Hollywood and its Others: 
Porous Borders and Creative Tensions 
in the Transnational Screenscape.

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August 2007

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Tessa Perkins.
Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my supervisors, Professor Ien Ang and Dr Brett Neilson of the University of Western Sydney and Dr Patrick Crogan of the University of Adelaide. I was privileged to be a member of the Centre for Cultural Research at the University of Western Sydney and I am grateful for the assistance of a student scholarship from the University. I also thank the Australian, Film, Television & Radio School for honouring me with an Associate Research Fellowship.

I thank the following for their valuable assistance: Professor Bob Hodge, Dr Jeannie Martin, Dr Zoe Sofoulis, Dr Penny O’Donnell, the administrative staff at Centre for Cultural Research and especially Maree O’Neill, the librarians at the Jerzy Toeplitz Library at the Australian, Film, Television & Radio School, the librarians at the Schaeffer Fine Arts Library at the University of Sydney, and everyone at the Dr What movie rental store.

My thanks to Professor James Donald at the University of New South Wales, Professor Shi-xu at Zhejiang University, the Centre of Cultural Research, UWS and the Power Institute at the University of Sydney for their invitations to deliver a paper. All these provided invaluable feedback and assisted my research.

Special thanks to Professor Sylvia Harvey with whom I first discussed the ideas that resulted in this dissertation.

I am especially grateful to Sarah Shrubb for her professional copy-editing skills and her selfless generosity.

Personal thanks to Sara Bennett, Shigeki Chiba, Yoshimi Chiba, Yvonne Chun, Julie Clarke, Lydia Fegan, Pat Fiske, Dr Mitzi Goldman, Lucinda Halbert, Associate Professor Gillian Leahy, Professor Catharine Lumby, Jane McCarthy, Tadao Sato, Emeritus Professor Virginia Spate, Professor Terry Smith. Special thanks to David McKnight.
Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.


Jane Mills
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Abstract

This dissertation challenges how Hollywood is typically imagined as monolithic, homogenous and homogenising, and separated from other cinemas by fixed and impermeable borders. This influential cinematic paradigm posits a centre-periphery model underpinned by binary oppositions in which most cinemas are negatively defined as Hollywood’s ‘other’ and perceived as fixed in permanent states of opposition and assimilation. It is a perception reinforced by the influential critical paradigm which focuses on the films’ formal stylistic and narrative properties.

This conceptualisation ignores, or fails to observe, the larger picture, in which global, national and local cinemas relate to each other in complex and volatile ways. My argument is that a paradigm shift is required in which the main question asked is not ‘What is Hollywood?’ but ‘Where is Hollywood?’ Location is a crux of my argument because it offers a way of questioning the widespread conception of Hollywood as bounded and fixed in a stable cultural landscape.

I apply Arjun Appadurai’s framework of disjunctive global cultural flows to the analysis of cinema to show the existence of a more dynamic and chaotic screenscape than is popularly imagined. I also develop a new model of textual analysis involving traces and tracings. This troubles the notion of impermeable borders by finding the traces of global cultural flows within the film frame and tracing their trajectories outside the frame to and from their points of origin and destination. From the creative tensions caused by these asymmetrical and multidirectional flows a previously unobserved screenscape emerges in which it is possible to see globalising processes as hybridising processes.

Within this interpretive framework Hollywood is decentred and can no longer be perceived as fixed and bounded, or as the paradigm by which most cinemas define themselves and are judged. It reveals that heterogeneity and flux rather than homogeneity and fixity characterise intercinematic relations. It shows the existence of porous borders permitting transnational flows. In linking a film’s formal stylistic properties to the disjunctions in the global flows, the new model I develop for textual analysis offers a way of re-imagining Hollywood within the transnational imaginary.
Introduction

On a fundamental level globalization and image are inseparable from each other.¹

Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto.

This dissertation challenges the way in which Hollywood is typically imagined. The widespread perception is of a monolithic, hegemonically powerful cinema destroying heterogeneity in most other cinemas and refusing heterogeneity for itself. When it is positioned at the centre of a centre–periphery model, borders are seen to be fixed and impermeable. This results in a cultural landscape in which most national and local or minor cinemas are negatively defined as Hollywood’s other, in a state of permanent opposition and assimilation. Hollywood is thus imagined as the big, and usually bad, other from which most cinemas throughout the world cannot escape and need to be protected.² While an increasing number of film writers and academics have shifted attention to marginal cinemas in recent years, I argue that there is a widespread perception of a critical paradigm that places Hollywood at the centre of critical concern and employs a form of textual analysis which focuses on the formal properties of film style, often to the exclusion of the economic, social and political processes. While Hollywood’s globally dominant status is undeniable, and has been since the end of the First World War, when examined more closely this conceptual model does not do justice to Hollywood which I show is not the homogenous and necessarily homogenising monolith it is popularly imagined to be.

More is at stake, however, than simply a lack of justice to Hollywood. As an analytical tool, when Hollywood is conceptualised as a monolith the outcome is a blinkered or partial perception of the global screenscape in which the notion of Hollywood as a cultural imperialist is perpetuated and cinematic diversity is ignored or obscured. What is at stake in countering this conception of Hollywood is twofold. First, it can adversely affect style, content and production processes of non-Hollywood cinemas in terms of their ability to contribute to a global art form enriched by diversity, innovation, imagination and vision. Second, it can impair the ability of audiences and others to recognise or appreciate cinematic diversity, innovation, imagination and vision. Both these contribute to an impoverishment of film culture.

A film that differs significantly from Hollywood usually attracts minuscule audiences both in its own country of production and overseas. The attempt to build larger audiences can lead to conservative funding and production processes which do not favour creative, imaginative and innovative films. Echoing this lack of vision, it can also result in filmmakers (screenplay writers, directors, producers and other key crew members) who consider it inadvisable to look beyond the norms of Hollywood's classical narrative style. Imagination and vision are hard, perhaps impossible, to quantify with precision and not all non-Hollywood cinemas are equally affected by this cautious cultural environment. But as film producer Peter Sainsbury convincingly argues in a passionate polemic about Australian cinema, for many small or medium-sized national and local cinemas it means that mediocrity becomes institutionalised.  

The widespread conceptualisation of Hollywood as static, bounded, homogenous and culturally destructive is underwritten by a relational model reliant upon binary opposition. This is a model that looks for and finds what is common within a cinematic category: it finds cultural essence surrounded by fixed borders. By focusing on the unequal power relations that exist between Hollywood and other mainstream and putative alternative cinemas, it obscures the existence of fluid and dynamic intercinematic relationships that are mutual, multilayered, and multidirectional. It fails to note the mechanisms of interactions involving interchange and change between cinemas.

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and the flows of cultural material crossing national and other cultural and cinematic borders. I argue the major stumbling block to seeing or understanding the productive flows between cinemas is the way in which Hollywood is commonly imagined. For these relationships to be conceptualised differently Hollywood needs to be re-imagined.

In order to re-imagine Hollywood I sought a critical framework that would enable me to trouble the notion of fixed cinematic categories. Arjun Appadurai’s concept of disjunctive global cultural flows provides such a framework. This model does not deny Hollywood’s hegemonic power, but by showing the chaotic, overlapping disjunctive flows of cultural phenomena between cinemas, it makes a centre–periphery model untenable. My research journey taught me the value of altering the depth of field characteristic of Film Studies so that the question of what constitutes Hollywood is no longer so acutely foregrounded that it becomes hard to see clearly – or even see at all – what is happening elsewhere. Imagined like this, what is most often consigned to the margins or the background is brought to the centre-front of vision – a position normally occupied by Hollywood. When categories are no longer perceived as static, or boundaries as impermeable, issues of mobility and space become of paramount importance. This means that the question of where Hollywood is situated – spatially and temporally – comes under closer scrutiny than is normally the case.

**Mapping Boundaries**

The second part of this dissertation consists of case-study chapters each focusing on a different non-Hollywood cinema and its relationship with Hollywood. My reason for choosing to analyse non-Hollywood cinemas originates in a desire to correct the Hollywoodcentric approach to how cinema is largely analysed and discussed. As already noted, the dominance of Hollywood cinema in the world film market cannot be questioned, but its dominance has extended beyond its undoubted economic and pre-eminence to a cultural hegemonic dominance that includes the way it is studied. From the time when cinema was barely twenty years old, Hollywood cinema has become the norm against which most other alternative cinema practices are measured.

In recent years, largely due to the growing influence of cultural studies within Film Studies, an increasing number of film academics have applied new approaches or begun
to focus on new and emerging cinemas. In many film studies departments throughout the world, however, due to Hollywood’s continuing economic and cultural global domination there remains an emphasis on classical Hollywood cinema that relegates other cinemas to being studied and valued largely in terms of the extent to which they either absorb or reject Hollywood’s form, style or mode of practice. Kristin Thompson makes the astute comment that ‘alternative cinemas gain their significance and force partly because they seek to undermine the common equation of ‘the movies’ with ‘Hollywood’.\footnote{Kristin Thompson, \textit{Exporting Entertainment: America in the World Film Market 1907-1934}. London: BFI, 1985:170.} This is often reinforced by a growing interdisciplinary trend within Film Studies that engages with issues raised by centralising trends of increasing globalisation.

