

Hasan Arslan / Mehmet Ali İçbay /
Christian Reggiero (eds.)

**Research on Humanities
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Communication, Social Sciences, Arts

The Voice of the Angry Streets: Third Cinema as an
Example of Memoria Del Saqueo – Memory of the Plunder

Özlem Arda

*Research Asst. Dr., Istanbul University, Faculty of Communication, Radio Television and Cinema Department,
ozlemarda@istanbul.edu.tr*

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Table of Contents

Communication

Füsun Alver

Popular Culture Between Integration and Resistance in the
Perspective of Cultural Studies15

Ali Murat Vural

The Perception of Turkey and the World among the Business
Community Professionals21

Christian Ruggiero

The Role of “motifs” in a Digital Storytelling Strategy
Aiming to Didactic Remediation41

Dinçer Atlı

Business Models for Social Media: The Example of Facebook.....57

Suat Dönmez

Security in Cyber Age: An Introduction to Difficulties in
Security Issues in Digitalized World69

Yıldırım Kesgin and Ahmet Faruk Çeçen

Prestige of an Online Newspaper: The Decision of
Future Journalists83

Sırma Oya Tekvar

Gender Stereotypes Via Anthropomorphology:
A Semiological Analysis of Printed Advertisements91

Selda Uca Ozer

Using Social Media in City Marketing: A Content Analysis
of Hashtags for Istanbul in Instagram 107

Social Sciences

Şenel Gerçek and Hülya Çevirme

The Comparison of Language and Literature Teaching in Turkey
and Finland 121

Sadet Altay and Nejat İra

Special Training in the First Years of the Republic: The School of the Deaf, the Dumb and the Blind in Izmir (1923–1938)..... 131

Osman Ferda Beytekin

Metaphors of School Administrators Related to Technological Leadership..... 145

Rezzan Ayhan Türkbay

Sukru Saracoglu and his Economic Policies in Early Republic Period 159

Mevhibe Ay Türkmen and Nurgül Evcim

An Analysis of the Logistic Performances of Countries 169

Tuğçe Üner

Consumer Ethnocentrism: A Comparative Field Research Between Gazi University and Abant İzzet Baysal University 183

Işıl Usta

The Effect of Demographic Characteristics on Perception of Nepotism: A Study on Academicians..... 199

Ünal Şentürk

The Solution of the Marriage Affairs in Terms of Phenomenology..... 211

Fuat Yılmaz and Derya İlkay Abdikoğlu

Econometric Analysis of the Production and Price of Grapes in Turkey 223

Fatma Nur Yorgancılar, Ayberk Nuri Berkman and Haldun Soydal

Possible Impacts of Voluntary Carbon Market Revenues on Foreign Exchange Earnings in Turkey within the Context of Carbon Footprint..... 231

Güneş Açelya Sipahi, Didem Tezsürücü and Kamil Bircan

The Level of Information Technologies in Logistics Sector..... 251

Alper Veli Cam, Busra Tosunoglu and Enes Gurtay

The Role of Financial Ratios on Evaluation of Stock Values: An Application in Bist 263

Gokhan Unakitan, Dilsat Unakitan and Gozde Meco

An Econometric Analysis of Consumer Preferences of Red Meat
Consumption: Case of Tekirdag, Turkey 275

Art Studies

Meltem Acarlı and Mehmet Kaya

The Perception of Women in Early Republican Caricatures:
The Case of the Zümrüd-ü Anka Magazine (1923–1925) 285

Meglana Apostolova

The Role of Non-verbal Communication to Develop Good
Behaviour in the Music Class 303

Tolga Şenol

A Review Concerning the Impact of Vassily Kandinsky on Applied
Education of Art Basics of Today 313

Babür Mehmet Akarsu

The Rock Reliefs of Antiquity of the Burdur Region 323

Özlem Arda

The Voice of the Angry Streets: Third Cinema as an Example of
Memoria Del Saqueo – Memory of the Plunder 333

Zafer Tural

Evaluation of Problems for Students with Low-Motivation in
Piano Training 345

Hüseyin Durgut

From the Historical Kipchak Turkic to the Today's Karaim Language:
A Comparison in Terms of the Grammatical Cases 357

Pelin Şulha

Translating Subtitles: *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* 367

Gürkan Turhan

Remnants of Sumerian in Modern Languages 375

Gülbeyaz Ünlüer

Student Opinions on the Use of Poetry in Social Studies 385

Özlem Arda*

The Voice of the Angry Streets: Third Cinema as an Example of *Memoria Del Saqueo* – *Memory of the Plunder*

