality of Others are a part of the mechanism that "creates need."[102] Yet it seems an inevitability in the struggle for decolonization. If this is the case, is there a model for ethnographic narrative cinema that both works to recognize the often-overlooked "Otherness" of the colonizer who may in part be the filmmaker, and expose marginality from a stance of "speaking nearby?"[103] In other words, is there a form of cinema that can celebrate the inoculative pathology of the marginalized while "speaking nearby?"[104] Can a film that is authored through the dominant culture, tell the story of those who've been relegated to the margins without crossing into the bordered site of identitarian agency? Can a filmmaker render the Other *and* the self as object—instead of individuating

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[100] Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Reassemblage: From the Fire Light to the Screen,* directed by Trinh T. Minh-ha (1982; New York: Women Make Movies), DVD.

[101] Bruce R. Schwartz. *In MacArthur Park: Director's Interview,* Directed by Bruce R. Schwartz (1977; San Diego: Knight Mediacom, 2005), DVD.

[102] Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Reassemblage: From the Fire Light to the Screen,* directed by Trinh T. Minh-ha (1982; New York: Women Make Movies), DVD.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Ibid.

either? Or does any filmmaker in a dominant cultural position who makes films about the marginalized in the U.S. or elsewhere struggle to walk away from the romanticism of cinema and its power to uplift the identity of a filmmaker and the dominant culture from which they're from? Indeed white-savior complex is an often-problematic presence in mainstream Hollywood films.[105] The celebratory individuation of heteronormative Anglo representation can even be placed upon the "Other" in typical Hollywood narratives. Yet there is room for reflexivity and non-individualist representation in cinema, specifically when it works to "Other" the dominant culture—as Trinh's film does.

Adopting the *Inoculative Pathology*

It is the colonizer who arrives, then creates a border within, which houses those who they deem as "other," or "native, or "ethnic." The creating of "need" that Trinh T. Minh-ha speaks of is indicative of this—the United States creates need through military and economic domination, then "helps" by bringing into its borders easily exploited foreign labor.[106] Shifting perspectives for a moment; if for example, the United States' can recognize its hand in creating so-called

[105] Regarding "white-savior" problematics in cinema, I want to bring up a recent film that was praised by the press for its inclusive perspective, *Hidden Figures* (2016). A narrative film about a historical moment, it tells of three black women who's work at NASA during the 1960s saw to the success of many American space missions. Yet the filmmaker outlines quite heavily that their struggles to overcome disrespect and invisibility in the workplace was in many ways because of a benevolent white boss, played by non other than white savior master—Kevin Costner (also see *Dances With Wolves*, directed by Kevin Costner, 1990).

[106] Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Reassemblage: From the Fire Light to the Screen,* directed by Trinh T. Minh-ha (1982; New York: Women Make Movies), DVD. In this film the filmmaker says the following several times, "First create needs then help." The statement is a charge against the ethnographer/colonizer who arrives in colonized lands and assumes they are helping, but not understanding that help would not have been necessary if they hadn't colonized the land to begin with.

illegal immigration, then it can be said that the *need* that is created is cheap labor—but *help* (or labor) doesn't come from within—instead this need is maintained, and those who provide *help* for that *need* are relegated to the margins of participation, their residency always threatened, and their lives illegitimatized. Turning back to the imagined reality of U.S. immigration policy there is *help* for the marginalized in forms of naturalization, citizenship, residency, guest worker programs, etc. But the underlying issue of American labor's internal colonialism—meaning the migration of exploitable labor into the U.S. rather than traditional colonialism's exploitation of labor within other lands or nations—is not often up for debate. Indeed the consequence for those who come here in search of work are often dire. They are treated as incomplete or partial members of the liberalist American economy; they work, provide services, and drive this economy, but cannot participate fully in it because they are pariahed into illegitimacy—or simply "Otherness."

Another form of *help* comes from mass media, where the struggles of migrant identities are exposed in news articles, documentaries, books, and narrative cinema (and dissertations)—ultimately lending to the American ethnographic circus of observation and Othering. As I discussed earlier about the film *In MacArthur Park*, the filmmaker seems to believe that his mere interest in marginality is enough reason to represent the Other without being reflexive of his own positionality; all the while sticking to normative (in the sense of Hollywood) and problematic stereotypes of autochthonous people. Schwartz's "interest" in the Other is assumed as *help* and *help* comes in the way of exposition without self-reflexivity, while still celebratory of the western individualism of artistry, or in this case filmmaking. But what if there was no (or very little) *help*? What could this look like? Robert M. Young's 1977 film *Alambrista!* may be a

practice in an attempt not to *help*, and instead "speak nearby," while being somewhat reflexive of the filmmaker's positionality.[107]

To summarize, *Alambrista!* follows the main character Roberto (Domingo Ambriz) as he leaves his wife, child, and mother behind in their rural Mexican village to find work in the United States. On his journey through the U.S. Roberto encounters others like him who teach him varying elements of assimilation. In central California he meets a diner waitress who finds him lying in the street exhausted after one of many arduous journeys, and takes him in. They become close over a relatively short amount of time and develop an intimate sexual relationship. In the end Ricardo discovers that his father, who had also left his village to find work in the United States and had never returned, died working on a nearby farm. When Roberto goes to collect his father's meager possessions, he discovers that his father had married a white woman and bore children with her. After discovering this Roberto has a breakdown and goes on a rampage in a junkyard beating up old cars. He decides that he doesn't want to end up like his father and returns to Mexico.

What is remarkable about this film is that Young seems to steer the viewer through Roberto's experience from Roberto's perspective, rather than Young's, and it seems as if Roberto's interiority is what propels the narrative.

Like Schwartz, Young is a white male who has an "interest" in marginalized identities. Also, very much like *In MacArthur Park,* the narrative follows the struggles of one man trying to find work across political and cultural borders. And similar to Trinh T. Minh-ha, Young conducts an ethnographic inquiry. Yet unlike *In MacArthur Park* Young doesn't villainize the characters in the film, *and* there is no hero or otherwise. Employing a form of reversal in

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[107] Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Reassemblage: From the Fire Light to the Screen,* directed by Trinh T. Minh-ha (1982; New York: Women Make Movies), DVD.

perspective, both the colonizer and the colonized are paralleled Othered, and observed in a way that objectifies both—meaning, the film ethnographically Others all identities—aligning with the methodology of inquiry presented in *Reassemblage*. Before I continue to analyze Young's film, I want to briefly look at its inception, discuss the filmmaker's background, and then relate this to the textual and philosophical questions regarding realism I outlined earlier.

Robert M. Young comes from a relatively privileged background. He attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and then dropped out to serve in the military.[108] Upon his return home he studied literature at Harvard and graduated in 1949.[109] He began his film career as a nature filmmaker, and later he would work for NBC's "White Paper Series."[110] His first film for NBC, *Sit In* (1960), documented civil rights struggles in Nashville Tennessee at the time, and would win the George Polk prize.[111] Young made several other films for NBC that addressed social conflict, such as *Angola Journey to a War* (1961), *The Anatomy of a Hospital* (1962), and *Cortile Cascino* (1961).[112] The last film, which looked into poverty in Italy and the hypocrisy of the Italian bourgeoisie, was rejected by NBC, and when Young was falsely accused of staging parts of the documentary he ended his work with NBC.[113] It was at this point that Young, along with Michael Roemer, set out to make his first fictional feature film, the seminal

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[108] Nicholas J. Cull, "Border Crossings: *Alambrista* and the Cinema of Robert M. Young," in *Alambrista and the U.S. – Mexico Border: Film, Music, and Stories of Undocumented Immigrants,* eds. Nicholas J Cull and David Carrasco (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 152.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Ibid.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Ibid., 153.

[113] Ibid.

Nothing But a Man (1964) starring Ivan Dixon as Duff, which tells the story of a Black rail worker who struggles for racial equality in Alabama and falls in love with the daughter of a preacher.[114] After a confrontation with his derelict father who was also a rail worker, Duff decides to take a different path and leaves town, but is confronted with more prejudice. Following a final visit to his father, who dies during the visit, Duff returns home with a child he had left behind in a previous relationship to start anew. The film was made during a pivotal moment in American history—shot in New Jersey in the summer of 1963, the cast took time off to take part in the March on Washington. As Nicholas J. Cull posits, the film:

> …broke new ground in its realist style and unsentimental approach to its subject matter. *Nothing But a Man* also broke Hollywood taboos by showing Black faces in close-up, center screen, and even kissing. The film did not shrink from depicting the internal problems of the Black community, including class prejudice, single parenthood and absent fathers, and black compromise with White racism. But unlike the heavy-message films of Stanley Kramer [*Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967)], Roemer and Young allowed their audience to draw their own conclusions."[115]

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[114] Nicholas J. Cull, "Border Crossings: *Alambrista* and the Cinema of Robert M. Young," in *Alambrista and the U.S. – Mexico Border: Film, Music, and Stories of Undocumented Immigrants,* eds. Nicholas J Cull and David Carrasco (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 153.

[115] Ibid., 155. I would add that *Nothing But A Man* also experimented with the visualization of the bordered sites of internal coloniality for Blacks, where Duff is negotiating leaving the space of oppression and hard labor for something new, and something he is not welcomed to participate in.

Later in the 1960s Young became interested in the "American Indian" civil rights struggle and he spent time living on a reservation in Montana and the Arctic, leading to the production of the Emmy Award Winning film *Eskimo For Life* (1970).[116]

It was in the early 1970s that Young began the journey that would inspire *Alambrista!*. Preceding Young's work on migratory labor, few films had addressed the subject—notably *Salt of the Earth* (Herbert Biberman 1954) and CBS's "See It Now" documentary *Harvest of Shame* (1960) were two that took it on. Young first addressed the topic in *Children of the Fields* (1973) a short children's film sponsored by Xerox for their "Come Over to my House" series.[117] Young began research for this project in Arizona "knowing very little about Mexican American life or culture."[118] Cull describes how Young attended a ten-day event lead by Cesar Chavez when conducting his research for the film:

> Over the course of ten days Young took part in activities, including handing out leaflets. During this time he met the Galindo family, farmworkers who agreed to be the core of his documentary. The father of the family, Paolo Galindo, was not a union member himself, and took care that Young's film not portray him as a radical out of worry that it might affect his ability to get work. Young agreed—he wanted to make a 'human statement" rather than a "political statement." Over the course of six weeks Young followed the Galindos from Phoenix Arizona onion

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[116] Nicholas J. Cull, "Border Crossings: *Alambrista* and the Cinema of Robert M. Young," in *Alambrista and the U.S. – Mexico Border: Film, Music, and Stories of Undocumented Immigrants,* eds. Nicholas J Cull and David Carrasco (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 155.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Ibid.

fields to Stockdale California. On the road with the Galindo family Young heard about the parallel lives of the undocumented Mexican workers who worked in even worse conditions than the legal workers like the Galindos, working without papers living underground lives, picking by day and even by lantern light at night.[119]

It seems Young spent a great deal of time immersing himself in an unknown culture, and it is this unknown that the film is centered on. Rather than allowing for a monolithic broad stroke about migratory labor, the questions that arise in the film are left unanswered. There is a distinction I want to make here, the questions are *left* unanswered not *gone* unanswered. Indeed Young's work is similar to Trinh's in that dialogic agency is handed to the audience, who are asked to seek their place within this unknown world. While "speaking nearby," Young doesn't assume any one character as object and is instead universal in his Othering and observation.[120]

Linda William's argues that representation of the Other is often challenged by the Othered identity when that identity authors a new representation to "remedy the situation with realistic and socially and historically accurate portrayals of the previously stereotyped group…[which] often amounts to a simple reversal of subject and object: the point of view shifts from that of the Anglo majority which views [the subject] as alien 'other,' to that of the [Other] who now views the Anglo as an alien. Thus the formerly individualized subject with whom the

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[119] Nicholas J. Cull, "Border Crossings: *Alambrista* and the Cinema of Robert M. Young," in *Alambrista and the U.S. – Mexico Border: Film, Music, and Stories of Undocumented Immigrants,* eds. Nicholas J Cull and David Carrasco (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 156.

[120] Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Reassemblage: From the Fire Light to the Screen,* directed by Trinh T. Minh-ha (1982; New York: Women Make Movies), DVD.

audience identifies becomes the new object and the formerly stereotyped [Other] object becomes the new sympathetic subject."[121] Indeed what Williams describes here is a parallax, or shift in perspective arising from the failure of a totalitarian project—in this case homogeneity, and the perspectives of the dominant culture.

Williams applies this theory to Young's film, pointing out how this "reversal" occurs in several scenes.[122] Early in the film Roberto meets two other Mexican laborers who set out to instructing him on the nuances of passing as American. They first show him how to walk into an American restaurant and order a meal, telling him to smile and show his teeth, and casually cross his legs, be confident, and always order, "ham, eggs, and coffee."[123] They also show him how to flirt with a waitress. As Williams argues of this scene, "the lesson amounts to a parody of the public manner of the American Anglo male—itself a stereotype contrasted to the more formally polite and overtly macho manner of the Mexican male."[124]

I argue that William's notion of "reversal" is employed in Young's film to objectify the objectifier, the Anglo audience, the filmmaker, and the Anglos that Roberto will encounter—and in the subtext also works to objectify the stereotype of the "formally polite and overtly macho Mexican male."[125] Thus Žižek's "parallax"—the "unfathomable X which forever eludes the

[121] Linda Williams, "Type and Stereotpe: Chicano Images in Film," *Bilingual Review/La Revista Bilingüe* 10, no. 2/3 (May-December 1983): 60.

[122] Ibid.

[123] Robert M. Young, *Alambrista! The Illegal,* directed by Robert M. Young, (1977, New York, NY: The Criterion Collection, 2012), DVD.

[124] Linda Williams, "Type and Stereotpe: Chicano Images in Film," *Bilingual Review/La Revista Bilingüe* 10, no. 2/3 (May-December 1983): 60.

[125] Ibid.

symbolic grasp, and thus causes the multiplicity of symbolic perspectives"—exists in this mode of object and subject rearrangement or reversal.[126]

Žižek posits that the definition of a parallax is "the apparent displacement of an object (the shift of its position against a background), caused by a change in observational position that provides a new line of sight."[127] Žižek's definition of subject and object are based on a shift too, arguing that a subject "subjects" themselves to an "object," which "objects" subjection.[128] Understanding this he further argues that a parallax is more complex than its singular definition stating, "subject and object are inherently 'mediated,' so that an 'epistemological' shift in the subject's point of view always reflects an 'ontological' shift in the object itself."[129] In other words, "the subject's gaze is always already inscribed into the perceived object itself."[130] In the case of *Alambrista!,* the object is the audience, the filmmaker, and the dominant culture, which are embedded in the subject, thus becoming subject as well—at once the subject (the audience filmmaker and dominant culture) share the liminal space of the object and blurs the line between object and subject. It is the phenomenon of this liminal space that Žižek argues for as a parallaxism that defines a gaze within a gaze. Positioning himself as this subject Žižek admits:

> it is this reflexive twist by means of which I myself am included in the picture constituted by me—it is this reflexive short circuit, this necessary redoubling of

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[126] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 18.

[127] Ibid., 17.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Ibid.

[130] Ibid.

> myself as standing both outside and inside my picture, that bears witness to my 'material existence.' Materialism means that the reality I see is never "whole"—not because a large part of it eludes me, but because it contains a stain, a blind spot, which indicates my inclusion in it.[131]

Applying this to Young's film, this inescapable "materialism" is indeed the positionality of the film as one made in the U.S. for a U.S. audience, thus it is a document that generates a sense that "reality" is "never 'whole,'" and because the image of whiteness is extolled upon the gaze of itself as Other, the dominant culture in *Alambrista!* is rendered as both a object and subject.[132] As Williams argues, "the film does not simply reverse the positions of the subject and object. Instead, it continuously confronts the subjective experiences of two cultures, refusing to objectify or stereotype either but also refusing to overtly individualize them."[133]

This complex reversal happens throughout the film. For instance, the main character Roberto, who is now in a relationship with the white waitress Sharon (Linda Gillen), goes to her evangelical church, where both the audience and Roberto are subjected to Sharon's over-the-top piety. Young uses a medium close-up of the two, Roberto in the foreground, Sharon just to the right in the background, her eyes closed, her hand raised in the air, her head limply nodding in affirmation as the preacher rambles on (Image 3). The camera then shifts to the other side, and Sharon is now in the foreground—we see Roberto, jaw slightly dropped, looking at her from the

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[131]Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 17.

[132] Ibid.

[133] Linda Williams, "Type and Stereotype: Chicano Images in Film," *Bilingual Review/La Revista Bilingüe* 10, no. 2/3 (May-December 1983): 60.

corner of his eye (Image 4). Young cuts this shot with shots of others at the church and the tent in which the church is set up. There are white people, Black people, and one or two other Latin Americans (Image 6). Young's camera moves around the tent like an apparition, it takes close-ups, it is in rhythm with the preacher as he walks back and forth before the congregation, it cuts suddenly and often from behind the congregation to in front of then as they wave and hail throughout. All the while, Roberto stares, wary of the spectacle in front of him, brows furrowed in wonder and silent. At one point Sharon with her hand in the air like the rest of the congregation, forces Roberto's hand up in the air while she smiles and nods at the preacher (Image 5). Soon the preacher starts singing and the congregation stands up to wait in a line to be "healed" by the preacher, who touches them on the head; some smile, some cry, another gyrates in a circle with their eyes closed, and Roberto stays seated and very still (Image 10).

Image 3: Still from *Alambrista!,* directed by Robert M. Young, Roberto's reaction to Sharon's participation at church[134]

[134] Robert M. Young, *Alambrista! The Illegal,* directed by Robert M. Young, (1977, New York, NY: The Criterion Collection, 2012), DVD. Screen shot by Aruna Ekanayake.

Image 4: Still from *Alambrista!,* directed by Robert M. Young, Roberto's reaction to Sharon's participation at church[135]

Image 5: Still from *Alambrista!,* directed by Robert M. Young, Preacher in foreground, Roberto and Sharon in background[136]

[135] Robert M. Young, *Alambrista! The Illegal,* directed by Robert M. Young, (1977, New York, NY: The Criterion Collection, 2012), DVD. Screen shot by Aruna Ekanayake.

[136] Ibid.

Image 6: Still from *Alambrista!,* directed by Robert M. Young, Sharon forcing Roberto's hand into the air[137]

Image 7: Still from *Alambrista!,* directed by Robert M. Young, Preacher with multi-cultural congregation[138]

[137] Robert M. Young, *Alambrista! The Illegal,* directed by Robert M. Young, (1977, New York, NY: The Criterion Collection, 2012), DVD. Screen shot by Aruna Ekanayake.

[138] Ibid.

Image 8: Still from *Alambrista!,* directed by Robert M. Young, Congregation Close-up[139]

Image 9: Still from *Alambrista!,* directed by Robert M. Young, Congregation Close-up[140]

[139] Robert M. Young, *Alambrista! The Illegal,* directed by Robert M. Young, (1977, New York, NY: The Criterion Collection, 2012), DVD. Screen shot by Aruna Ekanayake.

[140] Ibid.