By using the term ‘non-Hollywood’, I am aware that I might seem to be perpetuating the notion of a static centre–periphery relationship between a bounded globally dominant cinema and other, similarly bounded, local cinemas. My aim, however, is to question this notion of bounded cinematic categories and to de-centre the discussion. By analysing Hollywood within the framework of disjunctive global cultural flows and by selecting non-Hollywood cinemas as case studies I am following Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto’s imperative: ‘instead of talking about Hollywood as the norm, we must examine the specific and historically changing relations between the Hollywood cinema and other national cinemas’.\footnote{Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, ‘The Difficulty of Being Radical: The Discipline of Film Studies and the Postcolonial World Order’, in Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian, eds, \textit{Japan in the World}. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993: 338.} I do not, however, confine my analysis to national cinema; I extend it to a variety of local, or minor, cinemas, some of which themselves extend our understanding of the national.

I note that a paradox exists at the centre of a project which explores the implications of globalisation processes that destabilise the notion of rigidly defined cinematic and other cultural categories. On the one hand, I argue that fixed and impermeable borders between genres and categories do not exist. On the other hand, because this is how they are commonly identified, I name and discuss various cinemas and categories as if they are bounded entities distinguished from each other by essential
characteristics contained within these borders. It is a paradox that crops up in each case study chapter. An indication of this paradox lies in the plethora of names that most of these cinemas acquire in attempts to ‘fix’ what they are and what ideas and styles they include and exclude. The very fact of naming and categorising creates boundaries and thus boundary disputes. The naming process is often an attempt to resolve such disputes and as such it recognises and reveals the evolution of a cinematic style or mode of production. The need to discuss each of these styles or versions of a cinema as a discrete category is in tension with an awareness that cinemas cannot be understood as hermetically sealed time-bound containers of fixed essence. Renaming does not resolve a problem implicit in the categorising process, but tends to perpetuate a focus on the discontinuities rather than the continuities, on homogeneity rather than heterogeneity, and on the impermeability of borders.

Cinematic categories are created by a combination of a mode of production, marketing strategies, critical and analytical techniques, and by audience perceptions and experiences. These all play a role in determining how films are made, where they are seen, how they are written and spoken about, and how or whether they are experienced and enjoyed. They establish parameters for discussion based on a principle of inclusion and exclusion. As Angela Stukator points out in her analysis of national cinema: ‘the problem is that categories have a mythologising and homogenising function: they perpetuate a logic of identity, a logic which dictates that the critic emphasise elements (textual or extra-textual) of coherence and wholeness’.\footnote{Angela Stukator, ‘Critical Categories and the (Il)logic of Identity’, \textit{Cinema and Nation} 2(2–3), 1993: 118.} Hamid Naficy identifies an additional related problem: ‘While these classificatory categories are important methods for framing and positioning films to target markets, distributors, exhibitors, reviewers, and academic studies, they also serve to overdetermine and delimit the film’s potential meanings.’\footnote{Hamid Naficy, ‘Phobic Spaces and Liminal Panics: Independent Transnational Film Genre’ in Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, eds, \textit{Multiculturalism, Postcoloniality, and Transnational Media}. New Brunswick NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 2003: 204.} And, as William van der Heide points out, although critical constructs such as cinemas, genres and other cinematic categories have been useful in identifying formal, thematic and cultural commonalities within their defined boundaries, ‘the
persistent application of these categories has limited the ways in which films are considered in relation to each other.\textsuperscript{8}

What this means for my argument is that if a non-Hollywood cinema such as the avant-garde, for example, is defined in such a way as to make it only identifiably avant-garde when it is not Hollywood, then the avant-garde will never be detected outside its own supposed borders and within a Hollywood movie, because according to this logic it cannot be located in Hollywood. It also means that when elements considered quintessentially Hollywood are found in an avant-garde film, this non-Hollywood film tends to be considered diluted or destroyed by Hollywood’s hegemonic power to cannibalise. The presence of anything indicative of the avant-garde in a Hollywood film tends to be ignored or re-ascribed as characteristic of the classical Hollywood cinema. In this last instance a Hollywood which appears innovative or experimental falls into that exceedingly large category of Hollywood films which demonstrates what André Bazin called ‘the genius of the system’ when it comes into contact with other cinemas, and a cinematic paradigm considered by David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson to be ‘so powerful that it regulates whatever violates it’.\textsuperscript{9} For those less enchanted by Hollywood, or wary of its hegemonic power, it tends to reveal only unidirectional flows and the dominant cinema’s notorious devouring appetite.

In the case study chapters I argue that conceptualising cinema in a way that insists upon impermeable borders seriously skews our understanding of cinema, past and present, and prevents us from seeing the transnational imaginary at work. Conventional analyses of cinema that rely upon taxonomic categories and analytic templates with fixed and impermeable boundaries suppress or ignore what has become an increasingly prominent feature of cinema – namely, the hybridising processes in cultures of circulation. This, as Benjamin Lee and Edward LiPuma point out,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{8} William van der Heide, \textit{Malaysian Cinema, Asian Film: Border Crossings and National Cultures}. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2002: 28.
\end{itemize}
involves more than simply the movement of people, ideas, and commodities from one culture to another … [It] is a cultural process with its own forms of abstraction, evaluation, and constraint, which are created by the interactions between specific types of circulating forms and the interpretive communities built around it.\textsuperscript{10}

An example of how this culture of circulation operates in contemporary cinema is what Toby Miller and his co-authors of\textit{Global Hollywood 2} refer to as the ‘new international division of cultural labor’ in which today’s local film industries around the world combine the indigenous mode of production with a ‘runaway’ mode of production, all conceived and financed by Hollywood-based film companies.\textsuperscript{11} This is not, I argue, a feature only of contemporary cinema. When applied to cinemas and films in an earlier stage in cinematic history, the conventional taxonomic system fails to reveal the junctures and disjunctures involved in the globalising processes in the screenscape during an earlier phase of capitalism, when cinema itself was a new art form. Applying this understanding to cinema involves exploring the idea that hybridising processes have always taken place in cinema. The notion of hybridity, an important component of my argument, does not involve the destruction of the separate elements involved in the creative tensions of the globalising processes. Its value lies in suggesting the need to acknowledge the inadequacy of regarding cinematic categories as necessarily fixed and with borders that are impermeable to cultural flows. It makes sense to use the terms that designate the various categories (genres, cinemas, movements etc) only if it is understood that these are not bounded categories and that their borders are porous.

It is also important to recognise that the cinematic categories of my case studies exist only as imaginary concepts. Like the category ‘Hollywood’, they also need to be re-imagined. I thus acknowledge this apparent contradiction of naming and discussing cinemas and filmic categories as they are typically discussed while simultaneously arguing the inadequacy of how they are typically conceptualised. Disputes abound:


boundaries are fixed, unfixed and refixed, and renaming and redefinition are constants. This might be thought to indicate that the very categories do not exist at all. Clearly, though, they do and to contest these categories does not deny their existence. However influenced by Hollywood codes and conventions an avant-garde (or any other 'other') film might be, it does not make sense to discuss it as a Hollywood movie. Nor does Hollywood disappear when we discover that it is, or aspects of it are, located elsewhere. What we have, in fact, is what Mike Gasher refers to as 'a category crisis'. The problem lies in the taxonomic system and how it impacts upon the way in which cinema is conventionally conceptualised. When rigid borders are erected around them, cinematic categories tend to be only partially imagined. As a result of this partial conceptualisation, disjunctures and dissonant elements are suppressed or overlooked. Thus the hybridities resulting from the creative tensions of the globalising processes also go unnoticed. An insistence upon categorising cinema with fixed borders tends to legitimise the roles of those making, selling and interpreting cinema. My research journey indicated the value of troubling the notion of categories that set fixed boundaries.

**Conclusion**

What is original in my contribution to the study of intercinematic relations is the extension of Appadurai’s framework of disjunctive global cultural flows by applying it to the analysis of cinema since the inception of film. A further innovation is how I combine this with a model for analysing the stylistic properties of the film text which significantly revises the dominant critical paradigm.

I make a distinction between the terms ‘textual analysis’ and ‘close reading’. A close reading is, of course, a system of textual analysis but the latter term tends to be applied to the dominant critical paradigm of formalist or neo-formalist textual analysis. Widely referred to as ‘Wisconsin School’, this is the model developed and applied most notably by film scholars David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson in their influential textbook, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of*...

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Production to 1960. Their dominant critical paradigm focuses on aesthetics and a film’s formal stylistic properties. The term ‘close reading’ tends to be applied to models of textual analysis that differ from or critique the dominant critical paradigm. There is no consistency, however. Adrian Martin, for example, uses the term ‘mutant formalism’ for his approach that critiques the Wisconsin model.