Abstract In this study, recent films that have been produced based on the Third Cinema concept are discussed. Third cinema deals with social realities and fulfills a social function by portraying the problems in the life of a society and transferring them through visual language an awareness of the social problems and those who bear responsibility for them. The Third Cinema Manifesto defines a framework for films that are produced in the present day although such films imply a revision of the manifesto. These films based on the Third Cinema concept and follow its original construction and use the street theme to present the voice of the people, the living witnesses in the society. In this study, these films are analysed using Mike Wayne's four categories. That the films are compatible with the Third Cinema concept is emphasised. This study aims to describe *Memoria Del Saqueo* – *Memory of the Plunder*, with the Third Cinema understanding, examining it according to the four categories in terms of form and content.

Keywords: Third Cinema, Revision, Social Reality

1. Introduction

The basic concept of Third Cinema is symbolised in a society by the opposition to inequality, to exploitation and to the agents and representatives of imperialism. Its primary purpose is to stir the masses to action. This Third Cinema concept of reaching out to the masses has been observed at work in many countries and every country has its own problems that take place especially in Third Cinema films. It can display change as a form and/or content between countries, but the main understanding can not change.

Although the culture industry regards it as marginal, Third Cinema has been able to find its own space in many countries.

The 'Third Cinema' movement called for a politicised filmmaking practice in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, since its first appearance during the 1960s and 1970s, taking on broad issues of race, class, religion, and national integrity. The

* Research Asst. Dr., Istanbul University, Faculty of Communication, Radio Television and Cinema Department, ozlemarda@istanbul.edu.tr

films are important and from the directors; such as, Sembene, Getino, Solanas, and Guzman, and are amongst the most culturally significant and politically sophisticated from this movement, and denote the adoption of an independent, often oppositional stance towards the commercial genre emanating from the more developed capitalist world (Marzano, 2009).

The basic determinative motifs used in the culture industry include lifestyle, opinion formation, character structure, behavioural patterns, forms of emotion, daily life stories, social relations, political stances, identity acquisition, and sense of belonging. The most aggressive sector in the culture industry is hollywood cinema. USA's capitalism undertakes a critical manipulation together with hollywood cinema both on a national scale and on global communities (Karaşin, 2011).

Two important names in Argentinean cinema are established as having scrutinised and examined the state of existing cinemas and presented the Third Cinema as a cinema model:

Although the activism had focused on new areas and in many countries by the end of the '60s, Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, using an alternative cinema concept, started the "Third Cinema" movement with a manifesto that they prepared. Their documentary titled *The Hour of the Furnaces* (*Le Hora de los Hornos* – 1968), which followed on the coup of 1966 in Argentina; the two film-makers published their manifesto. Their stated aim was to create films that would raise social awareness about class, language, race, gender and religious discrimination, and to defend anti-imperialism and criticize absolute power structures. The name "Third Cinema" stems from the idea of creating a kind of cinema movement that is contrary to the commercial cinema industry (Salalı, 2013).

First of all, Third Cinema reflects theory and film production practices related to social and cultural liberation. The volume of production of such films is actually very small in comparison to total world cinema production. Nevertheless, Third Cinema films are among the most thrilling and challenging ones; the political and cultural importance of these films increases through their being set within the same period as major historical processes and becoming involved with these processes (Wayne, 2009).

Third Cinema has not only found a place for itself in Latin America where it originated, but also spread its influence, albeit with difficulties, to many parts of the world.

Third Cinema is an aesthetic and political project whose principles have guided film-makers throughout the regions of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Third Cinema still influences filmmaking strategies and projects today. Third Cinema continues to evolve as political, social, and cultural climates change throughout

the world; the tone of a Third Cinema film can reflect a revolutionary atmosphere and deliver its message with confidence, convey the disillusionment of failed or coopted revolutions, or express frustration with class, racial, or gender oppression and continued colonial impulses from First World nations. For this reason, Third Cinema's importance in filmmaking history and its power to deliver social commentary with the aim of inspiring change cannot be understated (Dodge, 2012).

1.1. Third Cinema Understanding

It is very important for Third Cinema that production, distribution, and projection are collective; a team who works collectively and commands each direction of this process directly makes the films.

The film industry has a tripartite structure of production, distribution and projection, but the power distribution among these parts is unequal. The producer needs the distribution guarantee to increase the venture capital, and thus has to transfer the film rights to the distributor. However, the distributor does not have to transfer these rights to the projectionist; therefore the power is held by the distributor company which can deploy all over the world as a financial organisation in the film industry (Armes, 2011).

