

Cinematic Fissures: Life, Image, and Infrapolitics

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The present dossier collects eight texts, all of which consider infrapolitics from the vantage point of films from the Hispanic world. Including films produced in Argentina, Mexico, Spain, Bolivia, Guatemala, and Chile, this dossier contributes to the production of infrapolitical texts from various latitudes that, while in this case are focused on the Spanish-speaking world, are certainly not limited to it. If infrapolitics draws on well-known European

thinkers like Jacques Derrida and Martin Heidegger, this comes primarily from a reception and negotiation produced in Hispanic and Latin American Studies departments in US universities.

A core premise of infrapolitics is that the figure of the political subject has oversaturated both cultural studies and everyday life. Following Alberto Moreiras's deliberately tentative "definition" of infrapolitics—which maintains that, despite capital's drive to render everything calculable and politics' pressure to reduce life to fixed identities, there persists an "absolute difference between life and politics" (85)—this dossier examines films from the Hispanic world that expose the limits, gaps, and interstices of modern political language.

Although this dossier begins from the premise that the image has become a privileged mode of neoliberal cultural production, it turns to the less explored relationship between film and infrapolitics. From an infrapolitical perspective, cinema occupies a paradoxical position within market logics. On one hand, it is an industrial and now digital cultural product shaped by the commodity form, identity production, market segmentation, mediatization, and technological dependence. On the other hand, cinema retains a literary dimension—a symbolic core—that allows us to think through its fissures. While we recognize that other cultural forms also exist in tension with market and technological forces, cinema's technical medium has undergone a particularly dramatic intensification of its ties to the market, a relationship that remains understudied within infrapolitics, given the field's longstanding emphasis on literature and philosophy.

Equally important—if not more so—than cinema's relationship to the market are the multiple roles that the visual image plays in contemporary life. For Martin Heidegger, the consolidation of Western metaphysics rests on the human subject's reduction of the world to a fully representable and quantifiable image, a tendency intensified in the twentieth century with photographic views of the Earth made possible by the space race. Today,

this prompts us to ask how the image functions within both market regimes and infrapolitical critique. We refer, among other things, to the centrality of visibility in discourses of securitization and surveillance, and to the persistent belief that politics and the market can be rendered transparent through clear, totalizing images. While infrapolitics has correctly diagnosed the increasing calculability of life and the expansion of the principle of general equivalence across ever more domains of existence, this dossier argues that it has yet to fully address the specific role played by the visual image in these contemporary formations. In the Coda to this dossier, Gareth Williams points out that “infrapolitics resists becoming a paradigm of world image” (300), that is, the infrapolitical carries with it a rejection to becoming a structuring principle of the world. The notion of image is, however, also central to cinema. After all, cinema’s and photography’s ability to capture images of the world perhaps radicalize the fantasy that art and language can represent the world in its totality (with hyperrealist film, reality tv, and snuff films at the forefront of this desire). The contributions to this dossier point, in contrast, to a tonality within cinematographic language that denarrativizes and upends the visual image’s impulse for totalizing the world.

The articles gathered in this dossier display both geographical and conceptual diversity. With analyses of films from six different countries, readers are invited to consider how the claims of infrapolitics take shape in local contexts without being confined to them. Although the dossier focuses on films from the Hispanic world, this choice does not imply any geocultural specificity inherent to infrapolitics. The essays also vary in how explicitly they engage the infrapolitical archive: some outline their theoretical grounding directly, while others approach infrapolitics more obliquely through concepts and interlocutors central to its development. We regard this range of orientations as a strength. It reflects infrapolitics not as a fixed system but as a gesture—a form of negativity that unsettles the reified concepts circulating

in the theoretical humanities and cultural studies, even as it invites legitimate critiques from scholars who question its premises.

The essays included in this dossier approach infrapolitics through a wide range of films and national contexts. Cristina Moreiras Menor examines the Spanish documentary *El silencio de otros*, highlighting the film's aesthetic strategies, its ethical project of restitution, and its engagement with archival memory to argue that its force lies in what remains incalculable. Pedro A. Aguilera Mellado also focuses on a Spanish film, *20.000 especies de abejas*, extending infrapolitical critique to questions of gender difference and human extinction; he suggests that the film stages an existential decision that exceeds both calculation and gender as fixed identity. Turning to the Mexican Revolution—one of the first violent conflicts to be extensively documented through photography and film—Juan Leal Ugalde asks whether images captured by the camera allow us to experience catastrophe in a temporality that resists linear, progressive historical narratives. Matt Johnson analyzes Argentine filmmaker Lucrecia Martel's short film *Leguas*, proposing estrangement as a narrative and perceptual device that reveals how cinema's mechanical gaze trains its audiences and where fissures open within this regime. Also working in the Argentine context, Daniel Runnels reads the heist film *Caballos salvajes* as staging an infrapolitical “something else” that disrupts the paradox of political anarchism, pushing its protagonist toward an infrapolitical stance. José Luis Suárez Morales examines Alonso Ruizpalacios's *Güeros* and its portrayal of the 1999 student strike at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, drawing on Ernst Jünger's concept of *Mobilmachung* (total mobilization) to argue that the film reflects on the exhaustion of movement as a key figure of hegemonic politics and on technology's encroachment upon life. Gonzalo Díaz Letelier turns to Raúl Ruiz's cinematic poetics to show how his work can be understood as an infrapolitical critique of biopolitics. Finally, Michela Russo addresses biopolitical discourse through her analysis of Bolivian filmmaker

Jorge Sanjinés's foundational film *Yawar Mallku*, examining its critique of the neocolonial management of life and death.

This dossier—featuring essays in both English and Spanish—invites scholars working in other cultural and linguistic contexts to pursue related questions in films not limited to the Spanish speaking world. Our aim is for this collection to serve both as an exploration of an understudied area within infrapolitical thought and as a call for further work on cinema across diverse traditions. Infrapolitics is increasingly visible in academic debates, with recent publications such as Pedro A. Aguilera Mellado's *Fines Infrapolíticos: De la Razón, la Representación y la Narrativa Española Moderna*, the English translation of Alberto Moreiras's *Infrapolítica: Instrucciones de uso [Infrapolitics: A Handbook]*, Gareth Williams's *Infrapolitical Passages: Global Turmoil, Narco Accumulation, and the Post Sovereign State*, a 2023 special issue of *Culture Machine* on infrapolitics and the Anthropocene, and a 2023 dossier in *Philosophy and Society*. In this sense, the present collection seeks to address a gap within infrapolitical cinema and visual studies, contributing to the ongoing development of infrapolitics as a transdisciplinary theoretical discourse.

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