The model that I have developed is a critique of the dominant critical paradigm in that it offers a dynamic model encompassing the related notions of traces and tracings; it offers a more textured and fluid understanding of the impact of globalising processes upon cinema. By placing my close readings within the framework of disjunctive global cultural flows I show the cultural phenomena – ideas, images, technologies, people and other cultural categories – exist as traces in the film text and these traces allow me to map the vectors, or trajectories, of these multidirectional and non-isomorphic flows across spatial and temporal borders. This enables me to show how the stylistic properties of a film can reveal what so often goes unobserved or is ignored: that Hollywood has been in a perpetual and productive relationship with other cinemas and is not the threat from which all other cinemas need to be protected. This reveals a screenscape in which Hollywood is located in places where it is not typically imagined.

Cinematic and Critical Paradigms

What is original in my contribution to the study of intercinematic relations is the extension of Appadurai’s framework of disjunctive global cultural flows by applying it to the analysis of cinema since the inception of film. A further innovation is how I combine this with a model for analysing the stylistic properties of the film text which revises a critical approach to the cinematic paradigm which places Hollywood at the centre of cinematic and critical concern. As Jane Gaines usefully points out, there are two interrelated paradigms involved. The cinematic paradigm is of classical Hollywood cinema as the realist ‘protagonist-driven story film, valued for the way it achieves closure by neatly resolving all the enigmas it raises as well as for the way it

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creates this perfect symmetry’ by means of skilfully crafted aesthetic, ‘narrative and imagistic economies’.14 The critical paradigm is the formalist, or neo-formalist, approach which focuses on aesthetics and a film’s formal stylistic properties.15

Gaines argues that both these paradigms dominate academic approaches to studying cinema. She claims that the formalist model of classical narrative cinema forms ‘the cement’ for a ‘film studies foundation against which new paradigms… must define themselves.’16 When refined and applied to film analysis as ‘neo-formalism’, she argues that this model became ‘institutionalized in the United States primarily through the work of Bordwell’ and his colleagues.17 The neo-formalist approach to film analysis, she continues, is ‘the cornerstone’ of David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson’s highly influential book, Film Art: An Introduction.18 Bordwell and Thompson developed and applied their neo-formalist model of classical narrative cinema in a number of further books, most notably in the influential study (with Janet Staiger), The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960.19 Initially written for undergraduates its influence has spread and as reviewer Des O’Rawe notes, ‘it remains primary reading for countless teachers and students of film studies, particularly in the

14 Ibid.
15 Ibid. According to Bill Nichols, neo-formalism is an ‘alternative to “ideological criticism”’ and is an approach which ‘values the strict delimitation of the object of study, rigorous attentiveness to the textual specificity, and an emphasis on pattern or order as a form of organization in contradistinction to thematic meanings or ideological effect. Bill Nichols, ‘Form Wars: The Political Unconscious of Formalist theory’ in Philip Simpson, Andrew Utterson, Karen J. Shepherdson, eds, Film Theory: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. London and New York: Routledge, 2004: 268-290.
17 Ibid. First published in 1979 and currently in its eighth edition with an accompanying DC ROM, this is the bestselling film studies book in the United States and is translated into twelve languages.
18 Ibid.
US’. The neo-formalist approach to the study of film texts is so closely associated with Bordwell and Kristin Thompson that it is known as ‘the Wisconsin School’, so named after the University where Bordwell and Thompson teach, research, write and often publish.

It is important to note, however, that film scholarship is more varied than this proposes and scholars fall into a number of camps in relation to both the cinematic paradigm and the critical paradigm. While some scholars maintain the centrality and dominance of both paradigms, an increasing number have shifted emphasis and focus to different, often marginal, cinemas and fields within the discipline. While I do not dispute the existence of, or undervalue the contributions made by, non-Hollywood-centric scholarship in this dissertation, I propose to focus on the formalist model of classical Hollywood narrative cinema and the neo-formalist critical approach for several reasons. A neo-formalist approach to analysing the film text offers a valuable means for studying the film style, the details of the visual and aural dimensions, of a film as an independent subject. Such a study is usually referred to as ‘textual analysis’. While valuing many of the insights that this neo-formalist approach has to offer, I use and develop an approach that I distinguish by referring to it as a ‘close reading’ and use it as a means of de-centering Hollywood in critical analysis. A close reading is, of course, a system of textual analysis but the latter term tends to be applied to the critical paradigm of neo-formalist approach. The term ‘close reading’, however, tends to be applied to models of textual analysis that differ from or critique the neo-formalist critical paradigm. There is no consistency, however. Adrian Martin, for example, uses the term ‘mutant

formalism’ for his approach, one that also critiques the Wisconsin model while borrowing from it.

The model of close readings that I have developed is a critique of the neo-formalist critical paradigm in that it offers a dynamic model encompassing the related notions of traces and tracings; it offers a more textured and fluid understanding of the impact of globalising processes upon cinema. By placing my close readings within the framework of disjunctive global cultural flows I show the cultural phenomena – ideas, images, technologies, people and other cultural categories – exist as traces in the film text and these traces allow me to map the vectors, or trajectories, of these multidirectional and non-isomorphic flows across spatial and temporal borders. This enables me to show how the stylistic properties of a film can reveal what so often goes unobserved or is ignored: that Hollywood has been in a perpetual and productive relationship with other cinemas and is not the threat from which all other cinemas need to be protected. This reveals a screenscape in which Hollywood is located in places where it is not typically imagined.

Structure
The main part of my dissertation is divided into two unequal sections. Part 1 comprises two chapters in which I set out my argument for re-imagining Hollywood, show how a Hollywoodcentric approach to studying cinema has been supported and perpetuated, and outline the approaches I have developed for re-imagining it. Part 2 comprises five case-study chapters in which I apply my approach to the analysis of cinemas widely conceptualised as Hollywood’s other.

Part 1. Reimagining Hollywood
Chapter 1. A Paradigm Shift. In this chapter I set out my proposal for a paradigm shift, asking not ‘What is Hollywood?’ but ‘Where is Hollywood located?’ The ‘what’ question, I point out, tends to focus on that which is inside the borders of the frame, film or cinema and to elicit answers involving notions of essence, sameness over time, geographical fixity, and impermeable national, cinematic and other cultural borders as markers of difference. In this model, the global is pitted against the local, homogeneity is seen to destroy heterogeneity, and borders supposedly contain essence and difference. When the question ‘Where is Hollywood?’ is asked, however, we can see not simply the
borders but the border crossings, not only what exists inside the frame, film, genre, cinema or nation but what crosses over and between these categories. From the interstices of these flows, a previously unobserved screenscape emerges in which it is possible to see hybridising processes involving interconnection and transformation.

The issue of location is a crux of my argument because it offers a way of questioning the widespread conception of Hollywood as bounded and fixed in a stable cultural landscape. After outlining Arjun Appadurai’s framework of disjunctive global cultural flows I demonstrate its value in applying knowledge and understanding of contemporary globalisation to the analysis of cinema since its inception. In support of my argument I discuss some of the cultural analysts whose ideas have been informed by, or are in accord with, the ideas of Appadurai. I also examine the arguments of those who dispute his framework and those who suggest caution or modification when adopting it. All these ideas helped shape my ideas and arguments and enabled me to propose new ways in which to analyse intercinematic relationships.

**Chapter 2. Approaches.** If Hollywood is to be re-imagined, I first need to show how it is typically imagined, and in this chapter I do so before outlining my methodology. I show that the typical perception of Hollywood has been reinforced by how Hollywood promotes itself, by notions of a universal language, by ideas and expectations of what constitutes pleasure, and by the critical paradigm of neo-formalist textual analysis. I offer a critique of the conventional textual analysis and explain how my revised model of close readings of the film text retains some of the advantages of textual analysis while discarding its shortfalls. The model I have developed is distinguished from the conventional neo-formalist model by encompassing dynamics involving the interplay between traces and tracings – that is, the traces of cultural flows within the film text which, once identified, makes it possible to trace their trajectories to and from other cinemas and texts.

The paradigm shift that I propose does not mean losing sight of the formal stylistic properties of the films themselves. Rather, it means identifying them as the traces of cultural material flowing in multi-directional and overlapping paths and tracing their trajectories between films, genres, cinemas and other cultural categories across time and space. My methodology involves first applying the framework of disjunctive global
cultural flows to the analysis of non-Hollywood cinemas and their relationship to Hollywood and second, applying this framework to the analysis of individual films. By mapping these unruly flows across time and space, I demonstrate the porous nature of cultural boundaries in a screenscape that lacks the stability and regulation that it is popularly thought to possess.

