



# Postcolonial and Transnational Perspectives

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Taking Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's evaluative statement, 'The best of postcolonialism is autocritical' (2000: xv), as a necessary injunction, this overview begins with an interrogation of its two principal terms, 'postcolonial' and 'transnational', and of the implications of their juxtaposition. Contrary to what this grouping might suggest, the terms – whether as analytical categories, ideological 'isms', or as historical experiences – are neither coeval, nor necessarily antithetical: one does not simply lead up to or negate the other. The postcolonial indexes lifeworlds, sections of which continue to be external to the transnational: to presume that the former is being completely subsumed by the transnational would be to erase these lifeworlds altogether. Such a supposition would take us back to a Hegelian epistemology, retooled for our times: if, in an earlier era, to be acknowledged as an agent of World History one had to possess national consciousness, now basic recognition requires the stamp of transnationality.

Much recent scholarship in Film Studies, awash in the oceanic promises of neoliberal globalization and an unmitigated techno-determinism, breathlessly proclaims the end of the postcolonial and the national, just as it engages in polemics about the death of cinema. In an increasingly unified intellectual endorsement of the core logic of capital – the endless production of novelty (new improved detergents, cereals, fashions, toys, technologies, models) – a large number of academics have called for new categories and paradigms, without always establishing convincingly, beyond the glibly evident, why we need such rethinking and re-articulation. The new assemblages surely demand innovative conceptualizations; but the problem is in a kind of academic new ageism that tends to dismiss earlier structures, processes and theories – as if the past is done with, and has no bearings on the present or the future. Meanwhile, the banal proliferation of the obsolete and the disposable – dead technologies, dead media forms, dead tastes, dead critical

approaches – have produced a series of spectral doubles for film (and television [and video] and new [and digital {and wireless}] media) studies, leading to a disciplinary ‘crisis’. This haunted cultural-epistemological field indexes, beyond all presumptions of a linear progression, the anachronistic interpenetrations of media forms and paradigms, experientialities and publics, and their uneven spatio-temporal distribution. The uneasy spectrality, an endemic condition of (colonial) modernity, intimates the problems presented by a celebratory transnationalism unhinged from a critical postcolonial optic, not the least of which is a global regime of knowledge production closely complicit with the imperialist moulding of a monolithic World History.

The present chapter proceeds from two deliberate choices. The first section of this Handbook, an admittedly partial inventory of national and regional cinemas and film cultures, has had to leave out certain cinematic ‘traditions’ (for instance, Japanese and Arab cinemas). The exclusion of African cinema, in particular, has ramifications for this overview. The gap evokes, wittingly or not, a particular Film Studies genealogy (resistance to colonialism ⇒ postcolonial nationalisms and cultures ⇒ Third Cinema as an oppositional movement arising in the global South) that subsumes all of African cinema under the sign of ‘postcolonial resistance’; thus, in spite of the evidence of recent scholarship (Shafik, 2007; Ukadike, 2003), popular Egyptian and Maghrebi cinemas or Nigerian and Ghanaian video productions continue to be marginalized within our discipline. Such a genealogy might raise an expectation that this overview of postcolonial and transnational perspectives would ‘cover’ African cinema(s). This essay eschews such token coverage as it would only reproduce structures of thought that deny the continent of Africa, conceived in the modern era as a terrain of lack, the possibility of any consciousness or culture except as a horizon of radical alterity (Mudimbe, 1988). A facile inclusiveness would constitute, epistemologically speaking, a further erasure of Africa. Secondly, in what

follows, the focus is on cinema – but broadly construed to accommodate recent techno-economic and socio-political transformations commonly placed under the rubric of ‘media convergence’.

### FROM POSTCOLONIAL TO TRANSNATIONAL?

The postcolonial and the transnational are both spatio-temporal categories: each indexes an historical break marking a before and an after, and simultaneously conjures up a geopolitical topography. To situate the terms in relation to each other, one might begin with their embeddedness in the history of capitalist modernity. If imperialism refers to the gradual and relentless expansion of a capitalist system across the planet, then colonialism – the annexation of other people’s territories by imperial powers for the commandeering of resources – is, like slavery, an early stage in that history. But even after territorial decolonization, widespread expropriation is sustained through international economic, political and legal systems. In the face of contemporary neocolonial exploitation, the two components of the ‘postcolonial’ imply both continuity and a beyond (Loomba, 2005). An anti-colonial project is still relevant to a global struggle against imperialism, against exclusionary hegemonies and against cultural colonization. Thus, the postcolonial is best understood as both an historical stage, and a generalized political stance.

The field of postcolonial studies is found to be vexing in many intellectual quarters. If the ideological Right is threatened by its anti-imperialist critical polemics, segments of the Left question its strong connections to Western academia, especially its debts to poststructuralist theory’s radical anti-foundationalism (which makes it difficult to mobilize political community and action) and focus on textuality (which appears to place concrete reality under erasure). The field’s dispersed institutional locations (from Australia to Mexico, from South Africa to the Netherlands) and disciplinary ties

(anthropology and history, literary studies and art history), with divergent – even incommensurate – genealogies and research protocols, concerns and commitments, resist efficacious parsing or characterization. But this fuzziness, this porosity, is also a measure of postcolonialism's broad and ongoing relevance: the discourse enjoys strong resonances and productive intersections with critical race theory (JanMohamed and Lloyd, 1991), indigenous studies (Povinelli, 2002), feminism (Spivak, 1988), queer criticism (Arondekar, forthcoming), globalization studies (Slater, 2004) and an emergent ecocriticism (Guha and Martinez-Alier, 1997).

According to some critics, the oft-rehearsed debates between historical-materialist approaches and poststructuralist paradigms, between Western and non-Western sites of knowledge production, between social science and humanities methodologies – debates that once energized postcolonial studies – seem to have largely exhausted themselves. They suggest that translocal perspectives, in the flexibility they afford beyond limiting antinomies, might bring new vigour to critical discourse. But the local and wildly divergent invocations of 'global' or 'transnational' underscore the continuing necessity of attending to the geopolitics of intellectual labour. And the more recent disciplinary formation of globalization studies cannot supplant the critical acuity of postcolonial discourse: the former frequently celebrates neocolonialism, and the latter remains particularly adroit in challenging cultural colonization. That so many academics are intent on jettisoning postcolonialism may well be a mark of its continuing power to provoke, to put pressure on epistemological certitudes that shore up geopolitical hierarchies. Indeed, this intellectual antagonism accompanies privatization, deregulation, 'increased poverty and infrastructure failure' in the global South and 'huge transfers of wealth from the South to the North in the form of debt payment and repackaging' – shifts that Mark Driscoll describes as components of a 'reverse postcoloniality' (2004: 60).

A conflation of postcolonialism with decolonizing nationalisms produces the common perception of an adversarial relation between the postcolonial and the transnational. Yet others argue that colonial encounters and postcolonial dispersion and hybridization pave the way for transnational formations. In what sense can we relate, if not reconcile, these polar viewpoints? Nationalism provided the emotive and utopian basis for the bureaucratic modern state, which became necessary at an early stage of capitalism to enforce private property rights, maintain market institutions and uphold legal arrangements. In colonial contexts, the practical needs of the state came into conflict with the utopian promises of nationalism: decolonizing nationalisms were born of these contradictions. Over time, the ossification of unifying essentialisms, once crucial to a nascent collective consciousness, led to structures of oppression and marginalization. Totalitarian tendencies, endemic corruption and rent-seeking behaviour further attenuated the legitimacy of nationalism. Already in the late 1950s, in the heydays of decolonization, Frantz Fanon (1965) was deeply troubled by the power-mongering of the comprador bourgeoisie in the postcolonies, who were vitiating the goal of emancipation by merely replacing the departing colonial machinery with their own networks of exploitation. As Fanon (1967) saw it, the roots of this disillusionment lay in the acute depersonalization produced by the colonial negation of blackness and the simultaneous internalization or 'epidermalization' of a European consciousness by the black (for Fanon, male) subject who donned a 'white mask' over his 'black skin'. Subsequent interventions from neocolonial forces and international agencies undermined economic and political sovereignties from Argentina to Zaire, reducing postcolonial liberation to mere 'flag independence' in many cases. On the other hand, persistent global inequities and an intensifying international division of labour have set in motion trans-border flows and presented opportunities for translocal social movements. Thus, postcolonial thought has had to reckon with both domestic and

external troubles, adopting positions ranging from the staunchly nationalist to the critically transnational.