A number of trends are generally accepted as being the basis either implicitly or directly of the Third Cinema understanding: Cinema Direct, Neo-Realism, Cinema Novo, Imperfect Cinema, and *Aesthetics of Hunger*:

Cinema Direct: The most remarkable feature of this movement is to be present where the events take place with 16 mm cameras that enable shooting with sound synchronization anywhere by means of developing technology. Neo-Realism: The relationship between Third Cinema and Neo-Realism is based on many foundations. Most significantly, a number of Latin American film-makers became familiar with Neo-Realism when they visited Italy. Cinema Novo: The daily life of society was being portrayed in a realistic manner in screenplays, thus bringing to the cinema social inequality, poverty and social contradictions as the subjects of discussion. Imperfect Cinema: The figure that determined the theoretical direction of Cuban cinema is Julio Garcia Espinosa through his article "For an Imperfect Cinema". According to his "Imperfect Cinema" concept, Hollywood cinema is technically perfect and commercial, but it is impossible for the cinemas of underdeveloped countries to reach this level. Technical quality is not important and the living culture of society must be reflected in cinema according to Espinoza (Sivaslioglu, 2011).

Glauber Rocha is a Latin American film-maker who wrote a manifesto titled *Aesthetics of Hunger*. He is able to present an analysis of his own country through

objective expression. Rocha explains Brazilian New Cinema as “a cinema that takes place within the politics of hunger and thus suffers the consequences of all its own weaknesses” (Coşkun, 2003).

Fernando Birri and Frantz Fanon are among those whose influences fed the Third Cinema before it emerged on the scene. As an Argentinian film-maker and theorist, Fernando Birri is best known for two films: his 40-minute documentary *Tire die* (1958) and the full-length *Los inundados* (1962). As the writer of *Black Skin White Masks* (*Peau Noire, Masques Blancs*) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (*Les Damnés de la Terre*), Fanon says, “What matters is not to know the world but to change it!”

Social, economic and political components feed the Third Cinema concept, which means that these films not only reflect the general situation in a country, they contain important data as well.

It can be stated that there is no straight line in the historical development of Latin American cinema. Latin American cinema experienced its most important period of cinema movements in the 1960s and 1970s. It introduced the movements and the directors that had impact all around the world. The political revival that spread globally in the 1960s gained a place in the Latin world as well (Sivashioğlu, 2011).

“The Liberation Film Group” (Grupo Cine Liberacion), a radical Argentinian film-maker group that had named themselves within the context of both a political and a cinematic approach, created a four-and-a-half-hour film in three parts titled *The Hour of the Furnaces* (*La Hora de los Hornos*) in 1968 after conducting a two-year study. The film was produced under conditions of strong oppression after the military take-over of 1966, but with the organised and growing, although confidential, support of the Peronist opposition party (Temiztaş, 2002).

One of the important details is that Solanas went to Paris in 1980 and made a movie dedicated to his friend Yılmaz Güney called *The Tangos* (*El exilio de Gardel: Tangos – 1985*). In addition to this movie, Solanas’ *The South* (*Sur – 1988*) having the marks of revolution, also has a significance place in Third Cinema movement. The Third Cinema understanding has influenced many directors and cinema communities. The most important ones from this group are in Socheaux and Besançon. The movies are made based on a collective division of labor and are made for workers (Salalı, 2013).

Third Cinema is regarded as “Militant Cinema” or “Political Cinema,” in terms of the subjects it deals with and the functions imposed on them; however, Third Cinema carries aspects that go beyond such definitions.

Third Cinema is a political cinema in which the interest in politics extends beyond any narrow definition of the word. It is the cinema of social and cultural liberation, requiring more radical and widespread transformation. If cinema makes relatively modest contributions to this transformation in its own style, this should be accomplished purely and simply by means of films (Wayne, 2009).

By incorporating cultural and political critiques and challenging viewers with new compositional structures and genre juxtaposition, Third Cinema harnesses the power of film to increase social consciousness about issues of power, nationhood, identity, and oppression around the world. For audiences within these regions, particularly those facing cultural and political subordination, Third Cinema aims to illustrate the historical and social processes that have brought about their oppression and to indicate where transformation is required. As Third Cinema principles continue to guide film-makers from the Third World or Third World diaspora with access to media and film resources in the First World, these messages will hopefully become more prevalent and make social change more possible (Dodge, 2012).