Image 10: Still from *Alambrista!,* directed by Robert M. Young, Congregation Close-up[141]

Image 11: Still from *Alambrista!,* directed by Robert M. Young, Preacher healing congregation, woman in green in foreground gyrating in circles[142]

[141] Robert M. Young, *Alambrista! The Illegal,* directed by Robert M. Young, (1977, New York, NY: The Criterion Collection, 2012), DVD. Screen shot by Aruna Ekanayake.

[142] Ibid.

In a later scene, Roberto sits at the local diner, and Sharon gives him an English lesson—"apple pie and ice cream," he repeats after her.[143] Just after his lesson a stranger, a white man, just begins talking to him, and rambles on about his father's horse riding and hunting skills. Roberto doesn't say a word, and politely listens, as a white police officer sits down beside him. Roberto looks over to the cop, the rambling man is still going on and on—Sharon then comes to take Roberto's order. "What'll you have," she asks.[144] Roberto, framed with the cop, looks up at her and says, "ham, eggs, coffee."[145] I argue that what we are made to witness in these examples is an ethnography of the dominant culture, using repetitive recursive stereotypes and symbolism that "Others" something that is often marked as normative.

The recursive ethnography of the dominant culture in Young's film, lends to an uncanny self-reflexivity—and yet, something akin to this reflectivity is apparent when observing the marginalized identity; something that doesn't separate. It is what Williams argues as a "refusal to individualize," and is " a key factor in any realist art's attempt to free itself from the stigma of stereotype."[146] Indeed this "refusal" works as a way to also negate monolithic notions of ethno-identity, meaning one is kept from individualizing, or making broad stroke assumptions about the identity of a subject or object.[147] Williams also points out that the representation of the "male protagonist" in dominant media often universalizes the human condition as one that seeks

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[143] Robert M. Young, *Alambrista! The Illegal,* directed by Robert M. Young, (1977, New York, NY: The Criterion Collection, 2012), DVD.

[144] Ibid.

[145] Ibid.

[146] Linda Williams, "Type and Stereotype: Chicano Images in Film," *Bilingual Review/La Revista Bilingüe* 10, no. 2/3 (May-December 1983): 60.

[147] Ibid.

freedom to express individuality—an individuality stemming from dominant culture that is not based in reality, but more so in the right-to-be or to-have individualism of European and American liberalism.[148] But this is not the case with Young's film, specifically because it's main character's gaze upon all other characters is one of wonder and disbelief—an observation of the strange. Indeed Roberto, though traveling with other Mexicans and Latin Americans, doesn't know them and is often surprised by their Anglicized ways of being.

When Roberto first crosses the border he gathers with other migrant laborers who he does not know. He eats with them and discusses the types of work available at their location. Some are from Mexico, others from elsewhere in South America. While picking tomatoes at his first job he is scolded for his slow pace by the Latin American foreman—frightened, Roberto speeds up. When the foreman announces the arrival of immigration agents, the workers run. Roberto narrowly escapes custody, while everyone else he was working with are taken by Immigration. When Roberto emerges from hiding, all who remain are him and three foremen. They drive past him on their truck loaded with tomatoes, and Roberto overhears one ask another in Spanish, "Well how did it go?"[149] The other foreman responds, "Once again they cleaned us out too early."[150] The others chuckle. They see Roberto emerge from his hiding place and one says, "This guy's pretty smart. He got away."[151] Roberto then approaches them, smiling and asking,

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[148] Linda Williams, "Type and Stereotype: Chicano Images in Film," *Bilingual Review/La Revista Bilingüe* 10, no. 2/3 (May-December 1983): 61.

[149] Robert M. Young, *Alambrista! The Illegal,* directed by Robert M. Young, (1977, New York, NY: The Criterion Collection, 2012), DVD.

[150] Ibid.

[151] Ibid.

“what about my pay? You’re the one that hired me!”[152] The men begin to drive off in their truck. Roberto yells, “Hey, you hired me…come on where’s my pay?!”[153] The men just keep diving away. Implied here is that the foremen are in collaboration with the immigration agents. The agents arrive at an estimated time of day; when the foreman have come close to, or met their harvest quota—the agents get the border crossers, and the foremen don’t have to pay their workers.

The scenes I describe above are indicative of the anti-individualism Williams speaks of. The film doesn’t situate itself as favoring or glorifying either side of the border that Roberto crosses (although the opening scene in which Roberto is with his family in a relatively peaceful though impoverished setting, and is a stark contrast to what is on the other side of the border—“chaos”).[154] The liminal space that Roberto occupies is the focus of the filmic narrative. Again, Young doesn’t differentiate or individuate—evangelical churchgoers and customers at the diner, are just as strange as the other migrant workers, and the Latino foremen at the field are just as corrupt as the white immigration police. Young also deliberately stays away from formally introducing such characters, instead focusing on the people that Roberto is intimate with—his mother, wife, child, Sharon, and a traveling partner—the only people he trusts, and so too does the camera.

Alambrista! was filmed by an American filmmaker, subtitled and distributed for an American English speaking audience, and works to reveal something or some space in which

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[152] Robert M. Young, *Alambrista! The Illegal,* directed by Robert M. Young, (1977, New York, NY: The Criterion Collection, 2012), DVD.

[153] Ibid.

[154] Linda Williams, “Type and Stereotype: Chicano Images in Film,” *Bilingual Review/La Revista Bilingüe* 10, no. 2/3 (May-December 1983): 60.

Americans rarely dwell—a self reflexive one in which one observes one's own oddity. As Linda Williams speculates, the film allows "Anglo viewers to experience some of the strangeness of their own culture to foreign eyes…[while allowing] Chicano viewers to experience the double vision of their situation between two cultures."[155] The film's title *Alambrista!* loosely means tight-rope walker or simply, walker. This is personified in the film's form—most of the film is shot using a handheld camera, giving the sense of uneasiness and imbalance, or more abstractly, limnality. If indeed the film is referring to a tight-rope walker then this liminal space on which the characters walk is one that is ever questioning and threatening their existence—more precisely, and referring to Benedict Anderson, the imagined communities in which they exist.[156] I emphasize the plurality of this experience—all the characters, and more so the audience participating in this film are negotiating their walk across or upon this "tight-rope"—thus all of us, at all times exist in a state of crossing borders and/or boundaries.

At a midpoint in the film, after having secured good work, Roberto treats himself to a new outfit, starched cowboy shirt, new jeans and a glistening hat—he looks odd and out of place, it is not who he has been through the film, instead he outfits himself as a caricature of what he envisions he has become—"Americano in his own way."[157] He takes Sharon out dancing at a nightclub, which is raided by Immigration. Again he is told by what seems a trusted fellow migrant worker, to run out a specific door, which ends up leading right into the Immigration

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[155] Linda Williams, "Type and Stereotype: Chicano Images in Film," *Bilingual Review/La Revista Bilingüe* 10, no. 2/3 (May-December 1983): 63.

[156] Howie Moshovitz, "Robert M. Young and *Alambrista*," in *Alambrista and the U.S. – Mexico Border: Film, Music, and Stories of Undocumented Immigrants,* eds. Nicholas J. Cull and David Carrasco (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 168.

[157] *Efraín Gutiérrez*, *Please don't Bury Me Alive,* directed/performed by *Efraín Gutiérrez* (1976; San Antonio: Chicano Arts Film Enterprises/ UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, 2007), DVD.

paddy wagon. Roberto is deported to Mexico, where he immediately strikes a deal with "coyotes" to get back. He and several other men are crammed into the back of a covered flatbed truck and shipped to a field in Colorado to work in place of striking Chicano farmworkers (alluding to Caesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers movement). It is in Colorado that Roberto learns his father had just passed away working in a nearby field. When he discovers that his father had children with an American white woman, Roberto sees his own possible future pass before him—distressed with what he has learned he decides to return to his family in Mexico and turns himself in to the authorities. At the border, crossing back into Mexico, Roberto witnesses a woman in labor brace herself to a pole on the American side of the border so her child can be a U.S. citizen—she moans and screams, stubbornly grasping the pole. After the child is born the mother rests herself, then elated and smiling says, "He was born here. He'll never need papers. He can work with no problems"—he will not endure the struggle that Roberto has endured. The camera cuts back to Roberto, looking at the mother and child, and smiling he walks across the border, back home.

What Young gives us is an example of the ever shifting perspective of Žižek's "parallax gap," from which emerges a multiplicity of perspectives which question what is "Real," and in some ways also questions authenticity.[158] *Alambrista!* does not allow for a singular perspective, even though it follows one character in a film about difference, borders, and crossing between both, it doesn't apply a singular authenticity to Mexican, Chicano, White, female or male. Indeed there is some individuation, but not in the traditional practice of archetypal characters in cinema; instead each individual is seen as simply that—a person, who shares the liminal space of being between worlds. For a Chicano audience this may be readily apparent (as Williams

[158] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26.

argues), but for the white audience it may be a surprise to see themselves out of context on the screen, which traditionally has stereotyped them too.

Conclusion

I began this chapter with an inquiry on Freedom as a trope of Americanism. Freedom to be within a space, which is defined by taking away freedom if someone is in that space without consent—thus invoking a discussion about migration, immigration and border crossing. Indeed these topics do not only apply to people of non-European decent, Europe colonized the Americas and if we follow in the laws and ideology of European and American liberalism, did so illegally. Europeans in the Americas are self-described migrants, though do not always call themselves immigrants, in turn arguing that they are authentically a part of this land—albeit through colonial conquest, which is why and how the discussion on borders and immigration I began with transformed into a discussion on authenticity and representation in cinema. That is, I asked, how does the dominant group *authentically* represent another group who has been victim to European and American colonialism, apartheid and dispossession? Is there authentic representation when the text about one group is being authored by an outsider Other? In the context of decolonization it seems that this may be possible, only if the dominant group recognizes their misrepresentation of themselves, as Robert M. Young attempts to do.

Slavoj Žižek argues that the "Real," or what is authentic, is ever elusive, and yet emerges when perspectives are shifted, or constantly shifting, rupturing from "fissures" created by an acknowledged failure in dominant repressive thought and discourse.[159] Trinh Min-ha eludes

[159] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26; Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-ization' of Resistance, "*Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 (Summer 2015): 30.

representation by first deconstructing the medium of film and its use as an ethnographic tool, and *reassembling* it outside traditional modes of documentary narrative. Robert Young's film depends on representation, but eludes individuating its subjects to avoid monolithic renderings of pre-categorized groups. Thus what is occurring in both Trinh's and Young's films is that the object or objectified on screen becomes the objector, and the subject instead becomes the audience, who subjects themselves, or is subjected, or submits to the cinema. Žižek addresses this shift or reversal of perspective on object and subject, arguing that the subject should be considered in the context of subjecting one's self, where as the object should be considered as an objection that does "protest, oppose, [or] create an obstacle." [160] Applying this shift to the three other films I've discussed here; *I am Joaquin* asks the Chicano viewer to "subject" themselves to the cause of identitarian nationalism while acknowledging their link to colonialism; *Please Don't Bury Me Alive* tells a similar message, but also asks the audience to submit to the "object" and objection of indigeneity, which resists erasure.[161] In regards to Bruce R. Schwartz's *In MacArthur Park*, a film I've argued is problematic because it's author's individuation or stereotyping of autochthonous peoples poses a threat to the process of decolonization, ultimately is itself an objection of representation—a document of the well-intended white man trying to tell the story of millions of marginalized autochthonous people using the traditional Hollywood modes of narrative filmmaking, which tends to render a monolithic interpretation of autochthonous identity. Still, from an academic perspective, there is value in Schwartz's work in that it is an example of another reversal taking place in ethnography, where the objection of the object [the film] is muffled by the submission of the subject [the audience] who takes all at face

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[160] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 17.

[161] Ibid.

value, or more simply put, the audience submits to not an objection, but objects to their own subjection in the process of decolonization—in other words, they may not challenge representation. Certainly I am making an assumption about the audience regarding this film—yet this equation does exist, and is apparent in the continued practices of cinema's of *colonization* to date. Indeed unlike the films of Gutierrez, Trinh, and Young, *In MacArthur Park* does not ask the audience to participate, or look within, therefore there is no room for shifting multiple perspectives—only one, that of the filmmaker who doesn't speak nearby, or from within, instead speaks about. Therefore Schwartz's film doesn't allow room for a parallax gap to emerge, he doesn't include himself as a "stain" in his rendering of reality—meaning, if Schwartz intended to show his interest in people "who fall through the cracks" he never addresses how those cracks got there in the first place: European colonial genocide, American apartheid and media mis-representation, to name a few.[162] Yet Robert Young doesn't do this either, as I argued earlier, he avoids representation, and asks the audience to subject themselves to the space of the narrative and find their place within it. Trinh only alludes to who is responsible for the "2 billion people [who] define themselves as underdeveloped" in one line—"create a need, then help"—but is rather vague about an outcome. So why am I so critical of Schwartz's work? Because he claims to have strove for "real" representation, whereas the others acknowledge that reality is not a singularity, it is instead polyphonic; a multiplicity that cannot be rendered in a singular

[162] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 17. "the reality I see is never "whole"—not because a large part of it eludes me, but because it contains a stain, a blind spot, which indicates my inclusion in it"; Bruce R. Schwartz. *In MacArthur Park: Director's Interview,* Directed by Bruce R. Schwartz (1977; San Diego: Knight Mediacom, 2005), DVD.

cinematic text.[163] Young's, Trinh's, and Gutierrez's work all speak to an audience; where Gutierrez challenges the hegemonic "you" while calling to arms a Chicano diaspora; and Trinh addresses the ethnography consuming audience to ask if they know their place within the spectacle of ethnography; while Young asks his fellow white audience to place themselves in the position of seeing their identity Othered from the perspective of the Other.

The questions of borders, migration, identity and agency as they arise in these films from the post civil rights era seek to disrupt how we as Americans consider our place within borders and between them, and how we negotiate our relationship to the illegal demarcation of land by a colonial power structure. Yet the films in this chapter, though disruptive of normative thinking, do not offer an answer to the questions they bring up—they provoke thought but are vague about an outcome. Therefore, in the following chapter I look at the tropes of prison, home, borders and migration, which I discuss in chapter one and this chapter, and consider films that are instructional about resistance to the constructs of the colonizer's police state.

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[163] Bruce R. Schwartz. *In MacArthur Park: Director's Interview,* Directed by Bruce R. Schwartz (1977; San Diego: Knight Mediacom, 2005), DVD.

Chapter 3: Destroying the Police(d) State of Coloniality – Subaltern Spectatorship as Contestation

…Five generals, gathered in the gallery,
Blowing plans.

At last, the secret code is flashed:
Now is the time, now is the time.

Attack: The sound of jazz.

The city falls.

-Bob Kaufman 1959

This chapter closely considers two words from its title, *police(d),* and *state.* With the parenthetical police*(d)* I do not necessarily refer to men in uniform who are armed and charged with upholding the law—though their presence is significant in the project of colonization and in this chapter. The phenomenon of being policed can be a result of the literal interaction with the police, but can also be generated within one's self or one's own community. Policing is also a staple of coloniality, which defines itself by creating barriers and enforcing rules, therefore

policing and *colonizing* are in many ways interchangeable terms. Furthermore, by *state*, I do not only mean the institutional *state*, but also the *state* of being, existing, and persisting. Indeed being policed occurs in many of the mechanisms of modern life where one is told to behave according to societal standards, follow posted rules in public, speak when it is deemed acceptable, etc.

Still, the notion of a police, or policed state is a literal reality in the post civil rights period. As described in the chapter one, the Johnson presidency sought to alleviate some of the causes of poverty, and also sought to tackle a result of poverty—crime. The Johnson administration's rather contradictory "War on Poverty" vs. "War on Crime" policies saw the implementation of *The Law Enforcement Assistance Act* in 1965; *The Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act* of 1968; and was an integral part of the precedence set by the Supreme Court case of Terry vs. Ohio, which gave police "virtually unlimited powers to stop and frisk citizens without probable cause."[1] *The Safe Streets Act* of 1968 invested $400 million toward the "War on Crime," in turn funding the creation of the *Law Enforcement Assistance Administration* (LEAA), which became "the fastest-growing federal agency in the 1970s, its budget swelling exponentially from the $10 million Congress allotted to the War on Crime in 1965 to some $850 million by 1973."[2] Thus, for the first time in American history the federal government had a direct role in policing the nation.[3] Though the historical significance of these events are quite apparent, it is not my aim to unearth the intricacies of policy reform, instead I look into how such

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[1] Heather A. Thompson, *Blood in the Water: The Attica Prison Uprising of 1971 and its Legacy* (New York, NY: Vintage Books 2017), 19.

[2] Elizabeth Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass incarceration in America*. (Cambridge, MASS & London, England: Harvard University Press 2016). 2.

[3] Ibid.

policing may have contributed to the cultural atmosphere of the time, which in turn would inform the cinema of the era. This chapter considers cinema that isn't only historicizing acts of policing or violence by the state, but is also reimagining a state in which one's body and mind is not policed; where one recognizes the many facets of state violence and resists.

Destructivist Inclinations

As I discussed in the previous chapters, the edicts of coloniality—that of nation building, homogenization, and law and order—are enforced through the threat of incarceration and the implementation and manipulation of borders and boundaries. The films analyzed earlier also told of these hurdles in relation to assimilation or resistance to it. Nearly all of those films exposed "literal narratives of violence" that stemmed from histories of such occurrences.[4] Though some films are critical works, they are not overtly didactic and don't necessarily seek to present a solution to the problems—instead they are particularly nihilistic and ultimately quite tragic. *Please Don't Bury Me Alive,* ends in Alex's incarceration, *Bush Mama* ends when Dorothy aborts her pregnancy and kills a police officer, suggesting that she will go to prison or has to live on the run. *Alambrista!,* on the other hand, simply observes a reality from multiple perspectives and favors none. These narratives that tell of violence against the marginalized do challenge whatever oppression they address, but do not in any direct way steer one toward a counter-violence narrative—one that seeks to destroy or at least disrupt the colonial project/narrative.

In the image above Raphael Montañez Ortiz—a founding figure in the destructivist art movement—is seen performing one of his many "piano destruction concerts" at the 1966

[4] Whitney Frank, "Instructions for Destruction," *intersections* 10, no. 1 (2009): 573.

Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS) in London.[5] Ortiz's "concerts" drew from "indigenous aesthetic practice," that gave voice to the otherwise silenced.[6] As the Ortiz notes, "sound is an important part of indigenous ritual, and the drumming sounds of the pianos that resonates when I chopped them apart were an expansion of their voice, so to speak: for at least a moment they had an indigenous voice."[7]

In Ortiz's performance the grand piano, symbolic of the European colonizer, is destroyed to release what has been repressed by the policing inherent in coloniality. Thus the rigidity and grandeur of the grand piano is reduced to reveal something hidden, something that had been placed their without consent—the repressed indigenous voice, an identity which is often not given credit for their sacrifice in the project of developing elements of European cultural capital like piano music or the cinema.

Make no mistake; Ortiz's technique is not one of randomly hacking away at the piano, instead it is quite calculated, meditative, and methodological. Ortiz plays the piano with an axe, while destroying it he is sometimes gentle, sometimes caressing the piano with the butt of the axe blade, and sometimes more aggressive, but it is all of it violent—a counter violence.