**Part 2: Case Studies**

In the case study chapters that constitute Part 2 of this dissertation I apply the model of disjunctive global cultural global flows to the analysis of five non-Hollywood cinemas. These represent a range of national, minor and local cinemas all widely considered to be Hollywood’s other. Hollywood’s globally dominant position is such that most non-Hollywood cinemas are defined in terms of being Hollywood’s other. Alterity, however, takes a variety of forms. Some cinemas, for example, are produced, marketed and conceptualised in terms of their rivalry with Hollywood, while others complement, mimic, oppose, or supplement the globally dominant cinema in any number of combinations.

The cinemas for my case studies have been selected because they provide a wide temporal and spatial span in intercinematic relations. Thus each allows me to explore a different aspect of othernesses within different concatenations of globalising processes. Temporally they enable me to map various flows from the 1900s, through the so-called ‘golden period’ of classical Hollywood cinema, and up to the present day. They thus span contemporary capitalism and an earlier period when globalising processes flowed with less speed and intensity. Spatially, they cover a wide global terrain: Europe, Japan, the Antipodes and Canada as well as cinemas and cinematic spaces much closer, in Los Angeles, and even Hollywood itself.

Each allows me to question the validity of the binarisms that are widely held to be rigid markers of difference between Hollywood and its others. The binarisms vary with each cinema, but the one most commonly thought to distinguish Hollywood from all other cinemas is the ‘art versus commerce’ polarity, in which commerce is equated with entertainment and pleasure and opposed to something considered more intellectually worthy, called art. This points to a central argument that infuses my dissertation: that to
use binarisms as a framework in which to analyse intercinematic relationships can hide or ignore difference and discontinuity as much as it can hide or ignore sameness and continuity. It proposes homogeneity where heterogeneity exists and supports a fixed notion of ‘otherness’ that hides the moments of overlap, transfer and crossover resulting from the processes of hybridisation and the mutual incorporation of global cultural flows.

My case studies proffer the opportunity for understanding the dynamics of globalisation in a number of different cinematic contexts. I show the globalisation processes to be hybridisation processes and note that, while they are more evident today than ever before, they are not new phenomena that have significance for understanding only contemporary cinema within the conditions of present-day capitalism. By analysing intercinematic relationships between Hollywood and its ‘others’ within the framework of globalising processes I show the cinematic terrain to be significantly more complex, mobile and overlapping than is generally recognised, and to have been so since the beginning of cinema. In each of these case studies I apply the method of close readings outlined above which I have developed to analyse the textual properties of scenes from one or more films. I shall briefly outline the cinemas I have selected and summarise how my analysis contributes to my project of re-imagining Hollywood.

Chapter 3. Avant-garde Cinema. In this chapter I focus on the early European avant-garde in the period up to the Second World War although some of the vectors I map flow into the post-war period and into other avant-garde spaces – geographic, stylistic and political. The cinematic avant-garde has a long history of self-declared binary opposition and ‘otherness’ to mainstream cinema which goes back to a period pre-dating the emergence of Hollywood as the globally dominant mainstream cinema. The conventional model for analysing the avant-garde defines it as ‘not-Hollywood’ and defines Hollywood as a conservative and non-innovative monolith. When the avant-garde cinema is analysed within the context of disjunctive global cultural flows, however, its relationship to Hollywood is revealed to include mutually hybridising processes and there is a shared history of stylistic properties, technologies, labour, ideas and images. I argue that this shift makes it possible to imagine and locate Hollywood differently.
Chapter 4. National Cinema. In this chapter I explore an aspect of Japanese cinema to challenge the notion of cultural imperialism, or ‘Hollywoodisation’, which some scholars argue occur when a national cinema is defined in opposition to Hollywood’s international norm. In addition to a long history of resistance to Hollywood dominance and the period of enforced domination, Japanese cinema has a long and often obscured history of cultural flows connecting it to, and at times repelling it from, Hollywood. Through the prism of the global border-crossing peregrinations of the celluloid warrior – a character widely seen to represent the quintessence of Japanese national cinema - I explore the hybridising processes and porous borders of nation and genre within a transnational screenscape.

Chapter 5. French New Wave. The links between the French New Wave and Hollywood are widely regarded in terms of innovation and appropriation. I explore this and other paradoxes to show how a close reading of a key New Wave film, *A bout de souffle* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1959), can reveal a complex set of transnational cultural flows occurring in a cycle of text, precursor and remake involved in processes of dislocation, relocation and rapprochement in which classical Hollywood cinema, the French New Wave and New Hollywood are all intimately connected.

Chapter 6. First Nation Cinema. In this penultimate case study I analyse the ways in which First Nation cinemas relate to Hollywood, to the cinema of the nation-state which they inhabit, and to other First Nation cinemas. My close readings explore the significance of the numerous designations that have been applied to these cinemas and how these definitions and delineations tend to obscure heterogeneity and a more chaotic screenscape than is typically imagined. This enables me to show what the films can themselves reveal of the traces of overlapping and multidirectional flows linking First Nation cinema, Hollywood and their more proximate national cinema in addition to other First Nation cinemas.

Chapter 7. Women’s Cinema. The final case study chapter analyses the relationship between the Hollywood and women’s cinema. I apply the framework of globalising processes to trouble the supposedly fixed boundaries between a Hollywood aesthetic and mode of production defined as patriarchal and its female gendered other. I argue that this invites a re-examination of notions of ‘place’ and ‘space’. My close readings
demonstrate the unstable geographies that relocate Hollywood and women’s cinema in closer proximity than is widely conceptualised.

**Conclusion.** To conclude this dissertation, I evaluate the application of a framework of global cultural flows and of the approach to reading the film text that I have developed for challenging a Hollywoodcentric approach in cinematic and critical concerns.
PART 1

RE-IMAGINING HOLLYWOOD
Chapter One

A Paradigm Shift

‘Hollywood is a place you can’t geographically define. We don’t really know where it is.’

John Ford.

In this chapter I outline my argument for a paradigm shift to relocate and reimagine Hollywood. To ask what or where Hollywood is may appear to be redundant, perhaps absurd, questions. They may even appear to be one and the same question. Can there be many people in the world who do not instantly recognise a Hollywood movie when they see one? Or who cannot tell almost within the first few frames when they are not seeing one? Is there anyone who does not know where films such as *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, George Cukor and Sam Wood, 1939), *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939), *Star Wars* (George Lucas, from 1977) or *Titanic* (James Cameron, 1977) were produced and probably filmed? Or for whom the names of stars, ancient and modern, such as Errol Flynn, Marlene Dietrich, Cary Grant and Julia Roberts, don’t instantly connote a particularly Beverly Hills-based form of glamour, wealth and success? Throughout the world ‘Hollywood’ instantly evokes a mental montage of large studios with huge sets reconstructing faraway places, glitzy stars whose often tawdry lives (and thus exciting to mere mortals) are manipulated by publicity spin doctors, innumerable crew members with intriguing credits such as ‘best boy’ and ‘chief gaffer’, and tearful Oscar speeches.

The visual and narrative elements of classical Hollywood cinema – fast action, strongly plotted cause-and-effect narrative, the illusion of reality, unobtrusive technique, gorgeous gowns, ‘good guys’ pitted against ‘bad guys’, happy endings – are very well known. And all under a Los Angeles hill on which a 50-foot sign spells out exactly where we are: H-O-L-L-Y-W-O-O-D. Hollywood is very familiar and

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1 It is worth noting that of these stars picked at random, only Julia Roberts was born in the USA (in Smyrna, Georgia): Hollywood has a long history of personnel – actors, producers directors, cinematographers, designers, etc – flowing over its borders to and from other nations and cinemas in both directions.
extremely fixed, both geographically and in terms of what we see within the frames of its movies.

But Hollywood also brings to mind the terms ‘tinseltown’ and ‘dream factory’, and these immediately trouble the stability of the previous picture by injecting an element of glam and sham and therefore notions of unreality and fantasy. Given a map, many people in many parts of the world can put their finger on a dot on the west coast of the USA, but the oxymoronic term ‘dream factory’ reveals ambiguity: a factory has a precise location, a dream has no fixed address; factories are involved in commerce and mechanical reproduction but dreams float way above the conveyor belts of Fordist industrial processes in the more nebulous realm of creative imagination. And ‘Tinseltown’? Tinsel is a cheap and glittery decoration that for a short time each year adorns Christmas trees, whereas a town implies history, substance and permanence. Just as we know Hollywood exists and is ‘real’, we also know that it excels in mimesis and in giving us only ever the impression of reality. At the heart of the celluloid landscape is a contradiction: Hollywood is instantly recognisable and also recognisably imaginary. It is hard to better John Ford’s frequently quoted remark that ‘Hollywood is a place you can’t geographically define. We don’t really know where it is.’