Nationalism was discredited as parochial, and a cosmopolitan humanism upheld as the core of progressive values, precisely at a point when decolonizing movements were gathering force: hence the postcolonial suspicion of cosmopolitanism with its roots in post-Enlightenment idealism. Nationalism remains a potent force in our transnational era, and not only in a backward 'Third World': witness the constant rhetoric of German or US patriotism, and the unrestrained jingoism during the Olympics. Even for critics of the nation state, any alternative political community or organization is not self-evident. Can cosmopolitan realms of belonging, transnational justice movements and various institutions of a global civil society (such as non-governmental organizations and legal advocacy coalitions) adequately represent local or subaltern interests in an increasing unilateral world? These seem to be most effective when they are rooted in local concerns, and utilize local resources and passions in tandem with transnational networks and protocols. On the other hand, large masses of people do not enjoy the fruits of trans-border mobility, nor can they avail of global standards and institutions. Indeed, emerging global players such as China, South Korea or Brazil embrace a rootless cosmopolitan ideal, and assume a global chic, to attract foreign and expatriate capital and expertise: while elite groups attain stratospheric levels of income and luxury, the bulk of their populations have to bear the brunt of the costs of structural adjustments. As Masao Miyoshi (1993) claims, the transnational is qualitatively different from the international or the multinational, in that the former designates a situation in which huge corporations transcend their national roots and become dedicated, full-time engines of global capital. Fantasies of connectivity and oneness, encapsulated in the rhetoric of a 'global village', serve to mask this ground-level reality. Many nation states are still able to deflect the pressures of globalization, to substantially recalibrate planetary scripts

and trends. Nevertheless, national regimes and institutions become increasingly more complicit with – even subservient to – global capital, bringing about their own partial erasure: a condition Pheng Cheah (1999) refers to as 'spectral nationality'.

Often used interchangeably with more established categories such as 'world' (as in 'world literature'), 'international' (as in 'international relations') and 'global' (as in 'global citizen'), the nomenclature 'transnational' is in need of clarification in order to muster any analytical potency: we need to identify what is new about it, not just in terms of its heightened reach or intensity, but also qualitatively speaking. In particular, it is necessary to track and interrogate emergent translocal institutions, flows, processes, subjectivities, affiliations and constellations of power. Arjun Appadurai's work, particularly his 1990 essay 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy', lays out an innovative approach to mapping these new formations, these transnational spatial imaginations, as 'scapes' of ethnic communities, financial systems, enclaves of ideas, technological networks and media circuits. His emphasis on 'imagination' as 'the key component of the new global order' has had great appeal for cultural theorists in general, and media scholars in particular, although he has been criticized for downplaying materiality (see Wayne, 2002: 123). However, Appadurai's initial polemic against a social scientific obsession with regularities and structures, in favour of a fluid conception of global flows and practices, does not preclude a situated, materialist approach. Faye Ginsburg, for instance, adopts the notion of mediascapes, Appadurai's term for 'the different kinds of global cultural flows created by new media technologies and the images created with them', to produce a 'situated analysis' of 'the interdependence' of Australian Aboriginal 'media practices with the local, national and transnational circumstances that surround them'. She demonstrates how this approach demarcates 'a more generative discursive space' for Aboriginal media production, allowing her to highlight 'the specific

situatedness' of such cultural labour without 'the fetishizing of the local' (1994: 366).

More recently, the term 'global assemblages' has gained wide currency, especially among anthropologists of globalization. 'Assemblage', which conjures up a sense of the plastic, the networked and the novel, carries within it the sedimentation of an array of earlier attempts to capture nascent formations, including Raymond Williams' invocation of the 'emergent', Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's notion of 'machinic assemblages', Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's 'articulation' and Manuel Castells' 'network society'. The term might refer to the political promises and socio-cultural tribulations of 'flexible citizenship' within diasporic ethnic communities and mobile business and managerial classes (Aihwa, 1999); the translocal 'cultures of expertise' that are employed in the 'management of globalization', for instance in dealing with conditions of contingency and uncertainty when 'contradiction, exception, facts that are fugitive' cannot be apprehended by 'the reigning statistical mode of analysis' (Holmes and Marcus, 2006: 237); or to the global traffic of human organs and the emergence of a post-human ethics involving organ transplant and scarcity (Scheper-Hughes, 2006). Global assemblages include not simply hegemonic transnational regimes associated with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the World Trade Organization (WTO), but also subaltern mobilizations and 'transnationalism from below' embodied in the Green Movement and the World Social Forum.

### **FILM STUDIES AND THE POLITICS OF INTELLECTUAL LABOUR**

A cursory look through our field's leading journals, books and conference panels reveals extensive references to postcolonial frameworks, but their implications have not been integrated enough to produce essential transformations. Many of the fundamental disciplinary shibboleths, questionable at best

when not outright offensive to a postcolonial sensibility, continue to inform our field. Thus, it remains necessary and instructive to rehash certain analytical gestures that congealed by the mid-1990s, and now appear to inspire, within postcolonial anthropology, literary studies, or history, all the excitement of dead-end homilies.

The mainstream of cinema studies continues to be enthralled with Hollywood. Most scholarship that deploys postcolonial and transnational frameworks retains Hollywood as a putative norm, reducing every other cinematic tradition to its satellite that emulates, aspires to or resists it. In this 'relational' world (to take a poststructuralist buzzword with great critical purchase), the relationality is, ultimately, in reference to a singular centre: only the margins are reserved for all parallel formations with their own aesthetic genealogies and local social concerns. Colonial representations and diasporic mediations garner an inordinate share of critical attention; when the focus is on other national cinemas, they are quickly consigned to the peripheries as quirky exceptions. Transnational film circuits that do not involve Hollywood continue to be ignored, unless they are framed as a cinema of resistance: Third Cinema remains a prime example (see Pines and Willemsen, 1989). But this constant reiteration of Hollywood as the dominant film industry, even if true in terms of its business clout and cultural influence, becomes something of a cliché that forecloses investigations of other significant translocal cinematic channels and publics (say, Hong Kong cinema's hegemony in Asia, or Hindi cinema's popularity in the Arab world and in East Africa). So assured is the effective hold of this 'Hollywood over the rest' perspective on our field that it is impossible to use its categories and paradigms and be able to talk about 'other', 'alternative', 'non-Hollywood' cinemas without lapsing precisely into such marginalizing categories.

To harp on the centrality of Hollywood in Film Studies (either approvingly or critically) is to risk the reproduction of a certain essentialist polarity – a problem that

marks much work on colonialist ideology and representation, including Edward Said's seminal book *Orientalism* (1979) on the discursive production of a reductive and stereotypical orient as the passive object of Western curiosity and mastery. Said's nuanced exegesis of imperial discourse produces the notion of a unified, self-same Europe; it thus constitutes a kind of critical Occidentalism that was, nonetheless, a polemical necessity at the time, and that staked out for such critique a central place within cultural theory. Drawing on Antonio Gramsci's theory of building consensus and hegemony through the institutions of civil and political societies, and adopting Michel Foucault's conception of discourse (as a knowledge set comprising what is articulated, what gets left out, and the institutions regulating these enunciations and erasures) and the equivalence he posited between the formation of knowledge and the generation of power, Said demonstrated the ways in which a colonial imaginary and its disciplinary bulwarks (colonial geography, colonial anthropology and so on) produced and maintained hierarchies and relations of power. Colonial knowledge, in its 'disinterested objectivity', legitimized imperialist interests and projects by purveying rationales for them (including the notorious 'white man's burden' thesis). He also revealed the constitutive, if latent, traces of an orientalist episteme in (post)colonial subjectivities and knowledge structures.