Third Cinema is an alternative and revolutionist cinema juxtaposed against the dominant cinemas. The aim was to enlighten and galvanise society through the transforming power of cinema. This movement that began with the documentaries of Solanas and Getino became the most important cinema movement that influenced the formation of many new movements (Sivaslioglu, 2011).

Argentineans Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino coined the term “Third Cinema” in 1968, stating that “First Cinema” is the commercial cinema based in hollywood, “Second Cinema” is the European *auteur* cinema, and “Third Cinema” is the political and informative cinema that is likely to occur in the third world countries.

1.2. Differences Between First, Second and Third Cinema

The term “Third Cinema” reflects its origins in the so-called Third World, which generally refers to those nations located in Africa, Asia, and Latin America where historical encounters with colonial and imperial forces have shaped their economic and political power structures. The term also illustrates a response to the dominant cinematic forms of First World nations and commercial national film industries. Where First Cinema conjures images of Hollywood movies, consumption, and bourgeois values, and Second Cinema refers to European art house films demonstrating aesthetic, but not always political, innovation, Third Cinema takes a different approach to filmmaking, by subverting cinematic codes, embracing revolutionary ideals, and combating the passive film-watching experience of commercial cinema (Dodge, 2012).

Third Cinema has been influenced by the "Italian Reality" movement in terms of production, low costs, out-of-studio shooting, and amateur actor usage. The characters used in the movies portray the release of women's voices, the poor, and the battered and humiliated groups; and in each one of them there is the desire for action based on social awareness (Salalı, 2013).

Although First Cinema is shown in the Manifesto as basically American Cinema or as it is commonly known "hollywood cinema," it is emphasised that this cinema exists on a world scale and dominates the cinemas of every country. In other words, First Cinema is popular cinema and its examples can be seen in every country (Odabaş, 2013).

Further it is indicated that certain cinema movements and trends arising in several countries of the world must be accepted as Second Cinema. American Independent Cinema is included among these. In the manifesto, it is argued that although these are alternative cinemas that emerged in response to the dominant cinema model, they are insufficient because their films remained within the system and when they arrived at the limits that are allowed by the system they could not go beyond them (Odabaş, 2013).

Third Cinema has characteristics that differentiate it from First and Second Cinema, but in the film production process it is not always possible to separate these differences with sharp lines. In this case, it must be clarified that the produced film is or is not in accord with Third Cinema understanding in general. This much-discussed point about the inclusion of a film in the Third Cinema category requires a deeper analysis.

Third Cinema may relevantly result as the 'third space,' which displaces the histories and needs that constitute it and sets up new structures of identity and political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through the current mainstream channels of production and distribution. Due to the changing multiracial and multicultural world reality, Third Cinema must reinvent itself in terms of gender, class, and geographical identity and consequently in terms of narrative structure and aesthetics. The challenge between those cosmopolitan images and the struggle of local identity continues to move film authors looking for new ways to co-produce Latin American, African, and Asian cultural identities through collaborative practices that have as their ultimate aim not the removal of the local, but a meaningful relocation of it into the global community (Marzano, 2009).

1.3. Mike Wayne and the Dialectics of the Third Cinema

Mike Wayne defines four factors for Third Cinema: historicity, politicisation, critical commitment, and cultural specificity (2009). According to Wayne, these four

categories are the cornerstone of the Third Cinema concept and Third Cinema films can be examined in terms of these factors as categories:

Historicity: Third Cinema seeks to develop means for the comprehension of history as process, change, contradiction, and struggle: in short, the dialectics of history.

Politicisation: Third Cinema centres on the process whereby people who have been oppressed and exploited realise this situation and decide to do something about it. In this context, Third Cinema should raise political awareness in the audience.

Critical Commitment: One of the primary aims of Third Cinema is to galvanise the cognitive and intellectual powers of the audience. Third Cinema films should pursue this aim through the structure and the content.

Cultural Specificity: Third Cinema is defined with the acquaintance and affinity with the culture in terms of both the specific meanings from cultural production (e.g., song, dance, theatre, rituals, cinema and literature) and general meanings of culture (the nuances in daily life). Third Cinema examines how the culture is present in the arena of political struggle.