Whitney Frank describes *Destruction Art* as the "only method in which the visual arts can cope in a society structured by violence and the underlying threat of death. Destruction art therefore becomes an ethical matter, an instance where artist-survivors attempt to expose

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[5] Video Still of Raphael M. Ortiz's *Piano Concert Sacrifice: Destruction in Art Symposium,* 1966, Recorded by USA TV, London, *Raphael M. Ortiz Papers*, University of California Los Angeles, Chicano Studies Research Center Archive, Los Angeles, CA.

[6] Raphael M. Ortiz, Jersey City Museum*, Unmaking: The Work of Raphael Montañez Ortiz*. Edited by Rocío Aranda-Alvarado (Jersey City: Jersey City Museum, 2007) Exhibition Catalogue, 9.

[7] Ibid., 8.

histories and systems of violence, and reinscribe such experiences into society's current consciousness"[8] Kristine Stiles outlines *destructivism* as a form imagined within the "discourse of the survivor"—meaning it tells the story of one who continues to survive within a system that does not work in their favor.[9] Stiles relates this notion to Robert Jay Lifton and Eric Markusens's theory of a "genocidal mentality," which manifests in peoples subject to a perpetual threat of annihilation—"a broad category of psychological mechanisms, which include psychic numbing, doubling, disavowal, and denial."[10] In Ortiz's 1962 "Destructivism Manifesto" he addresses this "genocidal mentality" and emphatically asks for one to participate in alleviating the malady, stating:

> We who use the process of destruction understand above all the desperate need to retain unconscious integrity. We point to ourselves and confess, shouting the revelation, that anger and anguish which hide behind the quiet face is in service of death, a death which is more than spiritual. The artist must give warning, his struggle must make a noise, it must be a signal. Our screams of anguish and anger will contort our faces and bodies, our shouts will be "to hell with death," our actions will make a noise that will shake the heavens and hell. Of this stuff our art will be, that which is made will be unmade, that which I assembled will be disassembled, that which is constructed will be destructed. The artist will cease to be the lackey, his process will cease to be burdened by a morality which only has

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[8] Whitney Frank, "Instructions for Destruction," *intersections* 10, no. 1 (2009): 571-607.

[9] Kristine Stiles, "Survival Ethos and Destruction Art," *Discourse* 14, no. 2 (1992): 74.

[10] Ibid.

> meaning in reality. The artist's sense of destruction will no longer be turned inward in fear. The art that utilizes the destructive processes will purge, for as it gives death, so it will give to live.[11]

Ortiz's manifesto resonates with the films I will look at in this chapter—films that attempt to *destruct* what are *constructs*. Films such as *As Above So Below* (Larry Clark, 1973) and *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* (Ivan Dixon 1973) will serve as contrasting examples to the passivity in the *inoculative pathology* of the films discussed in chapters one and two, in that they are both literal in their didacticism and criticism, and attempt to incite a potentiality in the struggle for decolonization in an American context. I will also briefly consider two other films *Daydream Therapy* (Bernard Nicolas, 1977) and *Illusions* (Julie Dash, 1982), both of which address states of embodiment and address the internalization of violence as a self-policing *and* a form of radicalization.

I relate destructivism to these films because it serves as en exemplary precursor to cinemas of resistance that follow. I also employ destructivism as one point of origin for a universal language uttered throughout art forms that address decolonization in the United States. Though many of the filmmakers discussed in this dissertation may have not known about or have been inspired by destructivist art, they do speak to a similar struggle—one for survival in a space that ever threatens their existence.

[11] Raphael M. Ortiz, "Destructivist Manifesto," *Raphael M. Ortiz Papers,* University of California Los Angeles, Chicano Studies Research Center Archive, Los Angeles, CA, Box 1 Folder 25.

Raphael Ortiz's destruction of the piano is an "expansion" of an otherwise silenced voice—an outcome that I argue is also present in the films discussed here.[12] Yet, rather than a medium that destroys the material of the dominant culture the films I analyze here destroy the "nonspace" of marginality by inserting into it the "discourse of the survivor," in turn filling a void with a potentiality of resistance.[13] Thus, I again return to prod at the spaces (both physical and ethereal) where the marginalized maintain in them "something that escape[s] subjectivization, a source of resistance that [can]not be squelched" in which the invisible-marginalized dwell—the "*nonplace*, from the zone of *nonsubjectivized* negativity that remains beyond power's reach (my emphasis)," where they "cope in a society structured by violence and the underlying threat of death."[14] Within this coping manifests the *inoculative pathology* of the arts, where resistance makes visible the invisible *and* vice versa and from which emerges, not the reality as dictated by coloniality, but a *Reality* that persists in between the theoretical spaces of constructed coloniality, and destructive resistance. As Greg Burris alludes to elements of "Real" as postulated by Žižek and Lacan, "resistance has the potential to radically reconfigure the social order, making visible the invisible and possible the impossible.[15] Indeed, it is precisely when "the Real" beings seeping through the cracks that existing power structures lose their

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[12] Raphael M. Ortiz, Jersey City Museum*, Unmaking: The Work of Raphael Montañez Ortiz*. Edited by Rocío Aranda-Alvarado (Jersey City: Jersey City Museum, 2007) Exhibition Catalogue, 8.

[13] Kristine Stiles, "Survival Ethos and Destruction Art," *Discourse* 14, no. 2 (1992): 74.

[14] Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-iszation' of Resistance," *Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 Summer 2015, 30; Whitney Frank, "Instructions for Destruction," *intersections* 10, no. 1 (2009): 571-607.

[15] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26.

hegemony.[16] What had appeared to be solid beings to crumble, and what had seemed immutable starts to disintegrate. It is a vision of destruction…"[17]

In the previous chapters I've discussed how processes of decolonization work to make visible what is often made invisible within the project of coloniality, and there are elements in this chapter that analyze this process in line with the process Burris describes above. But I diverge somewhat to consider the opposite of making visible the invisible—by making invisible the visible or the possible impossible I ask that we consider how resistance can erase the presence of coloniality (hegemony) with protest, while giving instruction on how to not literally make invisible, but omit, disrupt, or even destroy. Meaning if the only *possible* outcome of civilization is rooted in imperialist, colonialists power structures, then a voice of decolonization and its *inoculative pathologies* could make these totalitarian projects impossible/invisible, or their perpetual existence impossible/invisible by omitting them from dialogic participation with the marginalized, in turn erasing or destroying them.

There is a destructivism inherent in art made by the marginalized in this country, and I begin the next section with a close look at these potential "vision[s] of destruction" in the cinema of the post civil rights era, offering an intervening term in cinema theory that names a place beyond diegesis (though sourced from it) for these potentialities to exist both on and off screen—the *alterdiegetic*—in short a "*nonplace"* for the *"nonsubjectivized"* of marginalized-identity resistance to exist in the cinematic world, in spite of the *police(d) state* of coloniality.[18]

[16] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26.

[17] Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-iszation' of Resistance," *Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 Summer 2015, 30.

[18] Ibid.

Déjà vu, Alter-diegetic temporality, and a "radical Elsewhere"

What happens when one sees a film? Several things, but often one is reminded of something beyond diegesis that exists in our contemporaneous reality, a person, an event, a place, a song, a scent, and so on—a "Thing," if you will.[19] For most spectators the cinematic experience is linked to our perception of the here and now at the moment of spectatorship. This connection, or familiarity is recursive—meaning it occurs for each frame on screen, echoing beyond said screen—and ever links the film to our own reality. For the marginalized-identity spectator this phenomenon occurs in a space that is vaulted from the dominant culture, where what I will call the *alterdiegetic* in cinema manifests; a phenomenon that can be considered a more medium specific iteration of Slavoj Žižek's "Real"—which he describes as the "disavowed X on account of which our vision of reality is anamorphically distorted; it is simultaneously the *Thing* to which direct access is not possible and the obstacle which prevents direct access, the *Thing* which eludes our grasp and the distorting screen which makes us miss the *Thing*. More precisely the Real is ultimately the very shift of perspective from the first standpoint to the second [my emphasis]."[20]

This *"Thing"* in cinema, for the marginalized-identity spectator, is the *alterdiegetic*—a term that I coined to unpack a phenomenon that is related to spectatorship, to decolonization, and spaces of marginality that persist beyond the space of normative dominant culture.[21] It is a term akin to bell hooks' "Oppositional Gaze," which hooks describes as a deliberate "looking" in

[19] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 26.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

opposition of the dominant power in an effort to change reality, or at least influence it.[22] This oppositional "looking" or spectatorship, I argue, happens while watching a film in which the marginalized-identity spectator sees the potentiality of either resistance to the representations of them on screen, or find solidarity with revolutionary (either direct or indirect) ideas, actions, or fictional scenarios in the film—ones which pose an alternate reality to the horror of marginalization that they experience.[23] As hooks describes, in the experience as spectator, the marginalized, "create alternative texts that are not solely reactions," which work to ensure that "spaces of agency exist" for the marginalized, in which they interrogate the cinematic image and it's gaze upon them, and "look[s] back...naming what" they see form their socio-political positionality—it is in this moment that the alterdiegetic occurs.[24]

There are varying nuances to alterdiegesis, and the films discussed in this chapter illuminate this phenomenon and its relation to movements of resistance in the United States. Also in this chapter I also explore how the alterdiegetic allows for a space beyond the film and outside of reality to contain the potentiality of resistance spurred by the experiential oppression of marginalized groups, who often find it difficult to imagine or speak revolution because they are restricted by the oppressor's definitions of *acceptable* forms of protest or resistance. Yet before if begin to describe further these nuances, I start with an exercise in comparative analysis between Larry Clark's 1973 student film *As Above So Below,* and Beat Poet Bob Kaufman's 1959 poem "Battle Report" in an effort to position the other films I will discuss and their relationship to familiarity and recursivity. I will then continue my inquiry with a further

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[22] bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 115-116.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid., 116.

comparative analysis of Clark's film and Ivan Dixon's 1973 film *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*, which was made in the same year as *As Above So Below*, and nearly identical in thematic content, while being a relatively major Hollywood production.

As Above So Below tells the story of Jita-Hadi (Nathaniel Taylor), an African American veteran who returns home to the U.S. in an unspecified year in the late 1960's to find his community in "a post-Watts Rebellion state of siege"[25]. Jita-Hadi's "heightened political consciousness" leads him to encounter a group of Black insurgents who rally to recruit him for their cause.[26]

The epigraph at the beginning of this chapter is the last section of Bob Kaufman's poem, which I argue summarizes the critical climax of *As Above, So Below.* The film and the poem have no acknowledged historical connection, yet I employ a comparative analysis of the two in this chapter as an exercise in both textual analysis and a way to emphasize the themes of recurrence associated with the films discussed here and struggles for liberation in the United States more broadly. In many ways the poem in its entirety reflects the militant narrative of the film, and its structure and rhythmic motifs are strikingly similar to the mise-en-scène established in *As Above So Below.*[27] When analyzed alongside the urgency of Horace Tapscott's jazz score

[25] Allyson N. Field, "L.A. Rebellion: *As Above, So Below*," University of California Los Angeles Film and Television Archive, https://www.cinema.ucla.edu/la-rebellion/films/above-so-below.

[26] Allyson N. Field, Jan C. Horak, and Jacqueline N. Stewart, eds. *L.A. Rebellion: Creating a New Black Cinema*. (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015). 21.

[27] Bob Kaufman. *Solitudes Crowded with Loneliness*. New York: New Directions, 1965, 8. The University of Illinois English Department's biography of Kaufman: "Poet, prose poet, jazz performance artist, manifesto writer, and legendary figure in the Beat movement, Bob Kaufman successfully promoted both anonymity and myths of his racial identity and class origins… Still 'minor,' compared to his white bohemian

for the film, the poem as a whole touches on the tropes of recognition/familiarity and recurrence found in both the film's music and Clark's narrative, as I will outline and describe below while summarizing portions of the film.

In the scene that follows the opening black and white shot of a lone gunman in the woods, the boy who will grow up to be our main character, Jita-Hadi (Nathaniel Taylor), sits in his mother's kitchen in 1945, listening to a mock radio broadcast detailing the relocation of Japanese-Americans to internment camps. What follows this scene is a black screen, and for a relatively long seventy seconds, we hear only the sounds of gunfire, helicopters, bombs falling and people screaming—audible recursive tropes of war. This scene is a strong example of making invisible what is visible, by not visually rendering the violence of war Clark both negates its pornotropic appeal and makes invisible an act of coloniality. Clark then cuts to a low angle shot of the now-adult Jita-Hadi driving his car, accented by Horace Tapscott's jazz and overlaid with mock radio broadcasts reporting on a Black guerilla insurrection in the United States. Jita-hadi then enters a café and meets Kim (Gail Peters), who asks him if he'd ever experienced déjà vu (déjà vu is a significant motif in this film and this chapter that I will elaborate on later). We are next introduced to the other characters in the film as this soundscape escalates, retreating every so often, only to return in a familiar cadence, building toward an ever-more urgent intensity. These elements are repeated throughout the film: mock radio broadcasts, the notion of déjà vu, and the addition of characters and their roles in the community—elements that are also reflected in Tap Scott's music, and curiously, in Kaufman's poem.

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contemporaries, as editor of *Beatitude,* a San Francisco literary magazine, Kaufman is credited by some with coining "Beat" and exemplifying its voluntarily desolate lifestyle. He enjoyed an underground existence as a "poets' poet." http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/g_l/kaufman/about.htm

Where the last lines of Kaufman's poem parallel scenes of carrying out the insurgency in *As Above So Below*, the rest of "Battle Report" poetically synopsizes the first two thirds of the film. The poem begins with: "One thousand saxophones infiltrate the city. / Each with a man inside, / Hidden in ordinary cases, / Labeled FRAGILE"—these lines describe what the film is about: covert insurgents disguised as ordinary people, and their 'fragility,' is in contrast to the powerful forces of oppression with which they contend.[28] Kaufman builds onward from the saxophones, describing musical instruments in greater and greater numbers, just as Clark introduces the increasing numbers of members of the neighborhood community, while hinting here and there at their possible involvement with the insurgency. Parallel to this, Tapscott's music emphasizes the film's addition of characters, multiplying in complexity, and overwhelmingly consuming the soundscape as the film nears its narrative climax.

At this climax, we witness Jita-Hadi in the process of being recruited by the actual insurgents, some of who are revealed as familiar community members that were introduced earlier. Next Kaufman writes: "The secret agent, an innocent bystander, / Drops a note in the wail box."—these lines describe the moment when Jita-Hadi is taken to a house to meet a lead organizer of the guerilla group, and to plan his role in the rebellion.[29] Kaufman then writes: "Five generals, gathered in the gallery, / Blowing plans"—two lines that paint the next scene in which we witness the men gather to plan their insurrection.[30] There is then a cut to Jita-Hadi and a fellow rebel, in the midst of a guerilla operation, running from the police. They narrowly escape to a house in their neighborhood, where they had planned to collect plastic explosives. In

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[28] Bob Kaufman. *Solitudes Crowded with Loneliness*. New York: New Directions, 1965, 8.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

this house a highly unlikely community member is revealed as an insurgent. Informed by a snitching neighbor, the police discover Jita-Hadi's car. Gunshots ring out and we discover that the police kill the snitch by mistake. Following this scene Tapscott's jazz wails, but its core is still familiar, still bound to the same rhythm we heard early on, yet its urgency has become more palpable. Toward the concluding lines in Kaufman's poem he writes: "At last, the secret code is flashed: / Now is the time, now is the time"—these lines parallel the moment we see the unlikely insurgent drawing a gun and firing on the police officers as the music crescendos—Kaufman finishes with: "Attack: The sound of jazz. / The city falls.[31]

After the shooting of the cop Clark cuts in a flashback to the beginning of the film when Jita-Hadi first enters the café where Kim asks him about déjà vu. [32] Indeed the recursivity of Clark's film is evident throughout; we see several specific scenes at least twice—such as the one with Kim. The film begins and ends with nearly identical mise-en-scene, yet toward the end there is clarity about the positionality of the characters, and it is as if the spectator—having been given insider knowledge—has been invited to take part in their struggle.

Admittedly I begin my analysis of Clark's film with a spoiler. I do so to establish my methodological approach focusing on *recurrence*, as in déjà vu, or simply memory; which can conjure alternate/destructive potentialities that are often developed in the cinematic spaces created by the marginalized-identity spectator. More broadly, this chapter employs a discursive methodology to include a theoretical intervention that addresses the texts and their function both on and off screen, while employing a comparative historical analysis that considers the films'

[31] Bob Kaufman. *Solitudes Crowded with Loneliness*. New York: New Directions, 1965, 8.

relationships to movements of resistance in the post civil rights era and today. Within this analysis I will outline the term *alterdiegesis*, and discuss its relationship to themes of decolonization, recursivity, and the cinematic off-screen spaces of subaltern spectatorship. In doing so, I aim to inscribe non-hegemonic perspectives into classical and contemporary film theory. Seeing that much of film theory centralizes the cinematic aesthetics of the global north, it seems an imperative that the rethinking of film theory take place among works that seek to challenge not only dominant culture, but also forms of dominant cinematic practice. Indeed movements and schools of subaltern filmmaking such as Third Cinema have sought to repudiate capitalist or imperialist cinema throughout history; therefore, I offer the research here as both a compliment to, and extension of their theoretical practices, as well as an argument for film theory that is distinctly aware of American cultural and artistic apartheid—an argument that is central in the work of filmmakers such as Clark and others who first produced their work at The University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) in the 1970s and 80s, and came to be known as the "L.A. Rebellion," which I will discuss in further detail below.

Larry Clark describes how one summer when he was a student at UCLA, just two weeks before his financial aid would arrive, he realized that he was broke, stating, "all I had was a bottle of apple juice and 3 English muffins…I had to make this last for two weeks, and I did! That was when I wrote the film." [33] I imagine, that to survive these two weeks on such little required some planning, rationing and routine—a recurring sequence like déjà vu. Indeed *As Above So Below* is like a recurring dream.

[33] Larry Clark: Director/Writer/Producer of *As Above So Below* (Filmmaker/Professor San Francisco State University). Interview by author. June 27th, 2017. Berkeley, CA.

The original print of the film is housed at UCLA's Film and Television Archive, as a part of the L.A. Rebellion (LAR) collection. Also known as the Los Angeles School of Filmmakers, the L.A. Rebellion took shape at UCLA in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the Ethno-Communications department, which oversaw diversification at UCLA's film school—a school that was predominantly white and male. The LAR filmmakers set out to explore issues of social, racial, and economic justice. They also set out to challenge the dominant language of cinema by adopting and reimagining theories and styles of filmmaking with an emphasis on dismantling the dominant culture's self serving rendering of marginalized identities. Some filmmakers saw their work distributed and some did not. *As Above So Below* was never commercially distributed, and there is no copy of the film currently available for any sort of distribution. Although there is an L.A. Rebellion Box Set that includes Clark's film, it is limited to institutional academic use. The only way to screen the film is at UCLA's Instructional Media Lab, which is accessible to the public.