Said's contrapuntal readings, with their focus on discursive and textual formations and their trenchant attentiveness to the fear of, and fascination for, the Other, provided a powerful methodology for text-oriented disciplines such as literary studies, art history and Film Studies. Scholars such as Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (1994) and Fatimah Tobing-Rony (1996) have explored the cinematic production of a colonial worldview in which romance and desire consistently seep into objectivity: space is mapped out in terms of exotic fantasies about the New World and the Dark Continent, the sensuousness of the oriental harem and the savagery of the desert nomads; entire lifeworlds are compressed into

modules of facts and artefacts and put on display in museums (Egyptology's mummies and Indology's sculptures being salient examples); ethnographic films produce spectacles of distant (non-European) populations as a panoply of racialized, gendered, sexualized and, ultimately, infantilized stereotypes. Recent scholarship has built on this work to engage pre-cinematic visual cultures and early mass cultural sites like exhibitions, world fairs, and science and technology expos (Griffith, 2001), and also colonial documentaries (travelogues and instructional films) related to automobile technology, hygiene and colonial landscapes (Bloom, 2008).

Historians of imperialism have explored the mutual constitution of the colonizer and the colonized, focusing on the mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion, myriad negotiations, and the gradual elaboration of a bourgeois order in both metropolitan and colonial societies (Cooper and Stoler, 1997). Continuing in this vein of interrogating colonial interpenetrations, and shifting the focus to the cusp of the colonial and the postcolonial, Priya Jaikumar (2006) examines the cultural endgames of empire when the British colonial project in South Asia had already lost its moral legitimacy and political efficacy. The interaction between film regulations and film aesthetics (involving markets, genres, censorship, realism and modernism) articulated the shifting imperial relations: from governmentality to redemption of empire, and finally to autonomy. These transformations defined the future contours of the British and Indian film industries, and their relations to Hollywood and to the British and Indian states. Thus, Jaikumar traces persistent colonial structures back to the discourses and to the inter-industry and state-industry relations of late empire.

With territorial decolonization, the post-colonies faced the task of dismantling the material and psychic structures of imperialism. In particular, cultural sectors had to take on the project of 'decolonizing the mind', a project that had already begun with nationalist liberation movements (Gabriel, 1982; Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1986). Central to

this project were questions of subject formation, nation-building and nationalist pedagogy, aesthetic and political representation. The recovery of marginalized modes of sociality, of erased experiences and traditions, and of discounted modes of historiography was crucial to the exigency of countering the self-justificatory myths of Eurocentric (and, in the case of East Asia, Japanese) imperialism, including the inscription of its Others in perpetual lack, and the inexorable denouement of a universal History (Fanon, 1965; Landy, 1996). The mobilization of anti-imperialist political action, the consolidation of communities, and the continuing struggle for social justice became the preoccupations of postcolonial film cultures.

An agenda of politicized cultural intervention with an eye to social transformation was most clearly articulated around Third Cinema (Solanas and Getino, 1976), envisioned as an innovative, robust and combative alternative to 'first' or commercial-industrial (consumerist) cinema and 'second' or art cinema of bourgeois interiority (effete aestheticism). Articulating a possibility of transnational cultural cooperation on behalf of the global South around a model of resistance, Third Cinema mobilized itself in terms of a series of polemical dichotomies: integrity versus selling out, challenging versus pandering, education versus entertainment, passive complicity versus active struggle. The very 'problems' besetting Third Cinema – poverty, scarcity, lack of resources and training, urgency and rawness – were embraced as its strengths in the various rhetorics of 'imperfect cinema' (Julio García Espinosa), 'cinema of hunger' (Glauber Rocha), 'cinema of underdevelopment' (Fernando Birri), 'revolutionary cinema' (Jorge Sanjinés) (Pines and Willemen, 1989). These early manifestos were elaborated into garbage cinema, guerilla cinema and cannibal-tropicalist cinema. Third Cinema's origins, objectives, accomplishments and entanglements have been widely documented and evaluated (Guneratne and Dissanayake, 2003; Oubiña, this volume; Pines and Willemen, 1989); however, a few salient points are worth

recounting. Third Cinema is best understood as a loose paradigm of counter cinema (or a cinema of negation) aiming not only to dismantle colonial legacies, but also to challenge neocolonial pressures and an exploitative centralization of power. This homogenizing emphasis on a combative alterity ultimately concedes a referential centrality to that which it is supposed to oppose. Meanwhile, Third Cinema's oppositional status is complicated in practice by the facts of institutional and financial assistance by the state (for example, in Cuba), and by ex-colonizers (French aid for the cinemas of Senegal and Tunisia, for instance). The relentlessly masculinist articulations of Third Cinema align it with a mainstream heteropatriarchy. Produced by well-meaning (usually middle class, educated, male) urban filmmakers obsessed with subaltern subjects, the films are often notoriously pedantic, an attribute that limits their audiences.

It is not possible to reduce Third Cinema to specific national contexts, marked as it is by significant globalist impulses: Fanon's call for a genuine form of political, material and psychic liberation; Marxist cultural theory (specifically a Brechtian aesthetics of estrangement); influence of socialist realism, and even of neorealism. FESPACO, the biennial international film festival in Burkina Faso, emerged as an important transnational forum for coalition building, and as an alternative channel for distribution and exhibition. In their inaugural manifesto, Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino (1976) included certain filmmaking practices of the industrialized nations within the ambit of Third Cinema. Nevertheless, as Paul Willemen (1989) argued, Third Cinema was frequently grounded in local struggles (against Latin American dictatorships, Filipino and Senegalese elite classes, Indian landlords and industrialists) of the postcolonies. Extrapolating from these two seemingly incongruous tendencies, it is possible to situate Third Cinema as an instance of rooted cultural cosmopolitanism.

Largely because of its associations with familiar analytical and aesthetic canons, and

its resonances with Western social movements of the 1960s, Third Cinema enjoyed critical currency within metropolitan cultural theories, and came to stand in for a far wider and more popular set of filmmaking practices all over the so-called 'third world', notwithstanding the former's disdain for, and outright hostility towards, commercially-oriented cinemas. This conflation was possible because, until the mid-1980s, popular cinemas from developing countries were either consigned to critical oblivion or misrecognized as cinemas of negation because of their formal difference from Western filmmaking traditions. This preoccupation with imputed counter cinemas from the 'third world' was shaped largely by Western fantasies about oppositional cultural politics springing forth from geopolitical peripheries. The US-based Third World Newsreel embodies this tendency in its singular focus on radical independent media dealing with social issues relating to people of colour in developing nations and diasporic communities. Such grafting together of Third Cinema and 'third world' or postcolonial cinemas is responsible for the marginalization of various popular cinemas. At the other extreme, the confusion leads to the occlusion of Third Cinema theory and praxis from many recent accounts of film theory and postcolonial film cultures: nowadays, filmmaking practices of the 'third world', diasporic and marginalized communities apparently subsume Third Cinema (Guneratne, 2003: 4).