My purpose in focusing on location is to show that Hollywood is much more than the narrative style and formal properties of a mode of production. And that it is far less fixed and bounded than a geographical location in an urban district in Los Angeles on the west coast of the USA. Not only is it ‘more’ than these; my argument is that it is also ‘elsewhere’. Asking ‘where’ rather than ‘what’ enables me to look for the traces of unruly dynamic cultural flows spilling over geographical, historical and cultural borders. It also allows me to show that Hollywood is part of an unstable global cinematic terrain in which national, cinematic, and other cultural borders are permeable. I argue that wherever in the world audiences settle down to see a Hollywood movie – and since 1918 this is most audiences in most nations the world over – the global circulations of finance, people, technologies, ideas and images have meant that Hollywood is located in an imagined space. In short, when the question is

2 ‘Glam’ is short for ‘glamour’: in 14th century Europe ‘glamour’ denoted a magic spell used by witches to make something real appear absent or illusory.
reframed and the focus is upon location, Hollywood can be seen to be part of a transnational imaginary.

**A Paradigm Shift**

For the complex and dynamic relationships between Hollywood and other cinemas to become visible, a paradigm shift is required. Hollywood needs to be re-imagined, and for this to take place a different analytical framework from the one commonly used needs to be adopted. In his essay ‘Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy’, Arjun Appadurai offers such a framework, one that I shall demonstrate can be usefully adapted to the analysis of cinema. This is a framework in which Hollywood is decentred and non-Hollywood cinemas are no longer negatively defined as Hollywood’s others, in constant fear of cultural homogenisation. It invites the question ‘Where is Hollywood?’ and offers a means of answering it which reveals what otherwise goes unobserved or ignored: a Hollywood that is fluid and unbounded, in a labile screenscape characterised by mutual, multilayered, and intercinematic relationships.

Appadurai offers four key ideas. First, by adding a cultural dimension to the concept of globalisation in a discourse of deterritorialisation, he outlines a new role for the imagination:

The image, the imagined, and the imaginary – these are all terms which direct us to something critical and new in global processes: the imagination as a social practice … The imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component in the new global order.

Second, he invents a number of neologisms to introduce five dimensions of global cultural flow, or imagined world landscapes. These help to explain the nature of the global cultural economy in a world ‘fundamentally characterised by objects in

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motion’. 6 His concept of the ‘ethnoscape’ concerns the movement and transport of persons – tourists, workers, exiles, immigrants, refugees and others – who constitute the world’s constantly shifting populations. By ‘technoscope’ he means the global configuration of technologies moving at almost unimaginably high speeds across previously impermeable borders. His ‘financescape’ is produced by the flows of monies and megamonies moving across the globe with incredible speed in the currency markets and stock exchanges. ‘Mediascape’ refers to the distribution of the capabilities to produce and disseminate information as well as to the large, complex repertoire of images and narratives generated by these capabilities – that is, the movement of information forms themselves. His concept of an ‘ideoscape’ is closely allied to the concept of mediascape: it too is made up of concatenations of images, but here they are often directly political and associated with the ideologies of the state or counter-ideologies of alternative or oppositional movements.

Third, the interrelated notions of mobility, disjunction and instability are integral to this framework of ‘scapes. Appadurai proposes an alternative spatial mapping of the present, one that is not fixed in the way a typical landscape might be, but which comprises constantly changing combinations of flows following increasingly non-isomorphic paths. That they do not all operate at same intensity or speed points to their being volatile, deeply disjunctive and profoundly unpredictable. Crucially, these disjunctive flows create tensions between cultural homogenisation and cultural heterogenisation, which Appadurai identifies as the central problem of today’s global interactions: the disjunctures between the various flows can ‘precipitate various kinds of problems and frictions in different local situations’. 7 Nonetheless, disjunctures between the flows are also creative processes and he rejects the claim that globalisation necessarily means homogenisation:

A vast array of empirical facts could be brought to bear on the side of the homogenization argument … Most often, the homogenization argument subspeciates into either an argument about Americanization or an argument about commoditization, and very often the two arguments are closely linked. What these arguments fail to consider is that at least as rapidly as forces from

7 Ibid.: 6.
various metropolises are brought into new societies they tend to become indigenised in one way or another.\(^8\)

This leads to Appadurai’s last key idea of central relevance to my argument: when re-imagined in terms of a complex, overlapping disjunctive order, the global cultural economy can no longer be understood in terms of existing centre–periphery models. ‘The crucial point,’ Appadurai states, ‘is that the US is no longer the puppeteer of a world system of images, but is only one node of a complex transnational construction of imaginary landscapes.’\(^9\)

**Globalising Processes**

Applying Appadurai’s framework of disjunctive global cultural flows to the analysis of cinema offers valuable insight into how the globalising processes impact upon Hollywood and intercinematic relationships. It creates a link between ideas concerning cultures of circulation and the concept of a transnational cinema.

My proposal for a shift away from imagining Hollywood as stable, bounded and static accords with Appadurai’s argument that when examined closely, apparent stabilities turn out to be a device for dealing with objects that are, in fact, characterised by motion and instability. My concern to refocus from the ‘what?’ to the ‘where?’ is also a concern of Appadurai’s, which he explains as follows:

As scholars concerned with localities, circulation, and comparison, we need to make a decisive shift away from what we may call ‘trait’ geographies to what we could call ‘process’ geographies. Much traditional thinking about ‘areas’ has been driven by conceptions of geographical, civilizational, and cultural coherence that rely upon some sort of trait list – of values, languages, material practices … and the like. However sophisticated these approaches, they all tend to see ‘areas’ as relatively immobile aggregations of traits, with more or less durable boundaries and with more or less enduring properties.\(^10\)

This notion of process geographies challenges conventional thinking about cinemas as areas of cultural coherence and has a direct bearing on my proposal for re-

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\(^8\) Appadurai, ‘Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy’: 32.
imagining Hollywood. It relates to the notion of 'scapes in which ideas, people, technologies, images, information and other aspects are seen as objects in motion in a world of flows. In applying these five dimensions of global cultural flow directly to cinema, the difficulty in disentangling the various flows is an indication of the disjunctures and overlaps that I shall show have existed in the global screen economy since cinema began.

Cinema’s ethnoscape exists in the intercinematic flows of labour on both sides of the camera that have been a characteristic of cinema since its inception. The various vectors of people, technologies, ideas, images and finance crossed paths in the activities of the early film pioneers such as Pathé and the Lumière Brothers, both of whom set up offices overseas and introduced audiences around the world to images and ideas of foreign peoples and cultures. Over the years, the two-way flows of producers, directors, designers, musicians and others between Hollywood and the various national or local cinemas, as well as between the individual non-Hollywood cinemas, have been accelerated or decelerated due to a range of circumstances. These include war and peace, poverty and wealth, intolerant and tolerant political regimes, changing cultural and social attitudes towards gender, violence, sexuality and religion, and other economic, political, economic cultural and natural occurrences. All these have encouraged or discouraged the processes of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation of people.

Money has been a major factor in the flows of cultural labour, and thus reveals disjunctures and overlaps between the ethnoscape and the financescape. A minor cinema, for example, may not be able to afford an internationally well-known Hollywood actor or director, but the overt politics of a non-Hollywood film may persuade an actor to accept a low fee or no fee at all and cross borders into another genre or cinema of another nation. The vectors of finance, labour, idea and image are clearly interconnected in the co-productions and runaway productions of cinema’s

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contemporary financescape and, as a much-discussed aspect of late capitalism, they are closely implicated in global Hollywood today.

The flows of finance and labour also intersect with those of cinema’s technoscape, and can be traced in the transnational flows that have taken place since the first European and US camera-projector inventions at the end of the 19th century, through to the well-charted inventions of sound, colour, wide-screen, television, video, DVD and CGI. They also exist in the range of technologies used at all stages of the production process, from the online screenwriting courses at the development stage to today’s online ticketing technologies. In this, Hollywood has often led the way – thus refuting the tired argument about Hollywood’s conservatism and lack of innovation. Technological inventions are often the outcome of wealth and a healthy investment policy, and thus tend to flow from the richer cinemas and nations to the poorer; but these flows indicate that the creative tensions produced by disjunctures between the ’scapes, poverty, or a relative lack of wealth, can also lead to innovation and invention.12

Cinema’s mediascape exists in the flows of images and information in individual films, in the genres and styles associated with specific cinemas that are produced and distributed by global and local cinemas, and in cinema’s relationship to the rest of the media. There is an obvious overlap with cinema’s ideoscape which, in part, exists in the flows of ideas carried by the ever-varying combinations of images and, although Appadurai does not mention them, sounds. The ideoscape also exists at the points of production and reception: audiences and the meanings they make of the sounds and images they hear and see are an important aspect of the ideoscape.

Decentering Hollywood

Applying Appadurai’s model ensures that I am not, as Mike Featherstone warns, attempting to conceive the global in terms of ‘a singular, integrated and unified conceptual scheme’.13 Rather, this model makes sense of seemingly opposed

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12 An example of poverty generating innovation would be the creative use to which the camera and sound technologies were put in the Argentinean film, La hora de los hornos/The Hour of the Furnaces (Grupo Cine Liberación, 1968).
and incompatible processes such as homogenisation and fragmentation, globalisation and localisation, universalism and particularism. Nor does it either ignore or negate Hollywood’s hegemonic power and position of global dominion: it offers a framework for examining often unequal intercinematic relations, because it perceives the global cultural economy as too chaotic, overlapping and disjunctive to be explained by a centre–periphery model. Appadurai’s framework allows us to see all cinemas as a series of sites where the various flows of peoples, goods, finances, technologies, information, images, sounds and ideas cross and intermingle.