Given the difficulty in obtaining a copy of the film or attending a screening, to date there is very little research or writing regarding *As Above So Below*. Several essays in the recently published book *L.A. Rebellion: Creating a New Black Cinema,* discuss Clark's work more generally—Allyson Field describes *As above So Below* in the anthology's introduction as part of a "subset of films [that] thematically deal with domestic liberation, radical politics, armed resistance, and facets of Black Power."[34] In an interview Clark didn't seem particularly concerned when asked how he felt about the inaccessibility of the film stating, "Well, I came from a photography background, and when you present your work, you present your best work,

[34] Allyson N. Field, Jan C. Horak, and Jacqueline N. Stewart, eds. *L.A. Rebellion: Creating a New Black Cinema*. (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015). 21.

and the film wasn't my best work."[35] Clark seemed here to be referring to minor issues he had with sound, color and editing in what was his first feature film. However he also mentioned that showing the film today would be difficult because "people don't know what it was really like back then."[36] Indeed, contextualizing the film is hugely necessary if it is to be useful as a didactic revolutionary text. Yet what is significant about Clark's film is that it generates parallels relevant to not only its contemporaneous history but also our own present. *As Above So Below* is transhistorical, and it addresses the subjugation of Black peoples in an internally colonized state, pointing to not only what was, but also to what is now—in other words the film's circular narrative structure, and its use of themes regarding recurrence and déjà vu both visually and audibly brings the spectator into an atemporal recursive space. Notably there is never any direct indication of diegetic time or place in the film.

<u>The Alterdiegetic</u>

Clark's film narrative is scored with staged sound recordings that intone the government's policies and tactics in dealing with the increasing civil unrest in urban Black communities, as well as mock radio broadcasts reporting on the "terrorist activities" of insurgents. Some of the content for the staged recordings is borrowed directly from a 1968 U.S. government report titled *Guerrilla Warfare Advocates in the United States: Report by the*

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[35] Larry Clark: Director/ Larry Clark: Director/Writer/Producer of *As Above So Below* (Filmmaker/Professor San Francisco State University). Telephone interview by author. January 18, 2016.

[36] Ibid.

Committee on Un-American Activities.[37] Adding to these voice-overs, as described earlier, is the unnerving soundscape of Horace Tapscott's music, which works as an element that both creates tension and binds together the visual narrative and voiceovers. This soundscape and the primary visual narrative of Jita-Hadi's radicalization are forged in the contemporaneous struggles facing Black communities, which linger to this day; the fight for equal rights, the fight against poverty, the fight against police brutality, and the fight against and genocide. [38] Thus, *As Above So Below* stands as a text that is as relevant today as it was then, which is indeed troubling, and raises questions about where the voice of liberatory thought has been historically sequestered to allow such *recurrence*—again *recurrence* is a significant trope in this analysis. Yet before I further elaborate on recurrence, it is necessary to begin with an epistemological analysis of the film in relation to what I have termed the *alterdiegetic* in cinema.

The title of the film, *As Above So Below,* is an ideal starting point for my analysis—when I first saw the film the title seemed familiar, something I had heard or read before. When I began querying for possible origins of the phrase I discovered that it very much spoke to the questions I've raised about alternate diegetic spaces, both physical and conscious/subconscious. The phrase originates from Hermeticism, and *The Kybalion*, a book published in 1912 outlining the principles of Hermetic Philosophy, which first introduces the phrase in a section titled "The Principle of Correspondence" as follows:

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[37] The Committee on Un-American Activities U.S House of Representatives 90th Congress Second Session. *Guerrilla Warfare Advocates in the United States*. Report. Chapter X: "Conclusion," Second Section: "Obstacles Faced by Ghetto Guerillas," page 58-59. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government, 1968.

[38] Horace Tapscott, Composer of Film Score for *As Above, So Below* (directed by Larry Clark, 1973), performed by *The Pan African People's Arkestra*, (University of California Los Angeles, 1973).

> …a guiding "principle embodying the truth that there is always a correspondence between the laws and phenomena of the various planes of Being and Life. The old Hermetic axiom ran in these words: 'As above, so below; as below, so above.' And the grasping of this Principle [sic] gives one the means of solving many a dark paradox, and hidden secret of Nature [sic]. There are planes beyond our knowing, but when we apply the Principle of Correspondence to them we are able to understand much that would otherwise be unknowable to us. This Principle is of universal application and manifestation, on the various planes of the material, mental, and spiritual universe–it is an [sic] Universal Law. [39]

It seems that to get one, "to understand much that would be otherwise unknowable to us" through correspondence is the primary goal in Clark's film, which asks one to consider the alternate reality manifested in the film's narrative as a directional map, revealing possibilities both horrific and revolutionary for a future not yet realized occurring within and around us by way of a collective conscience projecting *recurring* potentialities—in relation to cinema, this is the framework I will employ to define what *alterdiegetic* is. This phrase also alludes to something that I will discuss in detail later, what Greg Burris posits as a "Real" which emerges at the dialectical meeting point of opposing or parallel "planes of Being." [40] For the purposes of this

[39] Three Initiates. *The Kybalion: A Study of the Hermetic Philosophy of Ancient Egypt and Greece*. (Chicago: Yogi Publication Society, 1940),10.

[40] Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-iszation' of Resistance," *Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 Summer 2015, 30; Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26. Three Initiates. *The Kybalion: A Study of the Hermetic Philosophy of Ancient Egypt and Greece*. (Chicago: Yogi Publication Society, 1940),10.

dissertation these parallel corresponding elements are the colonizer and the colonized. It is in this "correspondence" or dialogism that we can begin to define the disavowed language of marginality as it resists the colonial constructs such as mainstream cinema, and defines cinema in terms of said marginality—thus the need for the term alterdiegetic.

The phenomenon of alterdiegesis is in some ways linked to W.E.B. Du Bois's theory of a "double consciousness," or "the sense of looking at one's self through the eyes of others."[41] Different from what Du Bois describes as a "veil" thorough which one see's oneself, alterdiegesis instead turns the screen into a diaphanous element, through which the marginalized-identity spectator projects themselves into a yet-realized reality of decolonization, resistance, or opposition. [42] Thus the term alterdiegetic aims to define the double-consciousness of marginalized-identity cinema spectatorship.

In film theory the term *diegesis* refers to all the elements generated within the world of the film's narrative such as radio music or news reports listened to by a character. *Non-diegetic* elements are in the film but outside its narrative world, such as a musical score or narration (like the narration of government policy in *As Above So Below*), which is generated outside of the world of the film, and in various ways supports and/or comments upon it. The term alterdiegetic is still related to the film's diegesis, yet can point the marginalized-identity spectator beyond it to a contemporaneous potentiality in the here and now of the non-cinematic world. Alterdiegesis differs from diegesis because it is a suggested and/or projected portion of the narrative that does not occur in the text. Yet, it also differs from non-diegetic because it is not in the film as a

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[41] W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk,* (Los Angeles: Millennium Publications, 1996), 2-3.

[42] Ibid.

supporting source of narrative structure. The *alterdiegetic* is also not *meta-diegetic*—a term that describes diegetic elements that reveal the workings of the character's minds, i.e., dreams, hallucinations, or visualized thoughts. Instead, the *alterdiegetic* is indexical, pointing outward from the screen to a possibility perceived in the consciousness of marginalized-identities and into the here-and-now world in which the film is seen. Most importantly, this term is not to be confused with reflectivity/reflexivity in cinema—it does not mimic, nor does it look back upon itself, instead it reaches out suggesting something that isn't, but is likely to be.

As Above So Below invokes the alterdiegetic in varying ways—one example is how it presents an alternative to the overt militancy of contemporary militant groups. Though there is the familiar contemporary archetype of the Black militant in the film, these characters differ from the media imagery of groups like the overt Black Panther Party. Rather than overt in their political actions, the characters in the film are camouflaged as community members. They are themselves, leading normal lives out of the spotlight—something that may have never been, but certainly conjures a potentiality. Potentiality in Clark's film is employed in part by not naming location or specific dates; these elements are left for the viewer to decide. The insurgent group isn't given a name; they are instead an idea rather than a reality or a caricature—leaving the audience to apply their own reality in the contemporaneous spectating moment. Indeed, it is spectatorship that *generates* the alterdiegetic. Referring back to bell hook's "oppositional gaze" and its desire to change or alter reality, the alterdiegetic allows the subject (the gazer, or spectator) to be desubjectivized and become an element of the object (the cinema) and seek an alternative reality. In *As Above So Below* this alternate reality is allegorically related to the Black Panther Party.

Critical of the Black Panther Party's overt public militancy, Clark challenges the

possibilities of insurgency in *As Above So Below* by auditioning the idea of a covert Black insurgent force. As Clark describes, "The film was a jab at the Black Panthers. Who incites a revolution out in the open?"[43] Clark also mentions that this perspective was influenced by several other Black Nationalist groups he'd encounter while in college—groups such as "Afro Set" and "The Republic of New Africa"—and argues that these groups conducted themselves more covertly, therefore didn't receive the national media coverage that the Panthers did, making this film about a very specific reality that did not come to the attention of the masses.[44] In fact Clark suggests that the powers that be were never aware such groups even existed.[45]

In 1969, a year in which the Black Panther Party faced severe backlash from the FBI and the media, Fred Hampton, an up and coming voice in the Party was in the process of successfully transforming the Panthers from an all Black organization into a movement that addressed multiracial oppression.[46] Tragically, Hampton was shot dead in his home in December of 1969, murdered by the police in a raid organized by the FBI.[47] Following this, and other events in which members of the party were silenced, arrested, or exiled by FBI coercion, the Panthers underwent a transformation that was the result of opposing internal ideologies.[48] The Party

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[43] Larry Clark: Director/ Larry Clark: Director/Writer/Producer of *As Above So Below* (Filmmaker/Professor San Francisco State University). Telephone interview by author. January 18, 2016.

[44] Larry Clark: Director/Writer/Producer of *As Above So Below* (Filmmaker/Professor San Francisco State University). Interview by author. June 27th, 2017. Berkeley, CA.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Joshua Bloom, and Waldo E. Martin. *Black against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party*. (Berkeley: University of California Press 2013), 231.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

became divided between two schools of thought, one represented by Huey P. Newton and the other by Eldrige Cleaver.[49] Huey Newton announced that the Panther's were "putting down their guns," sparking a drastic decline in armed Panther activity.[50] Exiled to Algeria, Eldridge Cleaver lost influence back in the U.S. and many frustrated Panthers left the Party. [51]

As Above So Below was made in 1973, a year in which the Black Panther Party was no longer committed to armed resistance. When "facing dwindling public support, and embarrassing violent activity by rank-and-file members in chapters across the country, [Huey P.] Newton and the national Party leadership decided to cut their losses and consolidate their political strength in Oakland," and 1972 the called "on Party members to close down their local Panther chapters and bring all Party resources back to Oakland."[52] Indeed Clark's film reveals what may have been a widespread feeling of disappointment amongst supporters of The Panthers in this period. In this respect *As Above So Below* stands as an allegorical daydream of what resistance different from the Panthers' overt resistance could have been. Rather than an *outsurgency* like the Black Panthers', Clark's film proposes a guerilla insurgency in place of what had seemingly failed. The film urges the viewer to consider this potentiality in the world outside the diegetic space. Thus by offering the imagery of armed revolution one is able to more realistically imagine the potentiality of an armed resistance in the here and now—*alterdiegetically*—because it moves us beyond planes of knowing on the screen, and into the realm of an "Elsewhere" that does not yet

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[49] Joshua Bloom, and Waldo E. Martin. *Black against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party*. (Berkeley: University of California Press 2013), 380.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid.

exist; though it subsists.[53]

At this point one might ask; *don't all films evoke the alterdiegetic?* Indeed they could, but I want to emphasize that the alterdiegetic isn't merely a cinematic element that reminds one of the here and now—or universally suggests a change in reality. Instead, it is a blip in the marginalized-identity's conscious spectatorship, one which envisions resistance in their here and now, either in opposition to cinematic representation, or in solidarity with the onscreen resistance, placing it in an alterdiegetic space, where it is out of reach for the colonizer. Since the marginalized cannot always act upon our animus at the colonizer, we make imaginings of resistance in art that are an affectual inoculation to the subjugation we face; or we imagine revolution in spite of the mis-representation/dis-representation of us on screen. Kara Keeling discusses this form of affect that brings on oppositional spectatorship stating, "affection is the activity whereby one's own body is adopted as a privileged image around which other images arrange themselves according to their possible actions upon that body."[54] Indeed it is through affect that the images on screen are defined in spectatorship, either individually or as perceived by a group or race of peoples, as Keeling points out, "It is therefore through affection that pure perception is made into individual[ized] perception."[55] For the marginalized-identity spectator it is in the affect born of oppositional "perception" where the alterdiegetic is generated, making alterdiegesis a central term in the relationship between decolonization and cinema.[56] Therefore

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[53] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image.* Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Hammerjam. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1991), 17.

[54] Kara Keeling, *The Witch's Flight: The Cinematic, the Black Femme, and the Image of Common Sense,* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007), 13.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

this term does not apply to, or work in the service of dominant culture—it is a term within cinema theory that is for the marginalized-identity spectator in the process of decolonization.

In mainstream films authored by the dominant culture, mis-representation/dis-representation evokes the alterdiegetic in the marginalized-identity spectator, where one sees a caricature of them designed to mask or destroy what they truly are, and one is forced to use the alterdiegetic to oppositionally know what is real and what is not. Yet I do not include mainstream Hollywood films in this study, for the sake of space and time, but also to avoid the obvious—Hollywood has long worked to destroy the image of the oppressed. It may be that, for the dominant-identity spectator, this same phenomenon exists, in which they self-validate their conquest and oppression of others in viewing a film that is apologetic to the processes of colonization, but again, it is not worth stating the obvious. I use Clark's film as an example of the phenomenon of alterdiegetic because it is a text bent on decolonization.

Insider Knowledges

As discussed earlier Clark mentions that one problem with *As Above So Below* is that it has to be clearly contextualized. Indeed, there is much about the film only an insider would be able to decode. Some of this insider knowledge is revealed if one looks more closely at the sources that inspired the voiceover recordings in the film. Mock radio broadcasts play in the background throughout the film, and some of their content comes directly from a U.S. Government report titled: *Guerilla Warfare advocates in the United States: Report by the*

Committee on Un-American Activities.[57] Below is the list of proposed actions against guerrilla warfare that are heard through these mock radio broadcasts. In the actual report they can be found on page fifty-eight beginning with the second to last paragraph:

> Once the ghetto is sealed off, and depending upon the violence being perpetrated by the guerrillas, the following actions could be taken by the authorities:
>
> (1) A curfew would be imposed in the enclosed isolated area. No one would be allowed out of or into the area after sundown.
>
> (2) During the night the authorities would not only patrol the boundary lines, but would also attempt to control the streets and, if necessary, send out foot patrols through the entire area. If the guerrillas attempted to either break out of the area or to engage the authorities in open combat they would be readily suppressed.
>
> (3) During a guerrilla uprising most civil liberties would have to be suspended, search and seizure operations would be instituted during the daylight hours, and anyone found armed or without proper identification would immediately be arrested. Most of the people of the ghetto would not be involved in the guerrilla operation and, under conditions of police and

[57] The Committee on Un-American Activities U.S House of Representatives 90th Congress Second Session, *Guerrilla Warfare Advocates in the United States*, Report, Chapter X: "Conclusion," Second Section: "Obstacles Faced by Ghetto Guerillas," page 58-59, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government, 1968.

military control, some would help in ferreting out the guerrillas. Their help would be invaluable.

(4) If the guerrillas were able to hold out for a period of time then the population of the ghetto would be classified through an office for the "control and organization of the inhabitants." This office would distribute "census cards" which would bear a photograph of the individual, the letter of the district in which he lives, his house and street number, and a letter designating his home city. This classification would aid the authorities in knowing the exact location of any suspect and who is in control of any given district. Under such a system, movement would be proscribed and the ability of the guerrilla to move freely from place to place seriously curtailed.

(5) The population within the ghetto would be exhorted to work with the authorities and to report both on guerrillas and any suspicious activity they might note. The police agencies would be in a position to make immediate arrests, without warrants, under suspension of guarantees usually provided by the Constitution.[58]

This federal document, written in 1968, preempting the rise of covert guerilla warfare from

[58] The Committee on Un-American Activities U.S House of Representatives 90th Congress Second Session, *Guerrilla Warfare Advocates in the United States*, Report. Chapter X: "Conclusion," Second Section: "Obstacles Faced by Ghetto Guerillas," page 58-59, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government, 1968.

within the African American community, in itself *is* considering the potentiality of a true guerilla revolution, admitting to the failures of the state—failures which will be recursively countered through resistance. The union of the document and the film reveal a breakdown from which Slavoj Žižek's "Real" arises—meaning, as the "irreality" and "racial imaginings" [59] of guerilla forces in urban ghettos persist in the mind of those who make conditions for this to occur—an equally powerful and opposite force of resistance to the idea that armed guerilla revolution as an impossibility emerges in the inoculative pathology of the art of the marginalized.[60] In other words, by using an official document within the diegetic narrative, rather than a fictional script, Clark's film offers the potentiality of guerilla warfare in the United States—maybe even begging the question, if the government is preparing for this, why isn't it happening/or maybe it is? In this scenario the policing of ideological resistance is paradoxically disrupted by the very police with which the marginalized contend—thus Clark's meeting of the film and the Federal manifests the emergence of what Greg Burris describes as a "fissure," created at the dialectic meeting point between the *artistic symbolism* of the film and the *totalitarian symbolism* of the

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[59] Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Reassemblage: From the Fire Light to the Screen,* directed by Trinh T. Minh-ha (1982; New York: Women Make Movies), DVD; Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation,* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 5. As Moon-Ho Jung reminds us, *difference* lies in the "conglomeration of racial imaginings that emerged worldwide…a product of the imaginers than rather than the imagined."

[60] I employ the term *pathology* not as it relates to disease, abnormality, or anomaly—rather I consider the its plural definition, that which leads to a knowledge of emotions or feelings as it relates to love and hatred discussed earlier; a provocation of pathos in multiplicity. The Oxford English Dictionary defines pathology as: 1. In *plural.* Sorrows, sufferings. *Obsolete. Rare.* 2. The branch of knowledge that deals with emotions. *Obsolete. Rare.* It is important to note that this definition is marked with it interstitial position as an "obsolete" or "rare" occurrence—a "subjugated knowledge" indeed. Used as a plural of emotion, the term becomes a part of the often disavowed relation it has to marginality.

government document.[61] It is at this crossroads that emerges "the Real," what Burris argues as "the traumatic point at which the symbolic fails."[62] Yet, at this moment of failure, in cinematic terms, we are given an opportunity to place our perception of resistance into the alterdiegetic, as Burris posits:

> By taking into account the Real one arrives at a view of the Symbolic that allows for a radical conception of resistance. This interplay between the Real and the Symbolic operates even at the level of psychoanalytic subject. In contrast to a structuralist approach in which the subject is understood as a byproduct of successful subjectivization, theorists working out of a Lacanian framework argue that the subject is synonymous with failure, that the subject is precisely that which is not subjectivized. At the heart of the subject is a negative void or gap, a piece of the Real that eludes symbolization. As Mladen Dolar puts it, "The subject emerges where ideology fails."[63]

It is this anti-subjectivization that is at the center of the alterdiegetic, because within it occurs something that is eluding symbolism and representation, i.e. the viewing experience of the marginalized-identity spectator. As Žižek argues, the "subject" is one who subjects themselves to the "object," and the object "objects" to its objectification.[64] In the scenario of alterdiegesis if the object is the film and its content, then the anti-subject, the inherently failed subject, or the un-

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[61] Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-iszation' of Resistance," *Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 Summer 2015, 30.