2. The Aim of The Study and the Method

2.1. The Aim

The aim of the present study is to do an in-depth examination of the documentary film *Memoria del Saqueo – Memory of the Plunder*, in terms of Mike Wayne's categories for inclusion in the Third Cinema definition. Only a shallow description has been made thus far regarding the relation between *Memoria del Saqueo – Memory of the Plunder* and the Third Cinema understanding. The aim of choosing this film example is to frame the study on the basis of a documentary that belongs to the place in which the Third Cinema concept arose from with the street theme. For this purpose, this recently produced documentary film directed by Fernando Solanas that reflects the concept of Third Cinema and creates the scope of the study, and the ways in which this documentary film establishes a connection with the concept of Third Cinema are addressed.

2.2. The Method

This study is a descriptive study so a descriptive method has been chosen for analysing a documentary film. In this study, a documentary film that among various examples is highly capable of representing Third Cinema is examined in accordance with the criteria of the Third Cinema Manifesto. The classification

method of Mike Wayne (2009) consisting of four factors that Historicity, Politicisation, Critical Commitment, and Cultural Specificity. These mentioned factors will draw a superficial frame for *Memoria del Saqueo – Memory of the Plunder* but not an extensive frame because these factors describe a film with its connections and structural characteristics. Accordingly, the documentary *Memoria del Saqueo – Memory of the Plunder* will be examined in terms of its connection to Third Cinema, and an assessment is done with Wayne (2009)'s determined factors.

At the same time Wayne (2009) describes that these four key factors can define Third Cinema apart from the other film understanding, so Wayne makes an analysis especially for *The Battle of Algiers* which leads this present study.

Wayne's four key factors is searched in *Memoria del Saqueo – Memory of the Plunder* frame by frame. It can be seen that these factors are intertwined for some part of the film. In such a case it is important to determine the intense factor that draws the relationship of Third Cinema dialectics.

As well as being an assessment, the classification method of Mike Wayne consisting of four factors is used in this study. Also an evaluation of Third Cinema film can include production, distribution and projection procedures that are described for this film. Fernando Solanas has made *Memoria del Saqueo – Memory of the Plunder* as a collective production, distribution, and projection.

2.2.1. The Study Universe

Different Third Cinema films in the world that are in compliance with the criteria of the *Third Cinema Manifesto* constitute the study universe.

2.2.2. The Sampling

The quality of projection creation and the high capability of representation that is high in *Memoria del Saqueo – Memory of the Plunder* constitute the sampling of the study.

2.2.3. Process

The fundamental concepts on which the study is based are relative to the Third Cinema concept in the basic text of Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getinos, the manifesto *Towards a Third Cinema*. It is possible to comprehend Third Cinema with reference to this manifesto; however, the study by Mike Wayne (2009), *Political Film: The Dialectics of Third Cinema*, provides also systematic data about the cornerstones of the Third Cinema. *Memoria del Saqueo – Memory of the Plunder*

is investigated according to Wayne's four categories and an evaluation is given as to how they are reflected in the film.

3. Findings

The following data are resulting from the study of the documentary film *Memoria del Saqueo – Memory of the Plunder* using the descriptive method and Mike Wayne's categorisation of the Third Cinema films.

Examination of the Documentary Film *Memoria del Saqueo – Memory of the Plunder* on the basis of Mike Wayne's "Four Key Markers":

Historicity: Director and producer Fernando Solanas made the documentary film *Memoria del Saqueo – Memory of the Plunder* in 2004. Solanas placed in centre focus the socio-economic crisis of Argentina that occurred in 2001. Solanas forges a link between a previous period and the present to reveal present-day crisis parameters according to the historical process. *Memoria del Saqueo – Memory of the Plunder* presents a historical scene about Argentina. It describes conflicts, struggles, and changes in Argentinean social life.

Politicisation: Civil rebellion in Argentina in 2001 is the theme of *Memoria del Saqueo – Memory of the Plunder*. The hungry, unemployed, under pressure and exploited people come together in the streets because of their socio-economic situation. They decide to do something to change these unpleasant conditions for themselves; the film story is shaped within this process. The primary aim of the film is to raise awareness about the role of political consciousness for struggles in life. Solanas expresses his own political stance through this film. *Memoria del Saqueo – Memory of the Plunder* is also known as *Social Genocide* in cinema literature.

Critical Commitment: *Memoria del Saqueo – Memory of the Plunder* is intended to consider a historical period with a cognitive and holistic assessment. People's criticisms and reactions against governmental operations appear throughout the film. Another aim is to activate the audience by placing them directly in the middle of the events through the use of the Direct Cinema effect. The film shows all the negative sides of life in the ghettos of Argentina just with the interviews and adding no director's comments. All of the critical commitment is shaped through the critical perspectives of people out in the streets.