Decentred in this way, Hollywood becomes one of many mobile sites in a ‘world cinema’ where the image, the imagined and the imaginary commingle and where the differing aesthetics and modes of production of global and local cinemas intersect. It provides an architecture for cinema studies based on the concept of process geographies that are shifting and variable and allow one to map the labile congeries of cultural flows. The notion of ‘scapes helps to reveal how information, ideas, images and sounds, people and technologies flow from numerous centres and peripheries around the world and are brought together within the same cultural space conceptualised as a series of sites. The disjunctures between the ‘scapes means that no two spaces are ever the same either temporally or spatially. Conceived like this, cinema can be seen to exhibit constantly meeting, mixing and merging codes of fragmentation, instability, mobility, disjunction and hybridisation.

Appadurai’s model does not ignore the destructive power of global interconnections – he refers specifically to the mutual cannibalisation of sameness and difference. But hybridisation, or the production of things composed of elements of different kinds, offers the possibility of construction. It offers a powerful challenge to the way in which Hollywood and its relationships to other cinemas are traditionally imagined. First, as this definition of hybridisation implies, it is a creative process. It replaces the perception of globalisation’s processes being destructive and homogenising with the idea that, instead, they represent instead a kind of ‘creative tension’. Second, as Jan Nederveen Pieterse argues, hybridisation offers a perspective belonging to ‘the fluid end of relations between cultures: it is the mixing of culture and not their separateness that is emphasised’.14 The notion of

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hybridisations important to my argument because it offers an antidote to the notion of a static cinema with impermeable borders containing essence and permanently preserving difference. It also challenges the perception of cultural homogenisation in which the centre cannibalises the periphery. It points the way to re-imagining a decentred and unbounded Hollywood which is no longer the threat from which other cinemas have to be protected.

Scholarly recognition

Appadurai’s ideas about disjunctive global cultural flows support and are supported by the work of other cultural theorists whose ideas inform Film Studies. By placing culture firmly within the remit of globalisation, Appadurai’s model concurs with the analysis of Néstor García Canclini, who conceives of culture within late capitalism in terms of ‘progressive and healthy processes of eclectic contacts and borrowings’. As already mentioned, it is a model that accords with Jan Nederveen Pieterse’s concept of globalisation processes as hybridisation processes (with an emphasis upon the plural), in which the ‘unevenness, asymmetry and inequality in global relations’ produce ‘hybridities and mélange’.

Appadurai’s notion of dispersed hegemonies that replace a centre–periphery model consolidates the ideas of feminist cultural geographers Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, who introduce the idea of ‘scattered hegemonies’ to replace an ‘inadequate and inaccurate’ notion of binary division perpetuating the idea of bounded categories of location and gender. His ideas also accord with those of Arif Dirlik on the co-existence of the global and the local, which destabilises traditional ideas about the centre–periphery model for the organisation of capital. This model is no longer tenable within contemporary capitalism for Saskia Sassen, either.

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Writing of the disjunctures, instabilities and creative interactions characteristic of globalisation, she notes that they create contradictory spaces, characterised by contestation, internal differentiation, and continuous border crossings in a generative series of processes, which make it possible to ‘detect a new geography of centrality and marginality’.\(^\text{19}\) Appadurai’s notion of ‘creative tension’ also chimes with Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing’s notion of cultures which she writes of as being continually co-produced by ‘frictions’ which are ‘the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection’.\(^\text{20}\)

There is a common idea connoted by the various terms these scholars use. ‘Disjuncture’, ‘tension’, ‘friction’, ‘contestation’, ‘circulation’, ‘contact’, ‘border crossings’, ‘hybridities, ‘mélange’, ‘interconnection’, ‘generation’: all include the possibility of creativity existing in and being produced by globalisation processes. This is quite different, I argue, from the negative implications of an often supposed ‘clash’ of cultures that results in the destruction of heterogeneity and the local by the homogenous and homogenising global.

These are concepts that are also beginning to penetrate the academic discipline of Film Studies, as an increasing number of film writers have begun to analyse cinema within the context of globalisation. Taking an institutional approach in her neo-Marxist analysis of world film trade, Janet Staiger, for example, adopts the model of disjunctive global cultural flows to dismantle the centre–periphery model. She finds it ‘especially handy’ because it makes sense of the impact deterritorialised capitalism has on maintaining Hollywood’s hegemonic power and at the same time sustaining the countervening regional and local flows. ‘The negotiation, appropriation, and resistance to any cultural product,’ she writes, ‘must be considered, according to neo-marxists, to understand, as Appadurai would phrase it, the ethnoscapes, mediascapes, and ideoscapes of global culture flows.’\(^\text{21}\)


What is unique to the screen is that in addition to being a part of globalising processes it also narrativises and visualises them, and Appadurai’s model has proved valuable not only when analysing cinema in institutional terms but also the individual film text. It has been particularly influential among scholars working in the fields of cinemas conceptualised as marginal or minor. In his ground-breaking analysis of ‘independent transnational cinema’, Hamid Naficy uses Appadurai’s ideas concerning the image, the imagined and the imaginary directing us to the imagination as a social practice as the starting block to propose a genre he calls an ‘accented cinema of exile and diaspora’. This, he argues, cuts across previously defined geographic, national, cultural, cinematic, and metacinematic boundaries. In their major work on multiculturalism and transnational cinema, Ella Shohat and Robert Stam note the value of Appadurai’s concept of ‘dispersed hegemonies’ to those who would challenge the Eurocentrism (or Hollywoodcentrism) underlying the traditional binaristic, centre–periphery analytical model. In their rigorous reworking of the cultural imperialism thesis, they develop Appadurai’s insight concerning the interactive tensions of the global cultural situation. They observe that the same hegemony unifying the world through global networks of circulating goods and information also distributes them according to hierarchical structures of power, even if those hegemonies are now more subtle and dispersed.

Dana Polan writes of ‘glocalism’ as the creative outcome of globalising processes in which the local and the global exist within each other, with each differently inflected according to local time and space. He applies this concept in his discussion of the emergence of a new global-American culture to a number of films with interconnecting motifs that demonstrate concerns outlined by Appadurai’s five ‘scapes. These include narrative ideas about travel and movement, the fluidity of bodily and technological frontiers, the representation of human interaction as mediated forms of communication, and plots about the mediation between various subcultures of the global economy. ‘These cultural productions,’ he explains, ‘both

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are about and are themselves in their production figurations of the five forms of border crossings that Arjun Appadurai sees as defining the complexities of the global cultural economy.\(^{25}\)

Other film scholars have begun to apply Appadurai’s framework to the analysis of national cinema. In her study of Canadian multiculturalism Katharyne Mitchell, for example, values Appadurai’s framework for the light it sheds on the effect of globalising processes on national cinema, arguing that his ‘celebration of deterritorialisation’ enables one to rethink culture in terms of mobility and plural identities rather than boundaries and fixed locations.\(^{26}\) Thinking along similar lines, in her analysis of Hong Kong director Wong Kar-wai’s complex, multilayered films that emerge from the interstices of transcultural tensions, Audrey Yue notes how Appadurai’s disjunctive ‘scapes point to the production of the image as a practice of the transnational imagination.\(^{27}\) Like Yue, William van der Heide also applies Appadurai’s framework to the analysis of individual films. In an intercultural and intertextual study of Malaysian cinema, he makes a plea for the analysis of films and genres that he shows to be engaged in a complex process of interaction and transformation to be ‘placed in the context of’ global cultural flows ‘which are multi-directional if also asymmetrical’.\(^{28}\) He further notes that this framework challenges the model of binarisms in which Hollywood is pitted against its others, arguing that cultural flows cannot be seen to originate in just a few centres of popular culture located in the West, from which ‘cultural imperialism does its work’. As Heide points out:

A more effective and productive strategy is to focus on the creative interaction between the transnational and the local and between the local and the local. The analyst therefore employs cross-cultural strategies to acknowledge the

\(^{25}\) *Ibid.*, 263.


existence of the boundary, while constantly asserting that it is fluid, mobile, penetrable, contestable and creative.\(^{29}\)

To end this partial list of cultural analysts and film scholars whose thinking accords with, or has been informed by, Appadurai’s framework of disjunctive global cultural flows, there are two who propose ways in which it might usefully be extended and who have particularly guided my own thinking. Firstly, Ana M. López’s essay ‘Facing up to Hollywood’ alerts us to the broader implications of the framework, arguing that increased critical awareness of global forces and practices has had a significant impact upon the theorisation of international cinematic relations. With a focus on Latin American cinemas, she outlines multiple and diverse ‘border crossings’ between the global and the local which ‘point to the fact that film production, despite the continued financial hegemony of the Hollywood machine, has become as deterritorialised, diasporic, and transnational as the rest of the world’.\(^{30}\) Rather than remaining mired in unproductive analyses that stay fixed on the purely institutional and economic aspects of the cultural imperialism/dependency thesis, López favours an approach that accepts the shifting paradigms of globality for a ‘transnational’ Film Studies. Noting the persistence of an approach that pits the global against the local, López concludes that rather than fixing Hollywood in a position of binary opposition, which she describes as a ‘face-off’ between Hollywood and its others, a more appropriate strategy is that of:

a facing up to Hollywood in which we seek to understand … a broader zone of cultural debate and economic relationships in which we can trace the tension and contradictions between national sites and transnational processes.\(^{31}\)

Her suggestion that film scholars can usefully apply ‘the lessons of the present to their historical approach’ has been of particular value to my own argument. This opens the way for the application of Appadurai’s framework, with its focus on cultural flows within the new global order to the history of cinema at an earlier stage of capitalism.