[62] Ibid.; Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid., 17.

subjectivized marginalized-identity spectator, naturally becomes subject to, and in dialogue with, a *nonspace* beyond the film, where a "radical conception of resistance" *can* persist in the police(d) state which looks to ensure suppression against revolutionary ideology.[65]

As the mock radio broadcasts of the Un-American Activities document is read we hear the words, "community, insurgents, guerillas, terrorists" sporadically emphasized and interspersed throughout the scenes in which several characters are introduced. The placement of the words and imagery leading each introduction are strategic and work to ask the question: who among these unassuming community members might be the insurgents. In the film there are several characters that are subject to this question: Bee (Lyvonne Walder) is the overtly religious diner owner; Peewee (Billy Middleton) is the "Uncle Tom" archetype—a police detective, convinced of the white man's good will; Sweet-Ripple-Wine (Kodjo) is the town drunk; V.T. is the local bookie; and the young lady Kim is somewhat an allusion to the iconic Angela Y. Davis. Even though Peewee is a police detective, the placements of the mock radio broadcasts imply that even he could be an insurgent. Whereas Bee's knowing, silent, and curious direct glance at Kim seems to suggest the two of them may also be guerillas.

The scenes in the first two thirds of the film continue to imply the possibility that anyone in the frame could be an insurgent, and throughout this inquiry Clark uses imagery that allusively compares the Panthers' tactics of overt resistance to guerilla warfare. For example, as Jita-Hadi describes his experiences in the military working in South America to quell leftist groups, the film cuts to newsreel footage of contemporary guerilla insurgencies in South America, again pointing to the unimagined possibilities of resistance in the film viewer's here and now. That is,

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[65] Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-iszation' of Resistance," *Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 Summer 2015, 30.

if we can make the connection to dissidence here as a marginalized-identity American audience, we can begin to question what it means to understand revolution in our own context. By juxtaposing footage of South American guerilla warfare with that of the contemporaneous diegetic rebellion, Clark suggests that there is no difference between the struggles of these guerillas and struggles for liberation amongst the Black communities in post civil rights era America. As a historical document, the film moves across temporalities to refer to a potentiality; it goes into the past and into the present, as though all are happening at once. This exemplifies the alterdiegetic because it is also linked to the contemporary marginalized-identity spectator's present, the film's contemporary moment, and histories of oppression and resistance simultaneously and recursively.

Ivan Dixon's, *The Spook Who Sat by the Door,* which was also released in 1973*,* is another film about organized covert militant warfare in Black urban neighborhoods in the same period.[66] In Clark's film however, the members of the insurrection are ordinary citizens seemingly compliant with the oppressor's system, whereas the leadership and recruits in Dixon's film are people on the margins of the community. In *Spook*, the main character Dan Freeman (Lawrence Cook) is a Black former CIA agent who leaves the agency to become a social worker in his home town of Chicago, where he trains Black gang members in guerilla warfare tactics to use against the police. Though he is from Chicago, Freeman is in many ways an outsider, privileged with education and access to the reins of power, and the gang members he recruits are

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[66] Ivan Dixon, *The Spook Who Sat By the Door*, Directed by Ivan Dixon, Performed by Lawrence Cook (1973; Gary Indiana: United Artists), Film. Unlike Clark's film, *Spook was* nationally distributed, and was pulled from theaters. According to Samantha Shepard the film was may have been removed by the "influence of the FBI's Counter Intelligence Program"; Samantha N. Sheppard, "Persistently Displaced: Situated Knowledges and Interrelated Histories in *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*," *Cinema Journal* 52, no. 2 (2013): 73.

socially marginalized in their community because of their alleged criminality. In this regard, *As Above So Below* differs in its vision of leadership within the insurgency. Rather than a Dan Freeman who's knowledge comes from working *within* the oppressive system to bring it down, the insurgents in *As Above So Below* are Black community members, churchgoers, pastors, veterans, shop clerks, and transients—all familiar neighborhood people one might encounter everyday. These insurgents lead lives as part of the oppressed community, rather than at its margins like the gang members Freeman recruits, and one would find it hard to differentiate them from the compliant non-insurgent—and more significantly, so would an insider. Using repetitive shots of these community members doing their everyday things, Clark plays with the trope of familiarity, presenting it as déjà vu, implying that one might easily have seen or known these people, their dwellings, their clothes and mannerisms, somewhere else, in another space, time, or film. An example of this occurs early in the film after Jita-Hadi is introduced when the camera cuts away from his subjective perspective and makes an objective observation of Peewee walking down the street—as the camera cuts several times during Peewee's stroll we see him from long shots, medium close ups, panning shots, and a bird's-eye shot as he walks into a diner. The objective or objectifying camera is observational, curious, and prodding, seeking out who may or may not be an insurgent. Indeed Clark doesn't tell us who the insurgents are until they are rather abruptly revealed towards the film's end. Nonetheless we know from the mock radio broadcasts that there are "terrorist attacks" and "Black nationalist groups" and "insurgents" who have claimed for themselves power over their oppressor—at the very least due to the media attention.[67] Though we don't know who the insurgents are for most of the film, we understand

[67] Larry Clark, *As Above, So Below*. Directed by Larry Clark. (1973; Los Angeles: University of California Los Angeles), Film.

that we will. Clark renders this possibility by paralleling the narrative imagery with the mock radio broadcasts and voiceovers of government policy. For example, the scene where we are introduced to Jita-Hadi and Peewee is paralleled with a the sound bites of a mock radio broadcast that states that there are, "a group of unknown terrorists who spring up from time to time, strike and disappear."[68] At the moment when the word "terrorists" is uttered the camera cuts away from Jita-Hadi in his car listening to the radio to the man yet-to-be identified as Peewee. Offered the *possibility* that this man may be implicated in the "terrorist" activities, we have the opportunity to alterdiegetically place ourselves within "planes beyond our knowing," as described by the *Principle of Correspondence*, and become able to imagine through familiarity with Clark's neighborhood mise-en-scene and characters, the *possibilities* inherent in this unseen insurgency. And when we do know who the insurgents are, we are better able to "understand much that would otherwise be unknowable to us."[69] Thus, in posing the question of which community members might be insurgents, Clark disrupts the spectator's sense of knowing, by cinematically making suspects of those who would otherwise go unnoticed.

As the film progresses several characters are revealed to be a part of an insurgent group that is trying to recruit Jita-Hadi. Kim—the woman in the diner that acknowledges Bee's knowing glance, and who ask Jita-Hadi about déjà vu—is a key recruiter for the guerilla organization. Sweet-Ripple-Wine, playing the town drunk, turns out to be a firebrand militant who brings Jita-Hadi to the guerilla headquarters for the final phase of his recruitment. One of the most surprising reveals is that of the overtly religious churchgoing character of Bee who is

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[68] Larry Clark, *As Above, So Below*. Directed by Larry Clark. (1973; Los Angeles: University of California Los Angeles), Film.

[69] Three Initiates. *The Kybalion: A Study of the Hermetic Philosophy of Ancient Egypt and Greece*. (Chicago: Yogi Publication Society, 1940), 10.

discovered to be one of the group's leaders. In the moment of alterdiegesis these revelations point outward to the contemporaneous potentiality in the fight for decolonization, offering the possibility of an alternate mode of resistance stemming from unlikely sources in the here and now. Deflecting the stereotypes outlined in the mock radio broadcasts of armed militant insurgents, characters such as Bee or Sweet-Ripple-Wine are presented to suggest that the aggressive stereotyping by both the media and the police can be used against those who stereotype. Indeed if the militant can be camouflaged in their everyday existence, they can more effectively carry out their tasks of disruption.

The coded reality Clark created in the film is indeed indicative of what Žižek argues as a "parallax Real[ity]," where a shift in perspective reveals a multitude of different outcomes, some of which ironically do align with the dominant culture's expected outcomes (like the Uncle Tom-esque Peewee), and others go unseen while persisting and subsisting and regenerating beyond the screen, onto, or into, and within an alterdiegetic space, which *also* arises from a shift in perspective: that of the (de)colonized marginalized-identity spectator.[70] It is in this shift that we can position ourselves outside of the *police(d) state* of knowing only what is told or mandated by normative culture, and instead imagining what can be. Yes, cinema can manifest a model for resistance and place it in an off-screen out-of-reach-to-the-colonizer space, and yes, alterdiegesis is in dialogue with decolonization, and though it may apply to other contexts, it is only effective as a tool of decolonization, otherwise it works only as a *something that makes us think of something* element in spectatorship, which is then universally applied to the cinematic experience rendering it too broad a term to bother theorizing.

[70] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006).

Alterdiegesis is also destructive in that it doesn't allow for the constructs of the colonizer to exist within its space—like Raphael Ortiz destroys the European musical instrument—Clark's allusive narrative destroys the *impossibility* of a guerilla insurrection, and textually destroys pejorative tropes of militancy, making way for a "nonplace" where resistance can exist: a "zone of nonsubjectivized negativity that remains beyond power's reach."[71] Thus the alterdiegetic serves to put in an accessible place what may be deemed illegal or revolutionary in the eye of the colonizer—it distorts the process of catharsis in spectatorship in an effort to protect the marginalized-identify spectator from scrutiny, and allows in them a subjective mimesis to occur, using a shift in perspective that makes the *impossible* reality potentially *possible*.

When viewing Clark's film today, it brings into light the often-debated strategies of modern groups that seek to challenge aggressions by the state. In today's movements for decolonization, mere protestors (meaning those who work ostensibly within the set guidelines of what is deemed acceptable protest by law) of police brutality and state sanctioned apartheid are called out as radicals or thugs or even (and problematically) racists. Yet the potentiality presented by a film like Clark's can be useful in pushing supporters of forms of resistance, deemed acceptable by the centers of power, away from pejorative media rhetoric that paints resistance as thuggery. Indeed, texts that give opportunity for the alterdiegetic to arise as an agent of change can be useful in the radicalization of those who have been led to believe that following the homogenizing guidelines of coloniality in relation to resistance: behaving well, or conducting non-disruptive protest, must be the norm. Instead we can justify the use of disruptive warfare against the genocidal warfare of the state when we are able to imagine the possibility of everyday citizens as actors in disruption.

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[71] Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-iszation' of Resistance," *Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 Summer 2015, 30.

Clark's film then, is a beginner's guide to practicing an acknowledgment of the alterdiegetic, where the once marginalized-identity spectator understands that the film creates an *alterdiegetic* temporality—both historically and contemporaneously referring the spectator to the struggles for equality in the time the film was made and also to the movements against apartheid today—pointing us toward a potentiality of revolution in our own here-and-now, while descripting the often forgotten or erased histories of decades of peaceful protests, loosely organized regional rebellions, and even judicial representation—all which have failed to alleviate the malady of social injustice in American coloniality.

A Little Déjà vu – History Repeats Itself

I chose to begin my inquiry with Clark's film, because it gives an opportunity to discuss the phenomenon of the alterdiegetic in terms of déjà vu—an idea which was inspirational in the development of this chapter. Like déjà vu the alterdiegetic is recursive, atemporal, elusive and allusive, and at the moment of spectatorship it echoes back and forth between the space of film on screen and the space that it is—indeed, alterdiegesis is a space, but is also an element of cinematic temporality. Considering this, déjà vu serves as the non-cinematic, less specific, root idea of alterdiegesis.

The way characters in the film pose questions about déjà vu, and how Clark creates a mise-en-scene of familiarity between character and audience, is a significant component of developing the theory of alterdiegesis, thus the topic of déjà vu in relation to the alterdiegetic, is worth noting as mode of historiography as well—meaning it asks us to move beyond the historical moment, the historical text of the film, and draw contemporary parallels. For example, the film is bookended with a curious long take in black and white of a lone gunman walking

through a snow-covered and wooded mountainside. Between the lone gunman scenes, the film is further bracketed between scenes in a neighborhood coffee shop where, at the beginning of the film, Jita-Hadi meets Kim, who asks him in their first somewhat flirtatious conversation if he ever experienced déjà vu. Their encounter is initiated by Kim calling across the room to Jita-Hadi, "Hey Brotha!," followed by Jita-Hadi walking over to her table and sitting down. Then Kim asks, "Do you believe in fore knowledge? You know, déjà vu? You know, it's like you've been somewhere before, but you haven't. Like you have a dream and that dream starts coming true. It starts happening."[72] Jita-Hadi responds, "Yeah that's happened to me before," and Kim continues, "Well I've been here with you before. You came through the door got a cup of coffee, played the same record you just played [on the jukebox]. All of this has happened before. It's like a breath to a new life, and you go on and on and on till—until you reach your dream's furthest recesses."[73] This scene is again repeated at the end of the film, yet Kim's monologue about déjà vu begins earlier in the scene as a voice over. I propose that the dreams Kim speaks of and those "furthest recesses" are off-screen, out of the frame, in the parallel consciousness and temporality of living human beings in the real world contributing to the makeup of the alterdiegetic—indeed Kim seems to be directing these questions at the audience as well, alluding to what may well be the unarticulated emanation of the alterdiegetic.

Clark himself describes the trope of déjà vu as an element of life that is universally understandable, stating, "Everyone has déjà vu, it was going to be the structure of the film. If you've had déjà vu you know what's going to happen. [The film] wasn't [reflecting] reality

[72] Larry Clark, *As Above, So Below*. Directed by Larry Clark. (1973; Los Angeles: University of California Los Angeles), Film.

[73] Ibid.

because that sort of thing [covert Black insurgency] wasn't really going on."[74] Yet Clark nods to the possibility that these things did go on or are going on, and those behind it were left unnamed and remain in the shadows.[75] Although, there had been many rebellions in Black urban communities across the nation, as far as my research has shown, there were never reported organized covert insurgent groups or *Black terrorists* anywhere in America in the 60's or 70's. Certainly, more overt factions similar to The Black Panther Party had been around before then, and continued to arise as Black Nationalist and Liberation movements, but they were all out in the open. Indeed many civil rights organizations of the time as well as the Black Panther party were not "insurgent" revolutionary groups; instead they constituted a resistance faction that promoted the idea of agency in Black communities in which the state had failed to.[76]

In a compelling 1968 *New York Times* article titled, *Are We in the Middle Of a Revolution? Problem for revolutionaries: where to start chipping?,* Andrew Kopkind sets out to define just what "revolution" in the post civil rights era means and questions its presence in the United States:

> By usual definition, revolution means displacement of the rulers by the ruled, a redress of imbalance of power in the social system. The classical model—a seizure of the state in violent struggle—is of course unthinkable in America now.

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[74] Larry Clark: Director/ Larry Clark: Director/Writer/Producer of *As Above So Below* (Filmmaker/Professor San Francisco State University). Telephone interview by author. January 18, 2016.

[75] Larry Clark: Director/Writer/Producer of *As Above So Below* (Filmmaker/Professor San Francisco State University). Interview by author. June 27th, 2017. Berkeley, CA.

[76] Joshua Bloom, and Waldo E. Martin. *Black against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party*. (Berkeley: University of California Press 2013), 229.

> Potential revolutionary classes—black people, students, blue collar workers, hippies—are either ill placed or ill-disposed for such battle.[77]

Kopkind's point is clear, revolution is not a realized reality in America. I bring this article into the discussion because it is a historical account from the popular culture perspective of the New York Times, and it helps position the charge of Clark's call for covert revolution. Kopkind, rather cynically, argues that common person was "ill-disposed" for any successful revolution, because all overt efforts to change power have failed, leaving the power in the same place it began. Yet with Kopkind's charge against the common person in contrast with Clark's representation, it becomes clear that the common person would be the ideal candidate for recruitment into a revolutionary movement—because they are inherently covert.

Clark is similarly critical of the notion of revolution in a post civil-rights era America, and the rarity of the argument that *As Above So Below* makes is evidence that those who would be the source of revolution are ill equipped because the cultural rhetoric of American resistance (or non-violent protest) is positioned to benefit the oppressor. Kopkind validates the idea that overt resistance and protest weren't a means toward change, and Clark's film is an opportunity to explore further the cultural language of the oppressor, who has ensured the design and implementation of the ideals of so-called peaceful resistance into the system they created. A system that is poised to charge and shame those who would act otherwise, marking them as criminals when they step outside of the boundaries of resistance as defined by said oppressor. Franz Fanon argues a similar notion regarding revolution and decolonization, emphasizing that

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[77] Andrew Kopkind, "Article 62 -- no Title," *New York Times* (New York, NY), Nov 10 1968.

when revolution becomes a reality the oppressed “are called upon to be reasonable” by the oppressor, as Fanon elaborates:

> They are offered rock solid values, they are told in great detail that decolonization should not mean regression, and they must rely on the values which have proved to be reliable and worthwhile,” thus when the “colonized hear the speech on Western culture they draw their machetes or at least check to see they are close to hand. The supremacy of white values is stated with such violence, the victorious confrontation of these values with the lifestyle and beliefs of the colonized is impregnated with [such] aggressiveness, that as a counter measure the colonized rightly make a mockery of them whenever they are mentioned. In the colonial context the colonist only quits undermining the colonized once the latter have proclaimed loud and clear that white values reign supreme.[78]

It seems that Kopkind’s cynical view is informed by the subservience of those who protest within these defined boundaries of protest as created by the oppressor, in effect proclaiming that “white values reign supreme,”—and in many ways what Clark is critical of too.

The notion of revolution is always met with opposition. The Civil Rights Bill did increase minority inclusion in the American community, but has been long countered by the creation and expansion of a militarized police force, and economic, educational, and physical apartheid. Though institutional change had taken place at the hands of a reactionary government, the terms of social change are protective of the centers of power, and revisionist in their rhetoric

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[78] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched Of The Earth*. (New York: Grove Pr., Inc. 1968), 8.

of apartheid, rather than abolitionist. For Clark too the reality of a revolution had not yet arrived—not by the Black Panthers or any other overt liberatory group—and his reference to déjà vu in the film is an admission that revolution was yet to come, while being critical of those who see and speak, or perform an unrealized revolution.

Thus Clark's film is both an open critique of *outsurgency and* a call to action. Although viewers may read the film as one or both of these things, what it accomplishes in either case is to point not only *to* but also *beyond* its historical context to an alternate and unrealized response to oppression, one which the marginalized-identity spectator has perhaps daydreamed and pondered of in the specific state of déjà vu that Kim describes to Jita-Hadi.

In contrast to the Oxford English Dictionary definition of déjà vu as, "An illusory feeling of having previously experienced a present situation; a form of paramnesia," Kim proposes an alternative, and calls the experience "a breath of new life" through which you can access the "farthest recesses" of your "dreams"—indeed a realm of unrealized possibility. This is the possibility that moves us out from the cinematic into an alterdiegesis of a possible new revolutionary reality—an affective shift that occurs in the marginalized-identity spectator's cinematic experience. Thus the nature of alterdiegesis is as an *elsewhere* that is also indexically tied to our own real world, a location in which the marginalized-identity can place what has never happened and/or what can possibly yet happen. Within this elsewhere provided by the film, revolution can be visually, and emotionally realized, beyond the frame and beyond diegesis.

One could argue that many films or books offer alternative modes of thinking, but what I'm trying to point out is that there exists a space in cinema where the marginalized can place what is not known but is perfectly present. Revolution is present, and can be considered as a cyclical element of existence for the marginalized, rather than a finite occurrence. Inside of a

nation that condemns revolution there must be a space for it to exist. A cinema of resistance functions as this; though not as a space where mimesis occurs, but a temporally contemporaneous space where the potentiality of revolution is placed because it is not present in the *reality* of that very moment.