More than a hint of this conflation (not to mention a projected fantasy of oppositionality) is present in Fredric Jameson's writings on third world literature and film (1986; 1992), his privileged figures being modernist and politicized auteurs such as Lu Xun, Ousmane Sembene, Kidlat Tahimik and Edward Yang. As Vilashini Cooppan points out (2004: 17–18), we notice in Jameson a homology of the antinomies first world/third world, global/national, bourgeois individualism/collectivism, and a simultaneous recognition of the embeddedness of third world national cultures in global processes – particularly, their 'life-and-death

struggle with first world cultural imperialism – a cultural struggle that is itself a reflexion of the economic situation of such areas in their penetration by various stages of capital' (Jameson, 1986: 68). Jameson sees this struggle mapped in the obsessively allegorical figurations of third world literature. Ultimately, his objective is to locate a 'geopolitical aesthetic' that produces a 'cognitive mapping' of a global totality, however fragmented and opaque (1992). Thus, in spite of its essentializing characterization of all third world literature as national allegories, Jameson's analysis is valuable for stressing the links between postcolonial nationalisms and global formations. His influence is evident in explorations of the cultural politics of an allegorical mode within various national contexts – from Brazilian cinema's 'allegories of underdevelopment' in which scarcity is productively transformed into a signifier (Xavier, 1997), to Chinese fifth generation filmmakers' allegories 'of the social landscape' in the wake of the Cultural revolution and economic liberalization (Zhang, 1997).

Not all postcolonial cinemas are primarily about resistance to global capital, Eurocentrism, or bourgeois paradigms of filmmaking: popular films involve far more modulated negotiations with these hegemonic structures. Even an allegorical mode may have to do less with a struggle against imperialism than with historically contingent local concerns: for instance, Indian popular cinema's flight to allegory in mediating the collective trauma of national partition (Sarkar, forthcoming). Nevertheless, to the extent that colonial modernity remains constitutive of the material and psychic structures in the postcolonies, fundamental schisms continue to animate the politics of cultural production. Thus, cinema's mediation of postcolonial projects of nationhood has had to contend with the interpenetrations of racist structures and class differences in Cuba or Mexico (Chanan, 2004; Paranagua, 1996; 2003); questions of cultural pedagogy, citizenship and subalternity in relation to the national-popular (tensions captured with respect to Indian cinema in Ashish Nandy's notion of popular cinema



as a 'slum's eye view of politics' [1999], in Sumita Chakravarty's trope of cultural 'impersonation' [1994] and Madhav Prasad's identification of 'an aesthetics of mobilization' [2001]). Scholars examine the spectral jostling of incommensurate epistemologies and non-synchronous temporalities in recent Indian writing in English (Ghosh, 2004), and in Asian ghost films (Lim, 2001). Ackbar Abbas tracks the dislocations and disorientations wrought by the entanglements of imperialism and globalism in contemporary Hong Kong. Something about Hong Kong reality and subjectivity is always on the verge of getting lost, but its trace remains – like the bamboo scaffoldings on the construction sites of post-modern high-rise buildings. The city becomes a space of *disappearance*: marked not by the absence of appearances, but by an *uneasy* appearance. 'History now goes through strange loops and becomes difficult to represent in terms of traditional realism... Hence the frequent excesses and exaggerations of the new Hong Kong cinema: they register a sense of the incredible as real' (Abbas, 1997: 16–17).

The category of national cinema became central to Film Studies with its institutionalization in North American universities in the late 1960s (following the popularity of Italian neorealism, French New Wave and Italian modernism – the golden age of 'foreign films' in the US). At that point, the national was not so much a structure as a descriptive and organizing term. Film historians presumed the unity of national character and culture: hence the cinema of a particular nation was supposed to reflect its collective sensibility, its spirit. The national emerged as a problematic within Film Studies in the late eighties, when mounting multiculturalist pressures in the US and Great Britain brought its problems to the fore. Poststructuralist difference and problems of immigration inspired more complicated models of 'national culture' that saw it not as having a stable referent, but as a culturally constructed and deeply contested field where notions of national patrimony, heritage, tradition, authentic identity and community were being constantly debated. In the 1990s, with

the rising tides of globalization, the sense of an inside clearly marked from an outside became difficult to sustain: the emphasis shifted to the transnational dimensions of the production, distribution and reception of any national cinema (Higson, 2000; Miller et al., 2005). Communications technologies from satellite television to the Internet conjured up new terrains of affiliation and identity beyond national borders and standard territorialities (Crag et al., 1999; Morley and Robins, 1989).

A shift from nationalism to transnationalism has multiple implications for cinema studies (and for media studies in general). At the very least, we need to distinguish between (a) globalizing the terms and paradigms of film theory and criticism, and (b) theorizing global formations.

Film theory, in its focus on medium specificity, built a supposedly general theory drawing on the evidence of Western national cinematic traditions. Other cinemas remained precisely that: marginalized alternatives to the global norm, curious exceptions that only proved the universal rule. How do we move beyond these limitations? Certain pointers have been in operation for quite some time now, in the guise of questions and controversies that have continued to vex film scholarship. One such concern involves the cross-cultural critical apprehension of cultural forms, including the legibility of various national cinemas in their encounter with Western models and methodologies, and their place in film theory and history. The anxiety regarding the application of Western theory (a master narrative) to non-Western cinemas (aberrant supplements), an anxiety that is rooted in the opposition Self/Other, was first articulated around the study of Japanese cinema. Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto (1991) provides a useful critical map of this debate. While Noël Burch idealizes Japanese cinema, following Roland Barthes into 'an empire of signs' dissociated from the materiality of social life, and thus coincident with universal theory, and David Bordwell seeks to appropriate Yasujiro Ozu as a modernist auteur on account of his 'defiance' of Classical Hollywood cinema principles, Peter Lehman criticizes

such approaches for completely ignoring the relevance of Japanese aesthetic traditions to an assessment of Ozu's oeuvre. Lehman, in turn, proceeds from a Eurocentric and art historical understanding of modernism: as Yoshimoto argues, the question is not whether Ozu was a (European-style) modernist but, rather, what might be the contours of a specifically Japanese modernism (1991: 244). He also points out the operative binary general theory/contingent history, which produces a further polarity between a film theory approach (privileging trans-cultural frameworks) and area studies model (stressing deep immersion in, and mastery of, cultural specificities). It is this opposition that comes into play in E. Ann Kaplan's reflexive essay on the problematic of studying Chinese cinema without erasing its specificities (1989). Kaplan suggests that the limitations from her lack of familiarity with the Chinese context are somewhat offset by the objectivity afforded by her distance. Thus, as Yoshimoto points out, she counterposes a distant and somewhat disengaged critical mastery to another form of scholarly expertise achieved through conscientious immersion in the local, conducting what Spivak describes as an arrogant production of the Other through the collection of information (1988). One might add that this second form of mastery is tied up with the primary impetus behind the inauguration of the area studies model: imperialist intelligence. In sum, as long as the anxious discourse about cross-cultural analysis is predicated on the Self/Other dichotomy, Film Studies cannot hope to move beyond its implicit orientalism.

Kaplan's intervention came at a point when, following China's 'opening up' to the forces of globalization, and the emergence of the 'fifth generation' filmmakers, anxieties about cross-cultural analysis were played out with respect to Chinese cinema. Rey Chow (1991) questioned the very notion of a radically other Chinese culture, claiming that 'Chinese' and 'Western' were dialectically interactive. She also argued in favour of moving beyond the binary opposition of 'Western theory' as subject and 'Chinese cinema' as object, so that the mutually constitutive relation between

the two categories could be explored. Both she and Esther Yau (1987–88) stressed the mutability of film theory and practice. They also challenged the equation of China with tradition and the West with modernity, calling for a more complicated conceptualization of Chinese modernity that would capture its convolutions, and what Ernst Bloch (1977) might call its 'synchronicity of the non-synchronous' (see also Donald and Voci in this volume).