\(^{29}\) Ibid., 55.


\(^{31}\) Ibid., 435.
López’s call to ‘face up’ to Hollywood rather than persist in a ‘face-off’ is echoed by the title of Thomas Elsaesser’s recent collection of essays, *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood*. Elsaesser rejects the ‘Hollywood as nemesis’ thesis and, exploring intercinematic flows from a transnational perspective, shows Hollywood and European cinema to have been perpetually interconnected. While he makes no specific reference to Appadurai’s framework, his analysis rejects the traditional centre–periphery model and demonstrates how a critical awareness of global forces and practices impacts upon the theorisation of transnational cinematic relations. He writes of the creative tensions between the flows in terms of the ‘two-way traffic European cinema has always entertained with Hollywood, however uneven and symbolic some of these exchanges have been’. Widening his vision beyond the geographical and cultural boundaries of a European zone, Elsaesser notes that the mutual and multidirectional passages of cultural capital have become global, with reputations even in the art cinema and independent sector rapidly extending across national borders … Hal Hartley, Richard Linklater, Paul Thomas Anderson, Alejandro Amenábar, Tom Twyker, Fatih Akin, Wong Kar-Wai, Tsai Ming-Liang, Kim Ki-Duk, Abbas Kiarostami and Lars von Trier have, it sometimes seems, more in common with each other than with directors of their respective national cinemas, which, paradoxically, gives new meaning to regional or local attributes.

The phrase ‘face to face’ in Elsaesser’s subtitle refers to the often virulent and emotionally charged opposition that exists between Europe and Hollywood, and also to the ‘binary oppositions that usually constitute the field of academic Film Studies, in which American cinema is invariably the significant (bad) Other, around which both the national and “art/auteur” cinema are defined’. As Tim Bergfelder points out in his review of this book, Elsaesser’s formulation injects a strong element of ambiguity: ‘face to face’ can be seen to imply a ‘mutual interference’. It also implies a sense of equal value – or, as Elsaesser writes, a sense that identity is no

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longer a process of ‘self-othering’ understood only face to face with Hollywood. It means that non-Hollywood cinemas can enter a different dialogical space and address world cinema in the world’s terms. I do not suggest, any more than Elsaesser does, that any of this negates Hollywood’s dominant status, but it does propose a shared acceptance of the other and points to processes of interchange and change that are mutual and multidirectional. Tim Bergfelder’s analysis of the image on the front cover of the book – from the Danish film Dogville (Lars von Trier, 2003) in which the Hollywood star Nicole Kidman appears to be asleep (‘her eyes (wide) shut’) – suggest the boundaries between Hollywood and its others to be porous, thus negating the concept of ‘otherness’. He argues convincingly that the impression produced is of a creative intercinematic encounter ‘at the level of dream, memory and unconscious affinities’. This serves as a useful reminder of what Appadurai says about the interrelationship of the image, the imagined and the imaginary in global processes. His concept of the imagination as social practice is a crucial component in my project. In his analysis of the film frame on the book cover, Bergfelder takes a leaf out of Elsaesser’s book, which shifts seamlessly from macro-analysis to the micro-analytical business of close textual readings – something of crucial importance to my own approach.

**Critiques and consolidations**

In consolidating the ideas of these cultural critics and writers, I apply a critical awareness of contemporary globalising processes to the historical analysis of cinema to argue that it has been a part of a transnational imaginary since its inception. I build upon these approaches to demonstrate that intercinematic relationships are not characterised by opposition and cannibalism but are dynamic and creative ones, characterised by reciprocities. I extend the analysis of national and zonal borders that others have embarked upon to analyse a range of cinemas and cinematic categories and to demonstrate their interrelatedness. Appadurai’s approach to the idea of a stable cultural economy is to explore and explode the notion of boundaries. This informs my own approach, which troubles the notion of cinematic categories by imagining boundaries to be permeable. Instead of endorsing the idea of a static ‘face

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36 *Ibid.*, 378
off’ between Hollywood and its others, I also seek to contribute to a broader zone of cultural debate between cinemas perceived as a series of sites and transnational processes.

Although Appadurai offered his framework as a ‘tentative formulation’ and noted that the disjunctures between economy, culture and politics were something that had only begun to be theorised, his work has nevertheless attracted some criticism. I shall address some of these criticisms because these, too, have informed my own approach.

While Appadurai does not ignore the problems and inequalities created and perpetuated by globalising processes, his endorsement of the creative potential of instability and disjuncture is not endorsed quite so wholeheartedly by those with a less positive attitude towards globalisation. Fredric Jameson, for one, sees as overly utopian visions which suggest an ‘immense global urban intercultural festival without a centre or even any longer a dominant cultural mode’. He argues that this is a view in need of ‘a little economic specificity and is rather inconsistent with the quality and impoverishment of what has to be called corporate culture on a global scale’. 37 Meaghan Morris is similarly distrustful of too uncritical an acceptance of globalisation. She argues that too much enthusiasm for boundary blurring can lead to an unhelpful merging of endogenous/exogenous understandings of culture. ‘Some celebrants of global culture,’ she writes, ‘use the first term spatially to subsume all the others; in this variant globalisation is a kind of rapture, without end and with no outside.’ 38 In a footnote she comments: ‘This usage is more common in journalism than in academic criticism. From the serious literature on the topic, an example tending this way is Arjun Appadurai’. Morris argues that the most useful cultural analyses of globalisation focus on the more forceful concept of time rather than space to explore how cultural relations are shaped or dissolved. Although Appadurai does not totally ignore temporal categories and boundaries, his focus on the cultural politics of deterritorialisation and on ‘process geographies’ does tend to valorise the spatial at the expense of the temporal.

In a related critique, Leela Gandhi considers it cause for alarm that ideas such as Appadurai’s about globalised/hybrid identity apparently share many of the attributes of global capital, and she warns of a ‘celebratory or utopian articulation of globalisation which relies heavily upon a sort of poetics of hybridity’. Shohat similarly counsels caution in relation to ideas about hybridisation processes, pointing out that ‘a celebration of syncretism and hybridity per se, if not articulated in conjunction with questions of hegemony and neo-colonial power relations, runs the risk of appearing to sanctify the fait accompli of colonial violence’. This issue of power relations also concerns Koichi Iwabuchi, who warns of ‘over exaggerating the reach and impact of transnational cultural flows’. He cites Ien Ang and Jon Stratton who argue that this would underestimate ‘the historical and cultural situatedness of spaces traversed by (disjunctive cultural) flows’. While accepting that the unstable, decentralised and disjunctive nature of the globalising processes spells an end to a centre–periphery model for the analysis of global culture, Iwabuchi supports Ang and Stratton’s cautionary note that ‘we should not assume that such flows totally replace the old power relations, as the current cultural flows are always already overdetermined by the power relations and geopolitics embedded in the history of imperialism and colonialism’.

Another issue which has informed my own approach in consolidating Appadurai’s framework was whether Appadurai’s focus on the contemporary conditions of late capitalism was capable of shedding light on intercinematic relations in an earlier stage of capitalism. Related to this is Appadurai’s emphasis on a geo-political remapping of globalisation processes. When applied to cinema, this may appear to favour tracing the spatial flows across different national and cultural borders at the expense of the temporal flows that can occur. Appadurai by no means proposes that globalisation is the invention of the mid-20th century: ‘of course, at all

43 Ibid.
periods in human history there have been some disjunctures in the flows of these things’. He emphasises the here and now, however, adding, ‘the sheer speed, scale and volume of each of these flows are now so great that the disjunctures have become central to the politics of global culture’. Appadurai’s preoccupation with the unprecedented speed, scale, volume and intensity of globalising processes criss-crossing the world today invited my investigation of the validity of applying this framework to the entire history of cinema. If, as he maintains, the nature of the flows today are such that the disjunctures have become central to the politics of global culture, is it necessarily true that they were central or important in the past? Furthermore, if by end of the 20th century the global cultural economy has become too chaotic, decentralising and disjunctive to be explained by a centre–periphery model, does this necessarily mean that the centre–periphery model was of no value at the start of the 20th century, when the flows were slower and less intense? Appadurai does not ignore the long history of globalisation – his statement that ‘the US is no longer the puppeteer of a world system of images’ implicitly recognises this. It also begs the question as to whether Hollywood has ever possessed such dominion, an issue I address in several of the case study chapters in the second part of this dissertation.