Cinema's relationship to reality is located between reality and consciousness, informing one's perception of the text, imposed by one's own experiences in that reality. Indeed because of this relationship there emerges a space where cinema works beyond what is seen on the screen. As Gilles Deleuze argues, the cinematic "visual image has a legible function beyond its visible function," and there "remains an out-of-field [*hors champ*]"—akin to *alter-diegesis*—if not seen or consciously understood is nonetheless sensed.[79] Delueze further posits that "the out-of-field designates that which exists elsewhere, to one side or around," testifying "to a more disturbing presence, one which cannot even be said to exist, but rather to 'insist' or subsist,' a more radical Elsewhere [sic] outside homogenous space and time."[80] Richard Rushton argues that Delueze's philosophy of this " radical Elsewhere" is rooted in "the determination to uncover the 'unthought' in thought (to think that which is unthinkable)"—a mode of thinking that is heavily emphasized in unpacking the intricacies of alterdiegesis, because revolution for the marginalized-identity spectator is a thought that is a part of this *unthought*, a "Thing" that alludes their grasp, yet non-the-less exists.[81] Yet, unlike the phenomenon of alterdiegesis, Rushton

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[79] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image.* Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Hammerjam. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1991), 15-17. *Hors Champ* in French meaning off-camera or off-screen.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Richard Rushton, "Deleuzian Spectatorship," *Screen* 50, no. 1 (2009): 49; Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 26.

posits that Delueze's theories argue that the "sensations" or "thoughts" of the "unthought" cannot "be possessed by or attributed to subjects, for they are, Deleuze writes (with Guattari), 'independent of a state of those who experience them.'[82] Rushton further posits that "If the project of *Screen* Theory was one of transforming subjectivities so that they would no longer be subjects, then Delueze's cinematic philosophy is from the beginning one which tries to go beyond subjectivity"—as does the alterdiegetic, yet it does employ the subject in a transformative process, where the "unthought," or Burris's "nonsubjectivized negativity," is directed at the oppressor and is possessed by the desubjectivized-spectator.[83] Despite Deleuze's want of desubjectivization, Rushton admits that Deleuze's spectators are subjects of the cinema, thus created by it in the "act of going to the cinema and experiencing a film," in which a "fusion between the spectator and the screen" occurs.[84] Indeed the alterdiegetic is a product of this fusion—where the marginalized-identity spectator is no longer the subject of the object of cinema, and instead this desubjectivized spectator becomes the object itself and enters or renders the alterdiegetic. Interestingly both the alterdiegetic and the "radical Elsewhere" work in opposition to the Brechtian negativities associated with subject creation through art, positioning these theories as a *beneficial* fusion of the self and the cinema.[85]

I employ Deulueze's "radical Elsewhere" because it is similar to what I call the alterdiegetic, yet his "out-of-frame" refers to *spatiality* and cannot be "possessed" by the

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[82] Richard Rushton, "Deleuzian Spectatorship," *Screen* 50, no. 1 (2009): 49.

[83] Ibid.; Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-iszation' of Resistance," *Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 Summer 2015, 30.

[84] Richard Rushton, "Deleuzian Spectatorship," *Screen* 50, no. 1 (2009): 48.

[85] Ibid., 48-49.

desubjectivized subject; whereas the *alterdiegetic* refers to both the *spatiality* and *temporality* of desubjectivization and includes the subject in the process of transforming themselves and the object of cinema into an object of decolonization—specifically for the marginalized-identity spectator.

The alterdiegetic, as opposed to Deulueze's "radical Elsewhere," can only occur inside of a finite moment, during and after viewing a text and its relation to contemporaneous reality—which is how it is linked to diegesis, and once it moves beyond the diegetic, it is simply memory (or inspiration). Perhaps this is why Clark sensed there might be problems in exhibiting *As Above So Below* out of the historical context of 1973; nonetheless it seems there is much that the film may offer an audience today. Because it was never distributed in its own time and has only had limited art house screenings, it is difficult to imagine what its impact *could* have been. But what it *is*, today, given the racial turmoil in the United States of the new millennium, is both referential to our current reality and generative of the déjà vu of an as yet unrealized insurgency.

In May of 2015, I curated a screening at UCLA of *As Above So below*. The months before had been rife with media reports of police murdering unarmed Black men: April 2014, Dontre Hamilton, Milwaukee Wisconsin; July 2014, Eric Garner, New York City, New York; August 2014 Michael Brown Jr., Ferguson Missouri; August 2014, Ezell Ford, Los Angeles California; November 2014, Tanisha Anderson, Cleveland Ohio; November 2014, Akai Gurley, Brooklyn New York; November 2014, Tamir Rice Cleveland Ohio; December 2014, Rumain Brisbon, Phoenix Arizona; December 2014, Jerame Reid, Bridgeton New Jersey; March 2015, Tony Robinson, Madison Wisconsin; March 2015, Philip White, Vineland New Jersey. By April of 2015, Eric Harris, Walter Scott, and Freddie Grey had been the most recent victims of police

murder.[86] Two major protests occurred in response to this ruthless and seemingly endless genocide. On November 24th 2014 Michael Brown's murder had sparked protest and much "violence" in Ferguson Missouri.[87] And on April 28th 2015, shortly before the screening I curated of *As Above So Below,* protests broke out in Baltimore Maryland in response to the murder of Freddie Gray.[88] That same day, challenging criticism of the "protests" from conservatives, the online news magazine *Salon.com* published an essay by Benji Hart with the headline: *Baltimore's Protesters are Right: Smashing Police Cars is a Legitimate Political Strategy*—one particular paragraph stands out relative to the themes that arise in this chapter:

> Non-violence is a type of political performance designed to raise awareness and win over sympathy of those with privilege. When those on the outside of struggle—the white, the wealthy, the straight, the able-bodied, the masculine—have demonstrated repeatedly that they do not care, are not invested, are not going to step in the line of fire to defend the oppressed, this is a futile political strategy. It not only fails to meet the needs of the community, but actually puts oppressed people in further danger of violence.[89]

[86] Rich Juzwiak and Aleksander Chan, "Unarmed People of Color Killed by Police, 1999-2014," *Gawker*, December 2014.

[87] Ted Lewis, "Ferguson, the Murder of Michael Brown, and the St. Louis Cardinals," *The Huffington Post,* October 2014, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/ferguson-the-murder-of-mi_b_5968646

[88] Joshua Berlinger, "Baltimore Riots: A Timeline." *CNN.* April 2015.

[89] Benji Hart, "Baltimore's Violent Protesters Are Right: Smashing Police Cars Is a Legitimate Political Strategy." *Salon*. May 2015.

The images of civil unrest in our contemporary news paralleled *As Above So Below's* narrative, transhistorically linking this 1973 film to the here and now, and to the past, as a series of recurring present events—atemporal, like déjà vu. After the screening, *As Above, So Below* seemed more poignant and relevant than ever, and although it is a historical document, like déjà vu it pointed from the past out into the future that was our own present state of things. Like déjà vu the film, Hart's writing, Freddie Grey, Michael Brown, Baltimore and Ferguson, together, reached into "the furthest recesses of a [recurring] dream" or nightmare.[90]

Viewing Clark's film today *recurrence*, rather than repetition, is the mechanism by which the alterdiegetic imbricates history with the here and now. As Michel Foucault reminds us, *recurrence* is not a "perfect circle," or a "well-oiled mill-stone, which turns on its axis and reintroduces things, forms, and men at their appointed time."[91] Rather, "*recurrence* is the straight line of time, a splitting quicker than thought and narrower than any instant. It causes the same present to arise—on both sides of this indefinitely splitting arrow—as always existing, as indefinitely present, and as indefinite future," like the experience of déjà vu.[92]

This straight line of time splits the apparent circularity of Clark's film. The bookend scenes of the lone gunman in the woods attempt to enclose and preserve the narrative, as if to keep it from being consumed by its own unrealized history. These scenes also remind us that history cannot disassociate itself from *recurrence*, which is a generative mechanism of collective

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[90] Benji Hart, "Baltimore's Violent Protesters Are Right: Smashing Police Cars Is a Legitimate Political Strategy." *Salon*. May 2015.

[91] Michel Foucault, "Theatrum Philosophicum," in *Between Deleuze and Foucault,* eds. Nicolae Morar, Thomas Nailand, Daniel W. Smith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 55.

[92] Ibid.

memory and consciousness. Thus the alterdiegetic in Clark's film is not the "Elsewhere" of off-screen space or the referent of a diegetic element that cannot be seen. Rather, it is cinema's dialectical attachment to the space and time of the here and now, and the marginalized-identity spectator's conscious recognition of this attachment—a cinematic déjà vu where one says to themselves, *this is disturbingly uncannily familiar*, something one knows to be "Real."[93] Though it can be misinterpreted as the lowercase *r*eal or symbolic, it is not, because it resists the dominant thought that masks reality through symbolism, and is therefore dangerous to this thought and under threat of erasure—yet for the marginalized-identity spectator this dangerous *non-thought* can exist in the alterdiegetic.

Hollywood Gets Spooked

With the notion of recurrence I return to Ivan Dixon's film *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* (1973). Released in the same year that *As Above So Below* is finished, Dixon's film is thematically nearly identical. Not only does '*Spook*' follow the story of an unlikely insurgent guerilla force in an urban Black neighborhood in the post civil rights era, it also employs similar production techniques, such as voiceover mock radio broadcasts and the rhetoric of U.S. government policy and recurring diegetic narrative elements. Again, recurrence (as Foucault articulates) is the mechanism by which these two films can be can be considered two parts of one "*Thing*."[94] More precisely, the films are two parts of the same "present" arising "on both sides of [an] indefinitely splitting arrow—always existing, indefinite present, and as indefinite future"—of a yet unwritten future, which for the contemporaneous marginalized-identity spectator is the

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[93] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26.

[94] Ibid., 26.

reality of continued oppression of their communities by the state, and simultaneously, the potentiality of armed guerilla warfare against said state.[95]

Dixon's film, adapted from the 1969 novel of the same name by Sam Greenlee, follows the story of Dan Freeman (Lawrence Cook), a CIA trainee who outlasts and outsmarts a government attempt at gratuitous affirmative action in the intelligence community at the request of corrupt politicians. When Freeman realizes that his position at the CIA is one based in jingoistic tokenism, he quits to return to his hometown of Chicago where he becomes a social worker. In Chicago Freeman begins recruiting young Black gang-members to create a guerrilla army to fight against "whitey."[96] Using the expertise gained from his extensive training at the CIA, Freeman transforms the young men into expert soldiers and leaders who eventually are sent out across the country to recruit others like them, establishing a national network that will strike as one.

Like in Clark's film, Dixon uses recurrence to emphasize the development of ideas and scenarios in the film, which become more radical or subversive as the film progresses. For example, in Clark's film some scenes occur both at the beginning and the end of film—such as the meeting of Jita-Hadi and Kim—yet in their second appearance the viewer is empowered with the knowledge of who these people really are: guerillas. In *'Spook'* similar things happen in several scenes. For example, during Freeman's graduation from his training at the CIA, he is asked a series final oral examination questions regarding guerilla warfare by his white instructor Carstairs (Jack Aaron):

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[95] Michel Foucault, "Theatrum Philosophicum," in *Between Deleuze and Foucault,* eds. Nicolae Morar, Thomas Nailand, Daniel W. Smith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 56.

[96] Ivan Dixon, *The Spook Who Sat By the Door*, Directed by Ivan Dixon, Performed by Lawrence Cook (1973; Gary Indiana: United Artists), Film.

Carstairs: What is the guiding principle of an underground guerrilla army?

Freeman: To live off the country, to rely on nothing in the way of logistics or supplies which cannot be obtained easily and simply, whether legally or illegally.

Carstairs: What happens in an underground organization, when the first or second in command are killed or captured?

Freeman: Each main is trained to handle positions three steps ahead of him in grade, the operations officer takes over, and the others move up two grades.[97]

This same line of questioning happens later in the film, except it is Freeman asking these questions of his guerilla militia while they are huddled together sitting on the floor of the training room in their headquarters. Indeed the first half of the film, in which Freeman is in training for the CIA, is narratively parallel with the training Freeman puts the gang members through—from physical challenges, to bomb making, to marksmanship, to examinations.

Another rather uncanny similarity with *As Above So Below* occurs in Dixon's film during a scene in which agent Carstairs is debriefing with his boss, simply known as the General (Byron Morrow). When asked by the General what Carstairs thinks the next plan of action against the Black guerrilla insurgency in would be, he replies with three options: "1) Root them [the guerillas] out one by one; 2) Starve them out by siege; 3) Total Evacuation of the Black

[97] Ivan Dixon, *The Spook Who Sat By the Door*, Directed by Ivan Dixon, Performed by Lawrence Cook (1973; Gary Indiana: United Artists), Film.

population"—statements that read very much like the edicts outlined in the House Un-American Activities Committee document *Guerrilla Warfare Advocates in the United States*—which Clark uses to script the mock radio broadcasts in *As Above So Below.*[98]

Indeed there are many similarities between the films, yet it is not these thematic similarities that are of broader interest here, rather it is the fact that both films are made in the same year; both don't bother to articulate a year or date in which their fictional events take place; and the story they both tell beckons one to consider the discursive recursivity between the text and the contemporaneous moment. They are two texts that point to the "disavowed X" that Žižek offers, which eludes our grasp, conjuring a reality of resistance that is *not* a reality, but nonetheless is a "*Thing*;" and this "*Thing*," in the case of cinema is the alterdiegetic.[99]

In comparing these films, it seems that one may be able to challenge the specificity of alterdiegesis, asking again whether this phenomenon occurs universally throughout cinema spectatorship. Specifically because of the rather normative Hollywood-esq production practices Dixon uses to make the film in comparison to Clark's approach. *'Spook'* doesn't require the close reading that Clark's art-house avant-garde film does. It works in the greatest tradition of classical Hollywood filmmaking where one isn't distracted by the film's form, and is instead

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[98] Ivan Dixon, *The Spook Who Sat By the Door*, Directed by Ivan Dixon, Performed by Lawrence Cook (1973; Gary Indiana: United Artists), Film.

[99] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 26. For Žižek, what is "Real" stems from what cannot be or is not, yet—like Deluzes's radical Elsewhere—never the less is. It is the "disavowed X on account of which our vision of reality is anamorphically distorted; it is simultaneously the *Thing* to which direct access is not possible and the obstacle which prevents direct access, the *Thing* which eludes our grasp and the distorting screen which makes us miss the *Thing*. More precisely the Real is ultimately the very shift of perspective from the first standpoint to the second [my emphasis]."

easily immersed in in the narrative. Dixon's film is very accessible; as DeWayne Wickham writes about the reception of *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*, the "movie had a message that said to Black folks: you can resist, you can respond."[100] Seeing how this film speaks to a subaltern mass identity, one can argue that the alterdiegetic is not universally applicable to all types of film spectatorship, instead it is possibly a phenomenon that *all* marginalized-identity peoples experience when watching *any* film, be it one of uplift, or one of the horror of perpetual, recurring oppression, apartheid, violence, and/or genocide; be it a film where the marginalized are represented/misrepresented, omitted; or even when the film is a product coming from one of their own. Indeed marginality is not in sympathetic symbiosis with the mechanical, colonizing, and capitalist art of cinema. In contrast, if for a dominant-identity spectator the cinema is reflexive of the world in which they live, then for the marginalized-identity spectator, the cinema is both a reminder of a reality they do not experience, and a vehicle to imagine an alternate reality—a desubjectivized Reality only the marginalized can know.

The Alterdiegetic Becomes Diegetic

The alterdiegetic has existed since the birth of cinema, yet beginning in the post civil rights era it begins to breach the space between its liminality and the diegetic cinema—meaning what one sees coming from marginalized-identity filmmakers of the era is their own alterdiegetic

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[100] DeWayne Wickham, introduction to *The Spook Who Sat By the Door*, Directed by Ivan Dixon, Performed by Lawrence Cook (1973; Monarch Home Video), DVD; Samantha N. Sheppard, "Persistently Displaced: Situated Knowledges and Interrelated Histories in *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*." *Cinema Journal* 52, no. 2 (2013): 75. Wickham notes that because of the films message, after *Spook's* October 1973 release, "the film was quickly pulled from theaters across the country." According to Samantha Sheppard, there are varying accounts regarding its removal from theaters, yet many theater owners at the time reported that men identifying themselves as FBI agents asked the theaters to remove the film. This might have been the case with Clark's film had it been distributed in 1973.

imaginings as once-only-spectators themselves. These marginalized-identity films of decolonization are sometimes brutally literal, while others are skillfully subtle, like Dixon's and Clark's films respectively.

Bernard Nicolas's 1977 film *Daydream Therapy* is a noteworthy example of a text that works to dismantle the policed state-of-mind by imagining a liberatory insurgency against white colonizers in the United States. Nicolas's film works much like a modern music-video, in which the Nina Simone song "Pirate Jenny" dominates nearly all of the soundscape and tells the story of a mythical ship called "The Black Freighter." The 1964 song is the framework for the daydream musings of an overworked and abused hotel maid who imagines scenarios of an insurgent violent liberation carried out at first by the armed guerilla crew of the imaginary "Black Freighter," then later by her.

Daydream Therapy opens to the scene of an unnamed woman cleaning a hotel lobby, then a white man's hotel room—as Simone sings,

You people can watch while I'm scrubbing these floors
And I'm scrubbin' the floors while you're gawking
Maybe once ya tip me and it makes ya feel swell
In this crummy Southern town
In this crummy old hotel
But you'll never guess to who you're talkin'.
No. You couldn't ever guess to who you're talkin'.[101]

[101] Bernard Nicolas, *Daydream Therapy,* "Pirate Jenny," Performed by Nina Simone (1977; Los Angeles, University of California Los Angeles Film and Television Archive), Film.

Simone's song played alongside this footage suggests that this ordinary person—a hotel maid—is not what she seems. Indeed like the other films discussed here, Nicolas's film suggests that this maid may be a guerilla or insurgent. This idea of the everyday as covert is clearly used in Clark's film, and is directly addressed in *The Spook who Sat by the Door* too—while Dan Freeman trains his recruits in the art of covert militarism he tells them that a "Black man with a mop, tray, or broom can go damn near anywhere in this country. And a smiling Black man is invisible." Thus, we return to the earlier discussed trope of visibility/invisibility—and nearly all the filmmakers addressed in this dissertation work tease out differing nuances of overcoming invisibility; maintaining invisibility; making visible the otherwise unseen truth; or making invisible/destroying the oppressive imagery and voice of the colonizer. It seems that in the process of decolonization it is an imperative to make visible the state of colonization first—which is what Nicolas, with the help of Simone, points out early in the film. Then when Simone bellows the following lines, the filmic imagery suggests a metadiegetic exposition of the young woman's thoughts of liberation:

Then one night there's a scream in the night
And you'll wonder who could that have been
And you see me kinda grinnin' while I'm scrubbin'
And you say, "What's she got to grin?"
I'll tell you.