Cultural Specificity: *Memoria del Saqueo – Memory of the Plunder* gives wide coverage to all the effects of the socio-economic crisis on the lives of the Argentinean people, and it also deals with cultural change and conversion. The angry people sing songs composed by themselves and perform Argentinean dances on the streets during the civil rebellion. Their political action shaped in Argentina

is what gives a name to the struggle. As their political struggle is shaped by the cultural elements, the audience can perceive its cultural specificity.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

In the present study, the documentary film *Memoria del Saqueo – Memory of the Plunder* was evaluated descriptively based on Mike Wayne's categories. The structure of the document under study meets these factors in terms of Historicity, Politicisation, Critical Commitment and Cultural Specificity. Therefore, it is in consistent with the Third Cinema concept. A process whereby Fernando Solanas personally is included has been experienced in terms of production, distribution and projection. Although the structure is a little different from that of 1968, it is produced in the context of Third Cinema understanding in terms of both the matter that is put to the centre and the approaches taken to it.

For certain the Third Cinema concept has gone through changes since the 1960s. Cinematographic styles show changes according to technological and socio-cultural developments. Although the Third Cinema understanding is based on the original manifesto, it must be stated that that the movement area of directors and producers in the stages of production, distribution and projection has enlarged somewhat considerably since the early years of Third Cinema.

Third Cinema is an aesthetic and political project that is guided by certain principles in order to challenge power structures. Though some view Third Cinema as a project of a particular revolutionary period which has now ended, its legacy is visible in films being produced today in the Third World as well as by Third World diaspora populations now located within the First World and in organizations using the power of media for social justice. In short, Third Cinema is still alive – and just as powerful (Dodge, 2012).

The contribution of the study to the limited number of studies conducted on this subject in the literature demonstrates its importance. Third Cinema benefits from social realities and conveys the problems of social life with cinematic language, therefore serving a social function. The way in which this important function is carried out is emphasised in this study.

These concerns to define a necessary and new form of Third Cinema must not leave behind the primary concerns in the production of 'revolutionary films.' The need for Third Cinema is undoubtedly a call for social and cultural transformation. Even though historical contexts and aesthetic responses may change, its mandate to face post-colonialism and to protect local identities still holds. Obviously the present aim of Third Cinema, ignoring geographical borders, is to continue in seeking its own place in a global context. Third cinema is not the

cinema of the Third World but is the cinematic expression of the desire to express themselves and their identities, even though a general tendency of politics and culture is pushing towards a way of homologation and annulment (Marzano, 2009).

Third Cinema has undergone a transformation naturally but it should be underlined that form and content can include varieties but it does not mean the films can lose their dialectics or relationship with the Third Cinema understanding. The linked subroutine can extend along the film as the mentioned four key factors.

The manifesto *Towards a Third Cinema* is still alive although half a century has passed. Those film-makers who want to present a broad perspective concerning social inequality, the opposite conditions of production-consumption in the society or inequalities between countries, must definitely be acquainted with Third Cinema.

In this study, the documentary film *Memoria del Saqueo – Memory of the Plunder* was evaluated descriptively and it is seen that the documentary film has intense connections with the categories as Historicity, Politicisation, Critical Commitment and Cultural Specificity. The director has provided these connections with all the factors involved along the film. Consequently this characteristic strengthens Third Cinema and documentary film understanding together.

Also it is possible to make an analysis of *Memoria del Saqueo – Memory of the Plunder* with following another method. Mike Wayne's four key categories allow one to trace the relationships of the dialectics all along the film.

In the final analysis, only a dual perspective, a closer and a wider look at Third Cinema's bifurcated legacy, can do justice to the historically variable meanings of this term and the diverse audiovisual practices that can be related to it (Stollery, 2002: 207).

Third Cinema is a field still waiting to be discovered. Although the fictional or documentary films that reach an audience through this concept point to a number of economic and political issues, they are necessary cinematic actions for cultural specificity, national interests, and social equality.

Today, more in-depth studies based on films that might be examples of Third Cinema revision would serve to expand the body of literature in this field. This study gives an analysis made with the Mike Wayne's four categories and it will open the door to deeper analysis. Unfortunately, there is not a specific method of the documentary that shows how to examine the films so it is important for the field to examine a documentary film according to a systematic way as Mike Wayne's descriptive classification.

In the future the Third Cinema films can change as the formal and contextual characteristics but the mission will not change in spite of fundamental transitions. As long as the documentary film will address social issues for the reason to exist.

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