The Film Studies debate over China at that particular conjuncture (late 1980s–early 1990s), while advancing our understanding about the stakes of cross-cultural analysis, accompanies China's rise as a global economic power. In that sense, the debate presages current discourses around the global ascendancy of 'Bollywood' following India's economic liberalization, and paves the way for possibly more supple theorizations of translocal industrial, aesthetic and epistemological interpenetrations. The point here is that the production of intellectual discourse, the shifting paradigms, the fresh insights are all elements of a global system largely driven by the logic of capital: there is no pure critical 'there' outside of the space of capital. The shift to transnationalism, and frames of analysis that champion the hybrid and the plastic, are significant components of capitalist globalization.

Among postcolonial theorists, Homi Bhabha consistently nudges us beyond all kinds of binarisms – Self/Other, first world/third world, theory/politics – and locates culture in the interstitial or 'third' spaces between competing structures, incommensurate experiences and polarized frameworks. Foregrounding migrancy and liminality, Bhabha (1989) explores subjectivities, positionalities and cultural formations that are in the continual process of becoming: resisting foreclosure and maintaining constant critical vigilance constitute his 'commitment to theory'. Grafting Lacanian psychoanalytic models and deconstructive methodologies to Fanon's psycho-Marxist take on colonial ambivalence, Bhabha examines the mechanisms of racial and cultural othering

(in 'The Other Question' [1983], an essay first published in *Screen*), and the contradictions of a colonial civilizing mission paving the way for cultural performance and political negotiation (in 'Of Mimicry and Man' [1984]). But the analytic charge of Bhabha's work is reduced mainly to the notion of hybridity: his detractors criticize him for privileging psychic structures over material conditions (although most Marxists are liable of an inverted hierarchy), and for romanticizing the liminal subject whose ideal embodiment appears to be the cosmopolitan intellectual residing in the West (see Lazarus, 1993).

While Bhabha's writings have had a profound influence on Film Studies since the late 1980s, a focus on hybridity has to contend with the concrete specificity of the cinematic sign: in spite of the polysemic nature of representation, actual place trumps analytic 'third space'. This return of the real *qua* geophysical site raises questions about the locational politics of otherwise salutary interventions in Film Studies that proceed from hybridity and the fluid analytic possibilities presented by it: for instance, scholarship on (a) the constitutive presence of colonial experience in the contemporary identities and cultures of erstwhile colonial powers, (b) mediations of immigrant populations in host countries and (c) diasporic filmmakers. The thrust of all these approaches, which is to overcome the essentializing and homogenizing elements of both colonial and anti-colonial epistemologies, is, no doubt, a productive tendency. Thus, to point out the centrality of colonial Others to the self-constructions of French or British nationalisms is to destabilize the subjective autonomy and coherence of imperialist powers. Kristin Ross (1996) brilliantly interrogates the disavowal of the anguish of decolonization, and the spectral presence of Indochina and the Maghreb, in 1950s and 1960s French structuralist theory and mainstream cinema. More recent scholarship examines projections of the Balkans or Turkey in western European films (Diaconescu-Blumenfeld, 2003). Insightful studies about Beur cinema, Black British Cinema, films about

Asian-Americans and Hispanic-Americans, African, Arab and Turkish populations in Germany have enriched our understanding of migrant subjectivities and experiences in relation to host societies. However, these approaches tenaciously bring the focus back to the US or to Europe.

Hamid Naficy (2001) provides one of the most materially grounded approaches to hybrid cultural forms and practices. He stresses the commonalities of films produced by displaced (exilic and diasporic) people and focuses on the 'interstitial and artisanal' mode of production of what he calls 'accented' cinemas. Following Deleuze and Guattari's formulation of a 'minor' literature (marked by 'the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation'), Naficy characterizes 'accented' cinema as:

driven by its own limitations, that is, by its smallness, imperfection, amateurishness, and lack of cinematic gloss (many of the films are low-tech shorts with extremely low budgets and small crew and casts). It is also driven, in the exemplars of the style, by the style's textual richness and narrative inventiveness (deterritorialized language). (2001: 45)

Themes of dislocation, looking for a new home, and yearning to return home mobilize a dialectic of wholeness and loss. The simultaneous precariousness *and* promises of liminal subjectivities are intimated through autobiographical gestures, authorial voice-overs, presence of filmmakers in front of the camera, and epistolary forms. Space and spatial tropes take centre stage to mediate deterritorialization; performative aspects (reflexivity, doubling, masquerade) initiate a politics of intersubjectivity and empathy.

The category of 'accented' cinema allows Naficy to circumvent the problems associated with 'Third Cinema', although the latter's impact (as well as the influence of Teshome Gabriel's work) remains palpable. What are the effects of such a shift in critical focus to 'exilic and diasporic' modes of filmmaking, besides the invaluable attention brought to bear upon in-between lifeworlds and their challenges to the tyranny of normalizing

and homogenizing structures? As Guneratne points out, there is no reference to 'Third Cinema' theory or practice in a recent anthology on Mexican cinema that, nevertheless, examines in great detail Mexican-US cultural interaction in the 'border films' genre and Hollywood's constitutive role in the Mexican film industry (2003: 4). Note the tremendous critical attention paid to women filmmakers of the South Asian diaspora (Gurinder Chadda, Mira Nair, Pratibha Parmar) as opposed to South Asian women filmmakers (Aparna Sen, Sai Paranjpye) (see, for instance, Foster, 1997). It appears that displaced people, who now reside in the West, matter more than the underprivileged that remain in the postcolonies: the periphery matters mainly when it shows up in the centre. Likewise, while all border zones are interesting because of their liminality, on the evidence of Film Studies scholarship, some borders remain more riveting than others. The point here is not to advocate a return to archaic 'centre-periphery' type polarities, but to point out that habitual binaries endure underneath even while the sophisticated intellectual moves to problematize and dislodge them. At stake is the recognition of the persistence of colonial power/knowledge relations at the heart of contemporary intellectual labour.

While not the first book seeking to bring anti-imperialist filmmaking discourses and practices to the centre of mainstream Anglophone Film Studies (see Armes, 1987), Shohat and Stam's *Unthinking Eurocentrism* (1994) remains the most significant and far-ranging intervention with a clear pedagogical intent. Among their many contributions is the rethinking of difference – influenced, no doubt, by the Gramscian turn in cultural studies – not in terms of the structuralist centre/margin dichotomy, but as a polyvocal, contestatory and radically de-centred multiculturalism. The purchase of a multiculturalist model is certainly not limited to Australia, Canada, the UK or the US; *multiculturalidad* is also important to Latin America (the primary focus of Stam's own research), where large populations of European settlers stayed on after decolonization and where extensive

genocides of indigenous populations were followed by great racial mixing to create *mestizo/mestiço/métis* nations. Population movements and both official and illegal exchanges in transnational regions such as the Amazon basin (including Brazil, Colombia and Peru) and the free trade zone known as Mercosur (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay) produce domains of flux. Racially hybrid communities, while not altogether unknown, are not that common in Asia or Africa, although diasporic populations of immigrant workers are becoming more prevalent. At any rate, multiculturalism stands in for the policies of particular states aimed at managing social diversity by setting off a play between assimilationist policies and the reification of difference (Povinelli, 2002). So the question arises: what allows the imposition of a multiculturalist model on a global scale? After all, there are certain equivalences, however imperfect, of economic and legal institutions, political systems and cultural norms within a nation state: these structures diverge wildly across countries. An implicit assumption of simultaneity and equivalence, which ultimately helps co-opt difference and institutionalize hybridity, seems not that far removed from neoliberal celebrations of the levelling of global opportunities (of the 'world is flat' variety).