There's a ship
The Black Freighter

With a skull on its masthead

Will be coming in[102]

In the first sequence that Simone sings about the ship Nicolas shows us footage of the maid imagining waves crashing on the beach; in the second we see through her mind's eye a ship off in the distance; in the third she imagines armed militants killing a white man. After this Simone's song ends and Archie Shepps avant-garde jazz piece "Things have got to Change" takes over and becomes the concluding anthem for the process of the maid's radicalization—echoing the process that Dorothy in Haile Gerima's *Bush Mama* goes through. Also like Gerima's *Child of Resistance*, Nicolas shifts between black and white footage when the maid is cleaning; and color footage when she is day dreaming. Yet toward the end of the film reality and fantasy become blurred when Nicolas films the young woman as she walks, then cuts between her in black and white as a maid, and her in out of uniform in full color. In the first iteration of this sequence she is holding the book *Class Struggles in Africa* by Kwame Nkrumah—in both black and white and in color (Images 1 and 2); next the color and black and white versions are seen carrying a picketing sign which reads, "Don't just dream, fight for what you want." In the final black and white vs. color sequence the woman in color is seen holding a film camera, then Nicolas cuts to the woman in black and white holding a rifle, then back to the woman in color now holding a rifle (Images 3, 4, 5, 6). In the final black and white scene the woman returns to

[102] Bernard Nicolas, *Daydream Therapy,* directed by Bernard Nicolas, "Pirate Jenny," Performed by Nina Simone (1977; Los Angeles, University of California Los Angeles Film and Television Archive), Film.

work, but without a gun—suggesting we've returned from the daydream to reality. She walks into the hotel then a title card reads, "the beginning…"[103]

Image 1: Still from *Daydream Therapy,* directed by Bernard Nicolas, "Class Struggles in Africa," in black and white [104]

Image 2; Still from *Daydream Therapy,* directed by Bernard Nicolas, "Class Struggles in Africa," in color[105]

[103] Bernard Nicolas, *Daydream Therapy,* directed by Bernard Nicolas (1977; University of California Los Angeles Film and Television Archive), DVD.

[104] Bernard Nicolas, *Daydream Therapy,* directed by Bernard Nicolas (1977; University of California Los Angeles Film and Television Archive), DVD. Screen Shot by Aruna Ekanayake

[105] Ibid.

Image 3: Still from *Daydream Therapy,* directed by Bernard Nicolas, Camera as Weapon, in black and white [106]

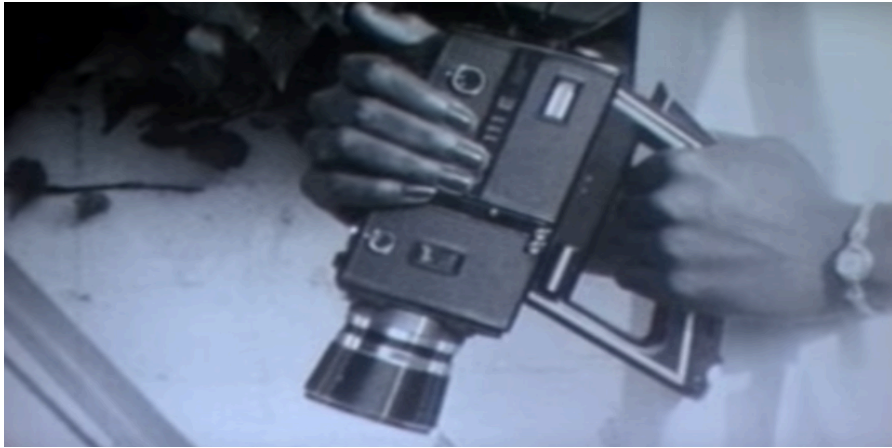

Image 4: Still from *Daydream Therapy,* directed by Bernard Nicolas, Camera as Weapon, in color[107]

[106] Bernard Nicolas, *Daydream Therapy,* directed by Bernard Nicolas (1977; University of California Los Angeles Film and Television Archive), DVD. Screen Shot by Aruna Ekanayake.

[107] Ibid.

Image 5: Still from *Daydream Therapy,* directed by Bernard Nicolas, Armed with Rifle, in black and white [108]

Image 6: Still from *Daydream Therapy,* directed by Bernard Nicolas, Armed with rifle, in color[109]

[108] Bernard Nicolas, *Daydream Therapy,* directed by Bernard Nicolas (1977; University of California Los Angeles Film and Television Archive), DVD. Screen Shot by Aruna Ekanayake.

[109] Ibid.

This "beginning" that Nicholas tells of applies to many of the films I've discussed in this dissertation, which seem to suggest a rebirth, as Kim in *As Above, So Below* describes, "it's like a breath to a new life, and you go on and on and on till—until you reach your dream's furthest recesses."[110] It is these furthest recesses that I seek, through a process of acknowledging that which "goes on and on;" that which is recursive, ever-present, and ever elusive; that which is the condition of the marginalized-identity spectator as one who seeks redefinitions of representation and rebirth of the self as something besides Other. A rebirth that is rooted in destructivism, be it in destroying, altering, or disabling the culture-making apparatuses of the colonizer, or in the process of destroying and remaking the self—because the process of colonization creates the *product* of marginalized-identity, in the process of decolonization the marginalized seek to destroy a self that is that very *product* of coloniality. Again, as Whitney Frank reminds us, destructive art may be the "only method in which the visual arts can cope in a society structured by violence and the underlying threat of death," therefore the production and exhibition of this art becomes "an ethical matter, an instance where artist-survivors attempt to expose histories and systems of violence, and reinscribe such experiences into society's current consciousness."[111] Considering cinema's role in decolonization, I argue that the alterdiegetic becomes one of many catalysts in the process—a process which begins with *destructivism,* another term in visual arts that is used in the service of the marginalized-identity.

[110] Larry Clark, *As Above, So Below*. Directed by Larry Clark. (1973; Los Angeles: University of California Los Angeles), Film.

[111] Whitney Frank, "Instructions for Destruction," *intersections* 10, no. 1 (2009): 572.

Conclusion: 'Passing' as Insurrection or Erasure?

Chapter one explored tropes of imprisonment, which involved both confinement and policing of the mind and thus reality or Reality. In the system of prison (both literal and abstract) in the United States, the body is the first element that is confided, but prison works in the processes of American coloniality to imprison the mind as well, even when one is not serving time in a cell. Below I further discuss the root of this form of incarceration, moving away from the literal resistance against the police(d) state, and arriving at a discussion about the state (of mind) of being policed.

In the study of spectatorship discursive outcomes make way for a saturation of possibility—the subdivision of the alterdiegetic thus far poses a cinematic space for the marginalized identity spectator to place their reaction of resistance or cohesion with rebellion to the images on screen. The following inquiry works to give another more-specific example of alterdiegesis by employing the theory of bell hooks, S.V. Hartman, and Farah Jasmine Griffin in their study on oppositional Black female spectatorship—a concluding exercise in destroying the police(d) state (of mind).

Much of the independent cinema discussed in this dissertation is authored by men, who cannot experientially address the political struggles of women. Though there are radical women filmmakers who emerge in this era, there is very little representation of or by women of color.[112] Indeed there are instances of great visibly for the woman of color in the popular culture of the post civil rights era, but this is not the focus of this dissertation. Women filmmakers and actors

[112] Mirasol Aurelia Riojas, "United States-Based Latina Producers of Feature Films (1976-Present): The Role of Community, Creativity, and Currency in Synergistic Authorship," PhD diss., University of California Los Angeles, 2012. Women of color however are present within the film industry of this era in varying roles as Mirasol Aurelia Riojas notes regarding the work of Josey Faz who, according to Riojas, "was involved with the making of the first three Chicano [feature films] during the 1970s."

that do emerge in this era, either maintain the patriarchal status quo in American cinema or choose to reject it as a product of the patriarchy and seek to challenge it—such as Silvia Morales, whose film *Chicana* (1979) places a direct feminist critique on Luis Valdez's *I Am Joaquin*; or Christine Choy and Susan Robeson whose film *Teach our Children* (1972) challenges the American prison system and its patriarchal foundation—also through a radical feminist lens. Of the women-made films in the post civil rights era that are critical of women's roles in society and/or the film industry, Julie Dash's earliest work stands out as a highly specific and sophisticated look at challenging Americanist norms and biases regarding race and gender in cinema, while also contributing to a discourse on artistic authenticity and Black female visibility in the film industry.

Dash is credited as the first Black woman to direct, produce, and release a feature length mass-market film—*Daughters of the Dust*—which didn't happen till 1991. Although this film does somewhat approach the topic of decolonization, it doesn't fit within the timeline of this project, which is one reason why Dash's 1982 student film *Illusions* will conclude this chapter. In relation to destroying the 'police(d) state,' this first film from Dash addresses the topic of insurgency in a very unique, disruptive, and poignant way. In this film Dash considers the visibility and regulation of the Black female body—a component of the Americanism that continues to define issues of intersectional feminist thought to this day. Haile Gerima approaches this topic in some ways with both *Child of Resistance and Bush Mama*, but it is Dash's film that directly takes on the topic of Black female identitarian politics in Hollywood and beyond, which in turn brings up the role of Black female spectatorship.

A black and white thirty-four minute film, *Illusions* tells the story of Mignon (Lonette McKee), a passing-as-white Black woman who has maintained a relatively privileged position at

the fictional “National Studios” motion picture company during World War II.[113] When some producers discover an error with sound synchronization in a film featuring their white star Leila Grant (Gaye Kruger), Mignon is charged with recruiting a voice double to correct the error. The voice double, Esther Jeeter (Rosanne Katon) is a young darker (than Mignon) skinned Black woman who is overjoyed to get the work, even if it means she will not receive credit—a circumstance that S.V. Hartman and Farah Jasmine Griffin describes as an act of violence against the Black female body, because it in effect destroys, or erases her.[114] One level of this “violence” is articulated in their description of the scene where Esther is in the sound booth watching the moving image of Leila Grant projected above her. Hartman and Griffin tell us that while she is, “Watching the out-of-sync foot- age of Leila Grant, Esther coordinates her singing with the movement of Leila's lips. Not only are Esther's voice coordinates appropriated, but the violence of the appropriation is heightened by the fact that Esther must lip sync the garbled movements of Leila—a reversal of the typical lip-syncing situation, in which the non-singer matches his or her voice movements to the singer's voice. In this case, Esther's live voice is being excised and reproduced, although she must mime the dumb star. Esther is both ventriloquist and dummy.”[115] Hartman and Griffin further argue that in this process of violence the Black body is consumed so that the white body on screen can survive. It is this form of survival that Mignon, the passing-as-white Black woman depends on—indeed Mignon, also acting as “ventriloquist and dummy,” is

[113] Julie Dash, *Illusions,* directed by Julie Dash (1982; Los Angeles, CA: University of California Los Angeles Film and Television Archive), Film.

[114] Farah Jasmine Griffin and S.V. Hartman, “Are You as Colored as that Negro?: The Politics of Being Seen in Julie Dash's Illusions,” *Black American Literature Forum* 25, no. 2 (1991): 366-367.

[115] Ibid., 365.

self-consuming in order to maintain a necessary place in the film industry for the Black female body.

Image 7: Still from *Illusions,* directed by Julie Dash, Esther sings in sound booth[116]

In the scene where Esther is recording in the sound booth, Mignon stands in the sound engineer's glass booth staring at Esther as if looking into a mirror, and "she sees herself not in the images on the screen but in the off-screen [alterdiegetic] space where no one else looks."[117] (Image 7)

[116] Julie Dash, *Illusions,* directed by Julie Dash (1982; Los Angeles, CA: University of California Los Angeles Film and Television Archive), Film. Screen Shot by UCLA Film Archive with the permission of Julie Dash Via University of California Los Angeles Film and Television Archive, 08/2019.

[117] Farah Jasmine Griffin and S.V. Hartman, "Are You as Colored as that Negro?: The Politics of Being Seen in Julie Dash's Illusions," *Black American Literature Forum* 25, no. 2

Here Dash gives an on-screen representation of the alterdiegetic in Mignon's reflection, and when viewed by the Black female spectator that Hartman and Griffin describe as dualistically aligned with, and in opposition to the image and purpose of Mignon and Esther on screen the specificity of alterdiegesis can be seen more clearly.

As Hartman and Griffin further argue, *Illusions* is a film made for a white audience to sympathize with the plight of the passing mulatta, or as Ralph Ellison posits on the subject, passing films allow the white audience to align with the suffering of "Negros," for according to Hollywood, it is only the "white negroes who suffer."[118] Hartman and Griffin further argue Mignon's Blackness is rendered as *authentic* or *real* when it is identified as such by a white man—a lieutenant in the military who discovers a letter from Mignon's Black love interest, Julius, who is also in the military. This lower case *real* relates very much to Slavoj Žižek's parallaxian "Real" in which what is truth, can only be revealed at the moment when the two oppositional parallels meet: the Black body of Julius and the white male gaze upon both Julius and Mignon exposing Mignon's Blackness—yet the other "Real" that is exposed is the nuanced "Real" of American apartheid, which dictates Blackness as only *real* when it is identified, named, and segregated by whiteness.[119]

If, as Hartman and Griffin argue, Dash's film speaks to a white audience, this audience aligns with Mignon's desire to secure a place in Hollywood as a person of color *and* as a white woman, they also may be thrilled by the drama of her insurgency at the film studio. Thus there seems to be a troubling reality that is overlooked, that of the Black female spectator, who

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(1991): 367.

[118] Ralph Ellison, *Shadow and Act* (New York: Signet 1966), 268-269.

[119] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 25-26.

disrupts the centrality of Mignon's insurgency. In the process of a decolonizing cinema, which seeks to make visible the invisible, Dash's work in some ways panders to the colonizer, while creating an oppositional spectatorship in Black women—Hartman and Griffin articulate this stating,

> Before Esther appears on the scene, we share Mignon's secret; we empathize with the masquerade. We know; we participate in the lie. We are silent. Esther's entry precipitates our rebellion, our mutiny. When she appears, our identification with Mignon is ruptured. The violence perpetrated against her body by the cinematic apparatus and the contradictory impulses of a Black womanist identity politics begin to trouble us. At the moment of rupture, we reclaim ourselves; we break the confines of representation and no longer comply to the violating conditions of our representability. Anger and resentment are the afterthoughts of this rupture.[120]

What Hartman and Griffin describe is the alterdiegetic in praxis—a "rupture" that occurs when onscreen constructed "symbolic" realisms, meet the "Real" of the marginalized-identity spectator; like Chon Noriega's articulation of "rupture," which switches from addressing the *off-screen* Chicano audience to addressing, or even accusing, the *off-screen* colonizer-audience; it is also indicative of Žižek's "parallax Real," emerging when a rupture in the constructed-

[120] Farah Jasmine Griffin and S.V. Hartman, "Are You as Colored as that Negro?: The Politics of Being Seen in Julie Dash's Illusions," *Black American Literature Forum* 25, no. 2 (1991): 371.

symbolism of the oppressor makes visible the marginalized-identity's Reality; and it is the cinematic manifestation of what Greg Burris describes as the "disavowed antagonism" of marginality.[121]

In Larry Clark's, Ivan Dixon's, or Bernard Nicolas's interpretations of insurgency, there are clear lines between who is the colonizer and who is the colonized. Whereas the insurgency of Mignon can be also be read as assimilationist. Therefore, as Hartman and Griffin posit, Dash's insurgents are off-screen—they are the Black female spectator—who more-so stand against the "pornotropic" violence that Esther is subject to.[122] The character of Mignon represents the bootstrapping uplift expected by the dominant white spectator, who can only sympathize within terms of how it is the "white negro who suffers."[123] In contrast, the Black female spectator at first aligns with Mignon and the secret of her Blackness, until Esther arrives; at which point the representation of Esther's erasure is of more significance than the struggle of a passing-as-white woman's struggles for participation in dominant culture—because passing is itself a privilege that many like Esther cannot have. Therefore the Black female spectator, in a moment of alterdiegesis recognizes their non-subjectivized agency; and, as Hartman and Griffin tell us, their alignment with Mignon is ruptured once they see the struggle that Esther must

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[121] Chon A. Noriega, "The Migrant Intellectual," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 13-14.; Greg Burris, "Prometheus in Chicago: Film Portrayals of the Chaining and Gagging of Bobby Seale and the 'Real-iszation' of Resistance," *Cinema Journal* 54, No.4 Summer 2015.; Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 26.

[122] Hortance J. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (1987): 67.

[123] Ralph Ellison Quoted in: Farah Jasmine Griffin and S.V. Hartman, "Are You as Colored as that Negro?: The Politics of Being Seen in Julie Dash's Illusions," *Black American Literature Forum* 25, no. 2 (1991): 370.

endure.[124]

The alterdiegetic is discursive and it is destructive; it is the marginalized-identity spectator's alignment *and* dissonance with the struggles of the characters on the screen, it is that same spectator's resistance to dominant culture's representation of them. It is at once a rejection of the cinematic policing of the image, and a rejection of the state of being policed, both in mind and body, where "we come to realize that the possibility of our pleasure lies in defiance—the rapturous *rupture*, the unleashing of aggression against the cinematic apparatus and disrupting the terms of our invisibility [my emphasis]."[125] Raphael Ortiz articulates this by dis-articulating a central symbol of European art—the grand piano—which is a product of the colonial exploitation of millions of Black and Brown bodies, and as Lisa Lowe reminds us, it is the labor of the colonized that creates the space for liberalism, representational government, and the music of the grand piano or the flickering light of the cinema.[126]

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I leave the reader with the words of James Baldwin, who defines the alterdiegetic experience—how it is at once distant and familiar, real and invisible, known and unknown.

> I am fascinated by the movement on, and off, the screen, that movement which is something like the heaving and swelling of the sea (though I have not yet been to

[124] Farah Jasmine Griffin and S.V. Hartman, "Are You as Colored as that Negro?: The Politics of Being Seen in Julie Dash's Illusions," *Black American Literature Forum* 25, no. 2 (1991): 371.

[125] Ibid., 373.

[126] Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacy of the Four Continents,* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2015).

> the sea): and which is also something like the light which moves on, and especially beneath, the water.[127]

Alterdiegesis is the light that moves beneath the water in which we must all swim (or drown).

[127] James Baldwin, *The Devil Finds Work* (New York, NY: Vintage International, 2011), 4.

Conclusion: Moving Toward a Study of Cinema and Decolonization in the New Millennium

Summation

The American media landscape is littered with the iconography of violence—the Twin Towers burning and falling, troops waging war abroad, police murdering citizens, mass shootings, and the rattling off of new and sudden terrorisms lurking in the shadows. This iconography is often applied across many platforms, from the theater to the smartphone, and some forms of media use this iconography to fear-monger about a persistence of terrorisms within the United States. Yet it is the political fear mongering that maintains the strongest platform—on both sides—be it fake news or not, the center of power in the United States holds the attention of every single one of us in such a profound way it is no wonder that people are driven to want walls that keep out imaginary evils, while others march through the streets in the way the seat of power wants them to, in "peaceful protest"—not that violent protest is the answer, but the practice of protest should not be dictated by the protested. A boycott is violent because it cripples a power structure, a strike is violent because it cripples a power structure, a direct action of self-reliance such as simply cooking instead of eating fast food is violent because it cripples a power structure—yet all these actions must be carried out collectively to be effective.