Shohat and Stam's location within Western academia and their objective of producing a groundbreaking textbook in postcolonial media studies for a North American audience inform the thrust of their larger argument about a de-centred multiculturalism on a global scale. Chow is one postcolonial critic who regularly engages cinema and whose work has been acutely sensitive to questions of cross-cultural translation, location and audience, research paradigms and methodologies, and modes of diffusion of intellectual frameworks. Writing in 2001 on the state of Film Studies in 'A Phantom Discipline', she warns against the presumed self-evident referentiality of cinematic representations (with politically retrograde implications), and the salvific politics of 'cultural difference' – of minority representations within national

cultures and of national film traditions in the global arena. Chow seeks to disabuse us of such 'critical prerogatives', so that we accept images as artifice and explore the complex relations between economics, desire and identity. And yet, the contingency of her specific forum (a special issue of *PMLA* at the turn of the millennium) leads her to frame her essay in terms of identity politics, a move that she herself astutely contextualizes by pointing to the demands of a specific academic-discursive formation, including a socio-cultural particularism that 'generate[s] research agendas, competitions for institutional space and funding, and self-reproductive mechanisms such as publications, and the training and placing of students' (2001: 1391).

The location of critical labour also matters in terms of local exigencies, familiarity and ease with material, and access to archives. This is why a politics of disciplinary formation is crucial – a politics that comprises what we choose to study, what questions we ask, what genealogies we follow, whom we cite. To become fundamentally global, Film Studies must transcend the automatic and naturalized language barriers and engage with, and encourage translations of, works originating in various geographic sites. Translations of critical writing from the postcolonies – such as Chinese intellectual Dai Jinhua's *Cinema and Desire* (2002) and Néstor García Canclini's *Hybrid Cultures* (2005) – enrich our field, not because these present the thoughts of native informants, nor because they afford an axiomatic informational depth and immediacy, but because of their articulation of a wider range of perspectives in the service of a genuinely transnational discipline.

How can film scholars think globally, beyond the deeply entrenched binaries of an older planetary mapping? One persuasive direction is provided by the approach to cultural globality inaugurated by Appadurai's influential 1990 essay, and developed in the pages of the journal *Public Culture* throughout the 1990s. Thus, Ana López declares:

Rather than a face-off between Hollywood and its others, what we now seek to understand is

a broader zone of cultural debate and economic relationships in which we can trace the tensions and contradictions between national sites and transnational processes. It is in this zone, after all, that the cinema is and has been 'lived' as a part of public culture. (2000: 435)

In a similar vein, Ravi Vasudevan charts a critical repositioning away from an endless global politics of difference based on 'national film cultures' and their 'patterns of distinction', highlighting:

particularity against hegemonic norms of narrative filmmaking associated with Hollywood cinema. Today, however, it is possible to pose another future for Screen Studies, one which might look to a more intricate cultural history of identity: to the web of exchanges, flows and translations that underlie cultural identity; to the negotiations of territoriality, in markets and geolinguistic spaces, that govern its changing terms. (2000: 119)

The shift to more thoughtful and sophisticated paradigms, with their premium on complexity, texture and nuance, is, without doubt, a productive development. However, such subtlety remains susceptible to misrecognition, even cynical appropriation – as in Catherine Grant and Annette Kuhn's estimation of Vasudevan's approach: 'while Vasudevan is clear about the critical-political issues at stake, there is no sense that the terrain has to be fought over' (2006: 6). The notion of unequivocal resistance, and the binaries that undergird such an idealist fantasy, do seem passé in our era of intricate interactions and negotiations. But when did the 'critical-political stakes' become merely a matter of refined reflection? From what vantage point is the 'fight' over? Who gets to enjoy this kinder, gentler, can-we-all-get-along 'terrain'? Even a cursory look at the Delhi-based *SARAI* project, which Vasudevan co-directs, reveals a bristling virtual public space that is deeply engaged with questions of representation, global knowledge formation, and quotidian, street-level struggles (including paradigms of development and urbanization, slum-dwellers' rights, media piracy and terrorism).<sup>1</sup> Depoliticizing generalizations such as Grant and Kuhn's assertion help secure an academic consensus about the 'uncontroversial' and

ideologically neutral status of the categories that reproduce and sustain the hierarchies of global power/knowledge structures: they serve, in spite of themselves, to underscore the continuing necessity of critical vigilance.

A second imperative facing contemporary Film Studies is the mapping and theorization of global formations. These include new technologies of production, new production conglomerates (transnational financing, studio and post-production services), media convergence and the transnationalization of film culture (new channels of distribution and new audiences, including satellite television, in-flight exhibition, screenings in themed bars and restaurants, global niche markets for experimental works and political documentaries). National or regional cinemas are becoming globalized, not just in terms of financing and distribution, but also through the performance – ironically – of national distinction as exotic otherness for a global audience (for instance, the exaggerated, stereotypical Britishness of many a recent British film, not to mention much of the Chinese ‘fifth generation’ work). This last tendency is closely related to what Kuan Hsing Chen (2006) calls the ‘global nativism’ of Taiwan New Cinema. Meanwhile, certain Asian formations are emerging as the new hubs of transnational cinematic cultures and imaginations: most notably, the Indian ‘musical’ and the Hong Kong action genre (Morris et al., 2005). On the other hand, local reception contexts implement their own nationalizing function: thus French or Danish critics bring their own criteria and national outlooks to their readings of international blockbusters from Hollywood (Hedetoft, 2000). As Shujen Wang (2003) points out, multilateral treaties on copyright issues, such as the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the WTO’s Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS), continue to depend on state laws and local attitudes for enforcement and compliance. Some of this scholarship is beginning to undertake a role that Timothy Brennan (2005) wants postcolonial theory to

assume: pay closer attention to the ‘economics of culture’.

A significant impetus for thinking in transnational terms comes from the formation of the EU. Thomas Elsaesser (2005) places European cinema within a global context that is dominated by Hollywood (purveying stars and spectacles) and Asian cinemas (providing colourful vitality and choreographed action). Tim Bergfelder (2000) counters the presentism of recent discourse: drawing on 1950s and 1960s European productions, he argues that cinema has always been a transnational medium. While the current salience of planetary imaginations is evident from the publication of so many recent volumes on world, global or transnational cinema, their precise invocations remain wildly divergent.

In their recent reader on transnational film, Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden (2006) ascribe the rise of a transnational perspective in cinema studies to the global expansion of capital, the porosity of national borders, post-cold war geopolitical climate, new technologies and the global reach of Hollywood. They present a largely unilateral sense of Americanization (thus all action films are described as ‘American-style’), their gestures towards Hollywood’s own globalization remaining vague in spite of the detailed evidence presented by recent scholarship (Miller et al., 2005). Transnationalism itself is essentialized as a form of elitist cosmopolitanism: thus, in their estimation, transnational cinema addresses itself to publics ‘who have expectations and types of cinematic literacy’ that transcend parochial national values and affiliations, and is best represented by festival-circuit auteurs such as Pedro Almodóvar, Krzysztof Kieslowski and Agnes Varda (Ezra and Rowden, 2006: 3). There is practically no acknowledgment of the popular (except for the hegemony of an entertainment-oriented Hollywood), or of the considerable transnational following of non-Western stars (Bollywood’s Amitabh Bachchan in the UK and the Arab world, Chow Yun-fat in East and South-east Asia, Tamil star Rajnikant in Japan) and films (Hong Kong martial arts films in the B-circuit of the Indian

province of Andhra Pradesh [Srinivas, 2003]). Postcolonialism is reduced either to the early stages of decolonizing nationalism with its stress on cultural authenticity (without recognizing that rhetoric of authenticity was a necessary bulwark against the deracination wrought by the colonial order), or to a more recent preoccupation with the 'deconstructive critique' of 'imperial or colonial pre-histories'. In contrast, transnationalism is lauded for its grasp of 'the impact of history on contemporary experience', because of its focus on 'immigration, exile, political asylum, tourism, terrorism and technology' – all transnational phenomena that apparently are 'straightforwardly readable in "real world" terms' (Ezra and Rowden, 2006: 5). The evidence of 'contemporary experience' returns with a vengeance, no longer mauled by 'deconstructive critique', and made immediate and immanent by its decoupling from all past links. As if this restitution of a wholesome ontology were not enough, the editors breathlessly proclaim this 'real world' to be 'defined not by its colonial past (or even its neocolonial present), but by its technological future': technology, it would appear, is neutral of power relations and past and present structures. They further claim, in a naïve techno-utopian vein, that 'previously disenfranchised people will gain ever greater access to the means of global representation' (Ezra and Rowden, 2006: 5), thus ignoring the well-documented complications to the erotics of new technologies (for example, William Mazzarella [2006] on e-governance and transparency in India, and Cristina Venegas [2004] on the introduction of the Internet in Cuba). Compare their technoromance to Sean Cubitt's articulation of a critical responsibility in our engagement with new media constellations:

Millions homeless, millions starving, millions destroyed physically and mentally by sickness and poverty, millions without hope of a better or even a sustainable life on a planet increasingly poisoned by the industrial and consumer experiments of an uncontrolled economy. Any responsible account of cultural activity today must begin in the brutal exclusions of the contemporary world, even more

so when we single out for attention the cultural uses of networked communications and digital media. (1999: 3)

In contrast to Cubitt's trenchant attention to the enduring inequities of our neocolonial moment, Ezra and Rowden's brand of planetary consciousness, produced through a wilful erasure of history, resurrects the (now globalized) West as the locus of value and agency. They instantiate the neoliberal unconscious of contemporary knowledge production, also in play in historian Niall Ferguson's attempted recuperation of the positive legacies of the British empire ('Anglobalization') for the contingencies of today's world (2003).

In their editorial introduction to an anthology of essays culled from the premier journal *Screen*, Grant and Kuhn state that 'world cinema' is a non-contentious term (2006: 1). This stunning claim flatly ignores sustained critiques of 'world literature' or 'world music', not to mention challenges to the disciplinary project of comparative literature (Cooppan, 2004). David Byrne, who is widely credited with making 'world music' popular in the West, wrote in 1999:

The term is a catchall that commonly refers to non-Western music of any and all sorts, popular music, traditional music and even classical music. It's a marketing as well as a pseudomusical term – and a name for a bin in the record store signifying stuff that doesn't belong anywhere else in the store. (1999: AR1)

Stephanie Dennison and Song Hwee Lim astutely point out that the reasons for the global hegemony of Western culture industries, 'and the ghettoizing of world music (or cinema) are more numerous and complex than the use of a specific terminology', and that the 'mechanics of consumerism and identification are arguably more subtle than Byrne's account' (2006: 3). True, but terminology helps reproduce structures of thinking that assume and naturalize the hegemony of Western culture, and erase the multiple hegemonies (Indian or Egyptian cinema, Latin American telenovelas, Arab music) of global public culture, confining them under the sign of the Other. Dennison and Lim do begin

with a clear articulation of the problematic status of the category itself, stating that 'in its situatedness, it is ... the world as viewed from the West', and arguing that '[i]t is futile, if not hypocritical, to pretend' that such a 'loaded term ... can be value free' (2006: 1). Then they go on to claim, against the evidence of new nationalisms, rabid xenophobic attitudes, not to mention terrorism and the war against it (the 'clash of civilizations' rhetoric), that 'distinctions between dichotomies such as Western and non-Western, self and other, although entrenched in the popular imagination, are beginning to dissolve' (2006: 4).

Dennison and Lim reprint a 2004 essay by Dudley Andrew, 'An Atlas of World Cinema' (2006), in which Andrew reiterates the dominant episteme of Film Studies with a gusto not that different from the triumphalist rhetoric of the 'end of History'. For Andrew, 'foreign films' – that is, non-Hollywood cinemas – constitute 'world cinema', which he describes as a 'freshly recognized' global phenomenon (2006: 19): but who is coming to this recognition finally? He does not offer a 'freshness' of perspective in thinking globally about global cinema; nor does he acknowledge, let alone examine, the power relations involved in upholding such an us/them paradigm of 'world cinema'. One is left with a very definite sense of one particular location taken as the fulcrum of a theoretical gaze. Even if we acknowledge Andrew's address of a North American pedagogical context, and his attempt to chart a set of methodological approaches, the unproblematic espousal of a 'parochial posing as cosmopolitan' taxonomy remains troubling. He adopts a conscientiously ethical approach to teaching world cinema, stressing the need to make the pedagogical situation unfamiliar for students. However, this ethical gesture functions mainly as a depoliticizing ruse for what is, at heart, a political move: effectively retaining Hollywood's hegemony by holding on to a self/other paradigm. A sincerely global approach to 'world cinema' would have to (a) dispense with the category altogether, or (b) include Hollywood and mainstream British and French cinemas in its orbit, in

which case the term loses its descriptive or explanatory relevance, or (c) dispense with an additive model of world cinema as the constellation of all national cinemas (a model operative in Linda Badley et al., 2006) and adopt lateral ways of approaching the topic, in terms of translocal cinematic movements, genres, institutions, circuits and publics (see Rosenbaum and Martin 2003).

Attempts to theorize translocal media assemblages encounter two sets of tensions: the first has to do with striking a balance between idealizing mutability, even uncertainty, and obsessing about determinate structures (as I suggested above); the second entails trade-offs between, on the one hand, a 'flora and fauna' approach and, on the other hand, a 'deep immersion' model. The former approach often devolves into a kind of academic tourism, conjoining interesting and seemingly homologous phenomena from various geographic locations to hypothesize about larger trends and formations, without paying enough attention to local conjunctural embeddedness. The latter, often associated with area studies and nationalism studies, is characteristically attentive to specificities of historical context at the cost of comparative insights and trans-border experientialities (Lutgendorf, 2003). Transversal approaches are better equipped to capture emergent global assemblages that, from their inception, transcend national boundaries; however, national policies remain important determinants (Parks, 2006). While innovative methodologies are needed to do justice to the new assemblages, the scholastic solipsism of postcolonial theory (endlessly fine-tuning existing models for past formations) impedes creativity. On the other hand, a need for a fresh perspective produces a demand for a decisive break with the past: as if the past is done with, has no ramifications for the present, and the future will be a level field of globally equal opportunities. Recent anthropological studies of media circuits and communities articulate the two models with some success (Ginsburg et al., 2002). However, as Lutgendorf (2003) warns, in sociological and anthropological works on cinema, the film texts and their



specific representational strategies tend to disappear. Most translocal studies continue to restrict themselves to channels that involve the West: postcolonial/transnational Film Studies must pay attention to the multiplicity of global cultural circuits, not just the ones that are routed through America or Europe (see Larkin, 2003; Srinivas, 2003).

### **FUTURES: INTEGRATION AND TRANSFORMATION**

At an earlier stage in its career, postcolonial studies had a profoundly transformative impact on disciplines such as anthropology and literary studies, two intellectual fields that had to come to terms with their role in the production of colonial knowledge structures and ideologies. Now, with global media's promotion to the role of the pre-eminent servant of neocolonialism, Film Studies must undertake similar reflection and renewal. If new technologies and transnational regimes are generating novel assemblages not beholden to any 'local', then a genuinely global model must account for the multifarious entanglements and their ambiguous ramifications, and the ways in which they recalibrate a universal techno-rationalist script of modernization. A truly global attitude must transcend all 'locals' and not protect the hegemony of one 'local masquerading as global'.

The critical interventions of poststructuralist and postcolonial theories have radically dislodged liberalist certitudes about the trajectory of World History (Chatterjee, 1986). Now we understand modernity not as a unidirectional process but, rather, as a series of encounters and exchanges producing effects that are devastating as often as they are salutary (Mignolo, 1995). Knowledge of differentiated experiences of modernity in different geographic locales (for instance, a Dutch modernity as distinct from a Nigerian modernity), and of earlier constellations before post-Enlightenment modernity (associated with, say, the T'ang dynasty of China, or the Persian empire) rend the linear coherence of master-narratives of Progress and History: now

we speak of multiple, parallel modernities instead of a teleological model according to which it all begins in Europe and then gradually spreads to the rest of the world, with the postcolonies forever consigned to the 'waiting room of history'. Even in the era of the so-called Washington Consensus (a unipolar and global hegemonic system consisting of free trade, liberalization of economic policies, and majoritarian democracy as the only acceptable political system), there are all kinds of challenges, detours and recalibrations by local imaginations and lifeworlds (Chakrabarty, 2000). Thus, in spite of anxieties about a homogenizing, unilateral 'global culture', ample space remains for negotiations and variations: the script of global capital cannot subsume every other impulse into its totalizing agenda.

Even as a postcolonial perspective dismantles Eurocentric master-narratives, how can we critically salvage the fecundity of their utopian vision to facilitate a more egalitarian global future? As James Ferguson (2005) has argued recently, without the promise of a golden history that is yet to come, could it be that Africans feel not less developed for now, but simply less? The challenge is to rearticulate transformative promises in ways that are fundamentally translocal and shorn of imperialist underpinnings. This might involve considerable adjustments in our thinking habits, including not dismissing terrorism as mad and misguided, but examining it as a radical form of historical consciousness emanating from prolonged experiences of disenfranchisement – a transnationalism from below.

Globalization studies does not render postcolonial studies obsolete; rather, each complements the other in terms of their relative strengths. While the former is adept at examining structural and material transformations, the latter is more capacious in engaging questions of imagination and meaning-making, mutuality and social justice. As the editors of *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond* ask:

[W]hat visions of a postcolonial world can we as humanists offer that will interrogate, perhaps

even interrupt, the forms of globalization now dictated by politicians, military strategists, captains of finance and industry, fundamentalist preachers and theologians, terrorists of the body and the spirit, in short, by the masters of our contemporary universe? (Lomba et al., 2005: 13)

The neoliberal agenda and the resurgent imperialism that propel globalization also generate pressing imperatives for retooling postcolonial thought. It is less important to hold on to a putative discourse (which, like feminism, is not only an analytical framework but also a political stance) than to consider how its intellectual clarity and political efficacy can be extended to engage emergent realities. For instance, what are the effects on translocal subaltern populations when postcolonial states comply with trade and copyright regimes? When, say, the Indian government signs onto TRIPS, and the supply of Indian-produced generic HIV medicines to Africa is cut off? How do we come to grips with a post-9/11 world, in which new claims to rights and recognition arise simultaneously with brazen forms of sovereign power that jeopardize previously unassailable human rights? The agon of contemporary postcolonial and transnational criticism is embodied in the fact that sometimes the very transformations that make possible new political emergences, such as ecofeminism or an incipient queer politics, also cause incalculable sufferings, such as the contradictions of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) or the rampant suicides by Indian farmers in the wake of structural adjustments.

How can film (and media) studies transcend its neoliberal unconscious, and maintain a critical relationship to an imperial apparatus of global consensus building? What forms of media literacy must we, as media scholars, help develop and disseminate to our media-saturated, supposedly media-savvy, publics? In short, how do we move beyond the current blind spots of our discipline, and attempt to wrest for us a measure of relevance in the global public sphere? 'Post'-ing contemporary Film Studies will involve not only being attentive to trans-media forms

and practices, but also developing new cognitive frames. The following are a set of suggestions from a postcolonial-transnational position.

- Postcolonialism need not be limited to the national only, just as cultural studies approaches need not valorize only the local (as they did in the 1980s). Since metahistorical processes and metanarratives of transformation do have critical impacts on local outcomes, we have to consider the interactions of macro- and micro-level structures, including transnational media circuits and publics that largely bypass Hollywood.
- The binaries cultural texts versus structural conditions, discursivity versus empiricism, while in wide operation, do not make much analytic sense. Film Studies needs to combine textual, semiotic and discursive interrogation with economic, institutional-legal, policy analysis. As Toby Miller has suggested, we cannot simply continue to pose 'textual determinism' as an antidote to 'economic determinism' (2001: 308).
- Adopt transversal approaches to patents and copyrights – related not only to media, but also to medicines, biodiversity/biopiracy.
- Develop what Film Studies has to offer to other disciplines in terms of its attention to technology and society, indexicality and iconicity, plasticity, the popular, formations of media environments, media networks and media publics, and transformative politics. Establish significant intersections with cultural geography, cultural anthropology, sociology, political science, history and, now, science studies.
- Explore what the institution of cinema has to contribute to convergences and coalitions, and how it is entangled with networks of power. How does cinema bolster or challenge new forms of sovereignty? How does it engage questions of citizenship, state violence, terrorism, human rights and international law?
- Investigate what it means to be human: as we consider the new possibilities charted in contemporary media (interactive technologies, genomics, mutations of social institutions like family and labour), we must carefully analyze the shifting power equations, the production of new subalternities, new strategies of exploitation and the demarcation of a new global South.
- Study the planetary range of pre-cinematic forms of popular entertainment, such as shadow puppets, magic, opera, narrative painted scrolls, vaudeville, acrobatic shows and folk

stage traditions. This might help in (a) situating the traces of various aesthetic traditions; (b) questioning, from a postcolonial perspective, standard notions of modern popular and mass culture, and the teleological history of cinema as a Western medium; (c) challenging the very construction of the enlightened modern era in relation to its other, the medieval 'dark ages', and the designation of barbarians, heretics and heathens and (d) tracking sedimented memories and representations (for example, in oral traditions) of historical experiences (hostilities and betrayals, triumphs and traumas) that continue to impel contemporary structures of difference.

- A strict, narrow facticity/empiricism will not do. We need to consider not just what happens, but also what might have happened, and what ought to happen. Resuscitate half-forgotten, unrealized visions of progressive transformation by reading cinematic and other types of documents against the grain. Deploy the power of speculation as a critical and imaginative force to project futures of subject formation, community life and political solidarities beyond the grammar and mappings of an imperialist consciousness.
- Pay attention to the protocols of institutionalizing Film (and Cultural) Studies: citational practices, pedagogical imperatives and long-term hiring policies. How do we re-imagine the curriculum, so that it reflects a genuinely global perspective? (Most US departments now offer US film history and International Film History or World Cinemas courses separately – as if the US is an extra-world, transnational entity, a higher dimension of pure normativity, knowledge and subjectivity.) What acquisitions principles are operative in our libraries? (While acquisitions at the University of California libraries have been affected in the 2000s by recent budget cuts, certain fields have been more affected than others. In spite of all the lip-service paid to the importance of the study of the Asia-Pacific to California, only two campuses subscribe to *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* while the *Journal of Visual Culture*, another Taylor and Francis journal started around the same time, adorns the library shelves on all nine campuses.) What rationales inform the publishing agendas of academic presses? (Is one token Egyptian or Hong Kong industry book, which introduces yet another 'national cinema' to Western audiences, enough?)

At the risk of sounding prescriptive, this overview offers the above suggestions for

integrating the lessons of critical postcolonial and transnational thinking within Film Studies – not as additive supplement, but with the objective of producing a revitalizing transformation of our field.

## NOTES

- 1 Available at: <http://www.sarai.net>.

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