It seems that regardless of what side of the aisle one is on, the citizenry of the United States is not equipped to challenge, let alone, change the malady of American colonialist genealogy. Acknowledging coloniality in the American project is the first step toward decolonization, and it is my hope that some day we can call the evils in our homeland what they are, unapologetically colonizing.

Throughout this dissertation I have sought to reify the theory of internal colonialism in the United States through the close textual analysis of films made largely by marginalized-identities during the post civil rights era. I have approached my analysis from a multicultural perspective rather than an identity-specific one, arguing that to consider the trope of decolonization one must listen simultaneously to the voices of all those who are colonized. Even though the internally colonized may represent disparate ethnic, gender, and socio-economic groups they all speak to a central notion of subjugation by the dominant colonizing faction in the United States. In my analysis, over three chapters, I employed three broad categories of coloniality: incarceration, immigration and the police(d) state, as both literal and abstract elements which arise in the cinematic discourse of the post civil rights era. Alongside the films interdisciplinary secondary sources and historical primary sources become the aggregate that worked to flesh out the theoretical implications of each category.

In chapter one I look into notions of prison that arise in several films, beginning with the documentary *Teach Our Children*, which implicitly interrogates the idea that for the multicultural-marginalized in this country the notion of prison and home are interchangeable elements. I then complicate the notion of home as not only including the as-defined-by-coloniality homogenizing ideal of home or the domestic, by also including the elements of the corporeal, and the civic, as representative of home or bordered sites that are invaded and controlled by coloniality—while also working as spaces of contestation. To consider the broad implications of naming these sites as both home and prison, Michel Foucault's work regarding imprisonment is placed in dialogue with the work of Slavoj Žižek, whose theory of a parallaxian "Real[ity]" becomes a component of philosophical inquiry throughout this dissertation when challenging the authenticity of constructed symbolisms in totalitarian projects like imperialism,

colonialism, and capitalism becomes an exercise in considering two opposing sides of the same coin—sides which are never intended to meet, i.e. the dominant ideology and the opposing one of resistance. [1]

Working from the micro to the macro economy of prison-as-concept, in the second chapter I move on to discuss the construct of nation as a site that is also coded as home and prison. I further this exploration by rethinking the metaphysical tool of demarcation of nation, the border, which in some of the films discussed here is rendered as both a liminal space that is embodied by the colonized and an element of imprisonment. Throughout my analysis I continue to employ and challenge Žižek's inquiries on "Real[isms]" as they relate to revelations of masked truths in both literal and abstract notions of boundary-crossing, such as agency, exploitation, authorship, and authenticity.[2] To address these notions I look at two films by white male filmmakers and their approaches to representing the marginalized contending-with-coloniality in comparison to a film by Trinh T. Minh-ha that interrogates the implications embedded in the cross-section of colonization and ethnographic cinema.

The constructs of home, prison, borders, and nation are all elements in the equation of coloniality that require degrees of policing. In my final chapter I begin by touching on the way policing or enforcing has been met in the spaces of the colonized, both historically and theoretically, and introduce two films that imagine scenarios of armed resistance against the internal colonizer's policing. Yet, I move beyond the post civil rights era in which a militarized police force begins to emerge and, as the title of the chapter suggests, consider how the *police(d)* state of coloniality exists as both a physical policing of space, and a state in which one is forced

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[1] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* (New York: Random House, 1977); Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006)

[2] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006)

to comply with constructed elements of the colonial project: ways to behave, ways to think, how to think, when to speak (up), how to speak, who to speak to, etc. More specifically I interrogate how resistance to these constructs is outlined in terms set by the colonizer, something we've come to know as "peaceful protest," a laughable contradiction considering that colonization has always been violent (indeed for the colonized using *violence,* as defined and carried out by the colonizer, is self-destructive, therefore I emphasize that violence against the state can take on other forms such as collective economic disruption—which requires a collective acknowledgement of an internally colonized status).

Also in the final chapter I consider how deconstructing the constructs of coloniality is exercised by the marginalized-identity cinema spectator, and introduce the term *alterdiegetic* to intervene in classical film theory, which ignores this spectator. The alterdiegetic names an the experience of the marginalized-identity spectator as they are either in solidarity with the revolutionary images and ideas on the screen or in opposition to images in which they are represented or misrepresented by the dominant culture's cinema.

I introduce and employ two other terms in this dissertation, the first being a term that defines the impetus for art made in the service of decolonization—*inoculative pathology*, which is the active condition of the marginalized artist, who seeks to remedy the maladies of coloniality though art. Again, in using the term pathology I refer to emotion rather than illness. The second term, *transcolonial cinema* is used in the introduction of this project to define cinemas of decolonization more precisely and remove them from the dominant culture's rhetoric of first, second, third, and rather problematic fourth worldisms. Thus transcolonial cinema is used here to define a cinematic movement that works form within the colonial power center outward in protest.

It is my aim to transfer the methodological framework I've used here to further study tropes of decolonization in cinema in several discursive modes. More broadly, I want to consider conducting a parallel survey of mainstream Hollywood films applying the same methodology and theories used in this dissertation. Indeed it is fair to say that blockbuster hits like *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola) series would serve well in understanding post civil rights era elements of immigration, prisons, police, realism and coloniality; as would George Luca's *Star Wars* trilogy—though I do admit that such a project would require a vastly modified approach. More readily this dissertation's framework would apply to a project that I hope to embark on soon, where I consider the era spanning roughly 1982-1995 in which the revolutionary guerilla voice of the post civil rights era shifts toward a more nihilistic, counter-violent tone in the cinema and music of a period defined by the Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush administrations, while applying the notion of *destructivism* more directly in contrast to the ideology of revolution touted in the previous decade. This study of the 80's and 90's would then be followed by a project that considers the not only cinema but discursive media from information age, which became a catalyst in the journey toward the *Occupy Wall Street* movement, the *Black Lives Matter* movement, and the *Me Too* movement, as each exploited the ubiquity of the moving image in a new digitized march toward decolonization.

Decolonization is a topic that may indeed be inconclusive if one is to admit that we are perpetually in a state of being colonized. If colonization is the exploitation of one group of people by another more aggressive or powerful group of people who seek economic gain and want ownership over resources, then it is capitalism that is the current form of colonization, which is addressed over the next several decades in independent and mainstream films in vastly varying modes. The films discussed in this dissertation seek to make visible revolutionary

ideologies that were not accessible to the masses, and do so somewhat in vain, as cinema and its cost of production and limited accessibility (at the time) links it closely to the child of colonialism, capitalism. Yet it is still the concluding goal of this dissertation is to reify the notion of internal colonialism in the United States, acknowledging that this practice is masked as free-market capitalism. Indeed to address the issues of capitalism it needs to be discussed in terms of its link to colonialism and its very similar practice of invasion and exploitation.

Déjà vu and the Discursive Efficacy of Decolonization

While writing this dissertation déjà vu and recurrence played a significant role in my research on the topic of resistance and decolonization. In our contemporary moment the discussion about resistance and state oppression is broad and controversial, and moves well beyond cinema studies. For each text I read, each event I attended, and each film screening I went to that addressed apartheid in contemporary America, in the discussions that ensued, there were a slew of familiar critical counterpoints that challenged the efficacy of resistance. They were familiar, or *recursive,* because they asked the same questions that opponents of social equity have often asked. Questions that began and ended with statements like: 'Well hasn't there been enough done?' or 'What more do you want?'

Even the possibilities for change brought on by the election of the nation's first Black president were never realized. Black Lives Matter scholar Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor posits that The Black Lives Matter movement should seem an anomaly considering the uplifting tonality of Obama's tenure, but argues that it was far from that.[3] In a Los Angeles Times op-ed Taylor

[3] Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, "Why is the Black Lives Matter Movement Happening Now?," *The Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), Jul. 28, 2016.

outlines that no Obama era policy addressed the struggles for Black liberation—instead, according to Taylor, Obama encouraged ineffective loose social reform in the private non-profit sector, remained relatively silent about police brutality, upheld the rhetoric of police heroism and scantily addressed the issues of mass incarceration—in regards to coloniality, something that is all too familiar; again, an instance of déjà vu.[4] Indeed, it is curious that the Black Lives Matter movement's presence was at its peak during Obama's tenure. Toward the end of his term, the political rhetoric of the country seemed to recursively assume a post Black Lives Matter Stance, similar to the admittedly problematic notion of a post civil rights era.

The films analyzed in this dissertation are made in the post civil rights era, and are a component of the super archive that vaults these discursive documentations of oppression and resistance to it. However discursive, these films open up dialogic possibilities for change. Thus, movements of resistance are informed by the potentiality of their discursivity, waiting for the powers-that-be to react to *any* resistance that is outside the boundaries of what is deemed acceptable resistance, this is the efficacy of movements like *Black Lives Matter*; this is the efficacy of films like *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* (Ivan Dixon 1973)—even though the FBI had a hand in pulling it out of theaters, it *was* in theaters and the oppressive powers-that-be listened and watched in fear. If the response to resistance is positive, the battle can end and the long process of reconstruction can begin, if it is negative (as it often is), then recurrence will further add to the archive of collective memory fortifying the mandate for change, or abolition.

Perhaps the discursive efficacy of the films discussed in this dissertation or The Black Lives Matter movement isn't necessarily the question. One film or an isolated action in a revolutionary movement do not have singular power to effect change. Instead what is most

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[4] Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, "Why is the Black Lives Matter Movement Happening Now?," *The Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), Jul. 28, 2016..

significant is their contribution to the archive of recurrence in revolutionary thought—and state oppression. The films discussed here, through their alterdiegesis, are pointing to a yet to be defined nucleus of oppositional potentiality in the face of this oppression. As far as history has shown, the response to the struggle for the liberation of people from the global south (who also occupy the colonizer's lands as exploited occupants) has been persistent derailment and disregard, which is like a dream (or nightmare) that has occurred and continues to come true—a collective and multi-temporal déjà vu.

In the seven years I have been conducting research for this dissertation, significant events in American history regarding issues of race, gender, and class have occurred. Below, in the closing paragraphs of this dissertation I share a story which continues to remind me that the contemporary moment is an echo of a past that should not be forgotten, a déjà vu that we must sadly hold on to so we do not repeat it or let it perpetuate as our reality.

On August 15th of 2017 Rachel Maddow opened her MSNBC news program discussing a historical account of the 1924 democratic primaries where thousands of Ku Klux Klan members rallied for their candidate, William Gibbs McAdoo. Maddow goes on to outline the new rise of the Klan in this period, even referring to D.W. Griffith's seminal racist film, *The Birth of A Nation* (1915) as a tool used in the upsurge of Klan membership in the era. On the 10th day of the democratic convention on July 4, 1924, 20,000 members of the Klan burned effigies of McAdoo's rival, New York Governor Al Smith. Neither McAdoo nor Smith made it past the primaries because of raucous tensions between supporters of both candidates; instead was picked a little known party member named John Davis. The Klan was angry with this turnout so they "made another show of political power," and in August 1925, dressed in full white hooded regalia, the Ku Klux Klan marched on the National Mall. Then in Fall of 1926 they did it again

in greater numbers—fifty thousand Klan members marched on Washington. In 1927 a Klan rally in New York City protested unfair treatment by New York's "Catholic" police department and seven Klan members were arrested that day—one of them was President Donald Trump's father.[5]

After telling us this history, Maddow goes on to describe the contemporary moment and how on August 11Th and 12th of 2017, in the first year of Trump's tenure, subsets of the Ku Klux Klan: white supremacists, neo-Nazis, and members of the "alt-right" went to Charlottesville North Carolina to support protests against the removal of a statue of Confederate general Robert E. Lee. There were violent clashes between un-hooded neo-Klansmen and their opponents; many people were injured, and one woman was killed. President Trump condemned the actions of "both sides" during the protests. Facing backlash from the public, Trump reworded his initial statement, and a day later condemned bigotry and hate. The following day, the president took it all back and returned to his rhetoric of "both sides" being guilty and responsible for the violence. During most of Maddow's report on these matters the graphic behind her in the newsroom read: "*Recurring* Nightmare [my emphasis]."[6]

It is evidence of this *recurrence* that I seek throughout my interrogation of the films in this dissertation—films that are both explicit and implicit in their representation of internal colonialism, and which offer an opportunity to ask whether colonizing practices are a deeply seeded continuing element of American democracy, bureaucracy, and nation building. By outlining recurring tropes of internal colonialism in a study that is not identity specific, I have

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[5] Rachel Maddow 2017. "Donald Trump Remarks Aid White Supremacists' Political Ambitions | Rachel Maddow | MSNBC". *Youtube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pBaWbDh2XYM&ytbChannel=MSNBC.

[6] Ibid.

sought to give voice to a unifying artistic utterance that holds accountable American essentialism, and points out a form of coloniality that is indeed nuanced yet universal—contributing to a collective déjà vu that attempts to reminds us all that that we are still colonized. The methodological approach that I've used throughout this dissertation works to look at how the intersection of two or more opposing parallel socio-political realities constitute a dialectical collision that reveals masked truths about coloniality, authorial authenticity in cinema *and* democracy, and the agency of subaltern spectatorship in the process of decolonization.

The colonized today work to forget the nightmare of colonialism, at least as it is defined by the colonizers. Yet forgetting to what degree colonial powers abducted people, stole land, and hoarded recourses ensures recurrence of these elements in newly veiled forms. Thus, as a touchstone tactic of decolonization the colonized must use the mechanism that sets off déjà vu as a tool of counter-violence, and first acknowledge recurring coloniality in the American context to move us toward reconfiguring the elements of coloniality that persist, such as voting restrictions, housing discrimination, mass incarceration, limited citizenship, and a policing that protects only the center of power and its wealth.

APPENDIX

In the table below I outline the four main historical categorizations of colonialism. I have used *definitions* from Oxford English Dictionary in some cases. The definition of internal colonialism is based on my own research. I have also outlined general applications of the respective terms and posed corresponding arguments.

	DEFINITION	**APPLICATIONS**	**ARUGMENTS**
Colonialism	The colonial system or principle. Now freq. used in the derogatory sense of an alleged policy of exploitation of backward or weak peoples by a large power. (Oxford English Dictionary)	European colonialism of the global south; i.e. Africa, The Americas, the Middle East, South Asia, and Australia.	Colonialism is something that cannot be erased. It has been historically redefined, but not abolished. Its framework is a significant component of modern geopolitics.
Post-colonialism	The fact or state of having formerly been a colony; the cultural condition of (a) post-colonial society. (Oxford English Dictionary)	This notion brings in the conditions of both the colonizer and the colonized into its discourse.	A hand-washing term that should be remembered as one invented by colonizers.
Neocolonialism	The use of economic, political, cultural, or other pressures to control or influence another country; *esp.* the retention of such influence over a developing country by a former colonial power. (Oxford English Dictionary)	Often the case for transnationalism or market centered global economic trade, where the terms of colonialism are reworked and continue to benefit the former colonial powers or the "First World." Arguably the stance of the United States.	Closely linked to internal colonialism, considering the issues of slavery, and migration. Where "foreign" labor is brought into the "first world" state and becomes subject to limited citizenship by "former colonial" practice
Internal Colonialism	Inequality within a state, marked by traditions and staples of coloniality, including: limited citizenship, unequal mass incarceration, and a militarized discriminatory police force.	For this project the United States is used as the example. Though any developed nations can share this attribute.	A term that can place agency into the hands of the colonized, rather the inventors of the term post-colonial.

Filmography

.	Chapter 1

Bush Mama (Haile Gerima, 1975)

Child of Resistance (Haile Gerima, 1972)

Hour Glass (Haile Gerima, 1971)

Please Don't Bury Me Alive (Efrain Gutierrez, 1976)

Teach Our Children (Christine Choy and Susan Robeson, 1972)

The Killer of Sheep (Charles Burnett, 1977)

Chapter 2

Alambrista! The Illegal (Robert M. Young, 1977)

I Am Joaquin (Luis Valdez, 1969)

In MacArthur Park (Bruce R. Schwartz, 1977)

Please Don't Bury Me Alive (Efrain Gutierrez, 1976)

Reassemblage (Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1982)

Chapter 3

Piano Concert Sacrifice: Destruction in Art Symposium (Raphael M. Ortiz, 1966)

As Above So Below (Larry Clark, 1973)

The Spook Who Sat by the Door (Ivan Dixon, 1973)

Daydream Therapy (Bernard Nicolas, 1977)

Illusions (Julie Dash, 1982)

Films Considered

A Clockwork Orange (Stanley Kubrick, 1971)

A Dream is What You Wake Up From (Larry Bullard, Carolyn Johnson, 1978)

Ali the Fighter (William Greaves and Rick Baxter, 1975)

All the President's Men (Alan J. Pakula, 1976)

Apocalypse Now (Francis Ford Coppola, 1979)

Ashes and Embers, (Haile Gerima, 1982)

Billy Jack (Tom Laughlin, 1971)

Billy Jack Goes to Washington (Tom Laughlin, 1974)

Bless their Little Hearts (Billy Woodberry, 1984)

Close Encounters of the Third Kind (Steven Spielberg, 1977)

Colors (Dennis Hopper, 1988)

Dog Day Afternoon (Sidney Lumet, 1975)

Easy Rider (Dennis Hopper, 1969)

Enter the Dragon (Robert Clouse, 1973)

Five Easy Pieces (Bob Rafelson, 1970)

Ganja and Hess (Bill Gunn, 1973)

Gidget Meets Hondo, (Bernard Nicolas, 1980)

Hito Hata: *Raise the Banner* (Duane Kubo, Robert Nakamura, 1980)

Infiltrating Hollywood: *The Rise and Fall of The Spook who sat by the Door* (Christine Acham, Clifford Ward, 2011)

…I Told You So (Alan Kondo, 1973)

Joe’s Bed-Stuy Barbershop: We Cut Heads **(**Spike Lee, 1983)

La Hora de Los Hornos - *Hour of the Furnaces* (Fernando Solanas and Otavio Getino, 1968)

Little Big Man (Arthur Penn, 1970)

Manzanar (Robert Nakamura, 1972)

Memorias de subdesarrollo - *Memories of Underdevelopment* (Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, 1968)

Mi Hermano, Mi Hambre (Gustavo Vazquez, 1978)

Network (Sidney Lumet, 1976)

Nothing but a Man (Michael Roemer, 1964)

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (Milos Forman, 1975)

Punishment Park (Peter Watkins, 1971)

Run, Tecato, Run (Efrain Gutierrez, 1979)

Shaft (Gordon Parks, 1971)

Star Wars: *A New Hope* (George Lucas, 1977)

Star Wars: *The Empire Strikes Back* (George Lucas, 1980)

Star Wars: *Return of the Jedi* (George Lucas, 1983)

Superfly (Gordon Parks Jr., 1972)

Sweet Sweetback’s Baadassss Song (Melvin Van Peebles, 1971)

Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One (William Greaves, 1968)

Taxi Driver (Martin Scorsese, 1976)

The Ballad of Gregorio (Robert M. Young, 1982)

The Deer Hunter (Michael Cimino, 1978)

The Godfather (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972)

The Godfather Part II (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974)

The Return of the Dragon (Bruce Lee, 1973)

The River Niger (Krishina Shah, 1975)

The Streets of L.A. (Jerrold Freedman, 1979)

Trial of Billy Jack (Tom Laughlin, 1974)

Wong Sinsaang (Robert Nakamura, 1971)

Zoot Suit (1981 Luis Valdez)

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