Appadurai’s construction of ’scapes also invited reflection, and further contributed to the development of a model that built upon his. His concept of the ‘ethnoscape’, for example, can seem limited when applied to the particular conditions of cinema’s labour force. By listing tourists as well as immigrants, refugees, exiles and guestworkers as examples of the constantly shifting populations, he indicates both the voluntary and the involuntary deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation of peoples. The emphasis he places upon involuntary deterritorialisation, however, could imply that the entirely voluntary movements of many film workers between genres, cinemas and nations, for reasons of economic or cultural gain, are viewed as an irrelevancy. Another issue relating to his ’scapes

45 Appadurai, ‘Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy’: 37.
concerns the fuzzy boundaries between his concepts of ‘mediascape’ and ‘ideoscape’. This suggests the very dilemma that I outlined in the previous chapter which is, perhaps, inherent in a theory that erects categories and envisions borders while also attempting to demonstrate the instability of categories and the porosity of borders. It also leads to a further question concerning the apparently arbitrary logic of introducing just five ‘scapes: why not fifteen or fifty?

My response to these criticisms and potential limitations in applying Appadurai’s framework to the critical analysis of cinema was to allow them to influence my research path and, where necessary, to modify my methodology and analytical model. Each of the cinemas discussed in the case study chapters raises all or some of these issues in different combinations. I also note that while he celebrates some aspects of the new world order, Appadurai does not deny negative outcomes of globalisation processes. He writes, for example, of the fundamental problems of livelihood, equity, suffering, justice and governance produced by the disjunctures between the various vectors characterising the ‘world-in-motion’ that he outlines.47 Nevertheless, I found it important to remember that just as the flows are multidirectional and multilayered, so too are, or can be, the outcomes. Financial instability, for example, is notable for the ways in which some nations and zones merge to create co-productions while export and import quotas in others prevent such mergers. Co-productions can be innovative and visionary and push the cultural boundaries of cinema and they can also result in the sort of film like the widely denigrated ‘Europudding’. Highly trained industry professionals from the hegemonically powerful global, Hollywood or national cinemas might work alongside exilic and diasporic filmmakers with little or no experience of the latest technologies. This can result in the highly skilled workers depriving the unskilled workers of labour opportunities, but it can also create labour opportunities and add to the total pool of knowledge and skills within the screenscape.

With regard to the blurred boundaries between Appadurai’s ‘mediascape’ and ‘ideoscape’, I shall argue that this helps to show clearly the chaotic and disjunctural nature of the multilayered, multidirectional flows. In terms of the potential limitations of five ‘scapes, I concluded that there was no need to be constrained and that cinematic terrain can be even better understood by the addition of further

overlapping flows: I found the notion of a ‘screenscape’ an invaluable tool, and the concept of a ‘genderscape’ proved indispensable to my analysis in the case study chapter on women’s cinema. On the issue of Appadurai’s emphasis on the spatial at the possible expense of the temporal, I sought the ideas of cultural geographers and others who include the notion of time within their definition of space – the work of James Clifford and Gillian Rose proved of special value. Concerning the other temporal issue, that of applying Appadurai’s framework to the history of cinema since its inception, I concluded that his discussion of the increasing speed and intensity of global cultural flows does not deny the existence of disjunctive globalising processes flows in an earlier phase of capitalism.

The mobile and disjunctive nature of flows means that no two periods, cinemas or films are subject to exactly the same combination of flows. Their fugitive nature and ever varying, constantly mutating concatenations thus make it difficult to see them clearly. The problem confronting me was how to analyse anything as mobile and unstable as a screenscape. Mindful of Appadurai’s warning about how easy it is to ‘mistake a particular configuration of apparent stabilities for permanent associations between space, territory and cultural organization’, I built upon the textual analysis approach of the dominant critical paradigm to develop a new approach to reading the film text. This, as mentioned in the Introduction, involves ‘traces and tracings’ – it looks at the formal stylistic properties within the film frame for the traces of the cultural flows and I then use these traces to map their trajectories through the permeable borders of the film frame. This process enabled me to engage in a critique of Appadurai’s ‘tentative’ model and to develop it further to produce one that places equal value on time and location. This allowed me to apply the lessons of the present to my historical research. As I uncovered and rediscovered cinema’s history of intercinematic flows, I also developed new perspectives on the intensification of these processes in contemporary cinema. This, I argue, is necessary to the task of re-imagining Hollywood: its history and the ways in which it has been imagined in the past inform how it is imagined today.

Having established the framework that allows me to do this I next outline my methodology to support my argument that identifying the traces of the cultural flows makes it possible to trace their paths flowing to and from other cinemas. They will

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48 Ibid.: 8.
thus show cinematic, national and other cultural boundaries to be permeable and the screenscape to lack the stability that is popularly attributed to it. If Hollywood is to be re-imagined, I need to show first, how it is typically imagined, and second, what my strategies for re-imagining it are.
Chapter Two
Strategies for Change

‘Pardon me, folks! Would you like the thrill of your lives?’

In this chapter I outline my strategies for re-imaging Hollywood, showing first how it is typically imagined. My argument is that a critical paradigm that places Hollywood at the centre of concern is not the most appropriate way to analyse intercinematic relationships. It results in a narrow, textually determined perception of Hollywood that fails to look outside the borders of the film. It offers a form of analysis that ignores the question ‘where?’ by asking only ‘what?’ By reinforcing the notion of strict boundaries as markers of difference and by focusing on essence, it enables one to see only what already exists within the borders of a pre-determined conceptualisation of Hollywood. It also ignores, hides or minimises how films respond to non-filmic events and dynamic processes originating in cultural fields that may not immediately appear to be closely related to cinema. It imposes order on an imagined world which, as I shall show, is highly volatile and chaotic.

The widespread perception of Hollywood is of a monolithic, homogenous and homogenising globally dominant cinema in a stable screenscape in which cinematic and other cultural borders are fixed. It is not, however, the only way in which it is imagined. As David Bordwell has observed, ‘the numerous versions of Hollywood would fill the library of a small town in America’.¹ He indicates some of the contradictions that exist:

Hollywood has been celebrated by cultists and camp followers, castigated by reformers and social theorists, and boosted by an army of publicists. Anthropologists have treated it as a tribal village, economists as a company

town. The films of Hollywood have been lumped together as indistinguishable vulgarity, and they have been splintered into a hundred categories: the films of Garbo, of Goldwyn, of Griffith; the Paramount pretties, automobiles in the cinema, the gangster film, the serial, music for the movies; direction by Alfred Hitchcock, costumes by Edith Head, cinematography by Gregg Toland, sets by Van Nest Polglase; silent films, sound films, color films, films noirs.²

In addition to the often negative versions of a lowbrow, mass culture that this list suggests, Hollywood is also celebrated as ‘a (if not the) truly original contribution of the United States to art and aesthetics’ in the 20th century.³ Hollywood, it would seem, is widely seen to be bounded and static and at the same time, it is hard to pin down. This was certainly the experience of anthropologist Hortense Powdermaker who, after living in and studying Hollywood for a year in the mid-1940s, became very aware that the Hollywood of the popular imagination did not match the reality she found.⁴ The oxymoron in the subtitle of her book, Hollywood: The Dream Factory, suggests that like many others, before and since, she puzzled over how something as individual and imaginatively unruly as a dream could simultaneously be the tangible product of an industrial manufacturing process. Acknowledging that Hollywood ‘has commonly been described as a state of mind’, she nevertheless attempted to map – and thus fix - its cultural co-ordinates.⁵ Ranging from anthropological philosophising to moral panic, her definitions reveal a perception of Hollywood that was far from fixed – one might say it was ‘all over the place’:

Hollywood is engaged in the mass production of prefabricated daydreams. It tries to adapt the American dream, that all men are created equal, to the view that all men’s dreams should be made equal …⁶

Hollywood is an industry but daydreams are its product and these cannot be successfully produced as if they were cans of beans …⁷

⁶ Ibid.
... the general atmosphere pervading the studios is no more that of a factory than it is of a creative human enterprise. Rather it is that of a gambler’s den.\textsuperscript{8}

Powdermaker eventually concluded that ‘Hollywood ‘exists wherever people connected with the movies live and work’.\textsuperscript{9} While this acknowledges Hollywood’s existence outside the established geographical borders of the Los Angeles suburb that gave it its name, and beyond the visual and aural stylistic qualities of millions of strips of celluloid, her horizons are, nevertheless, narrow. To locate ‘the movies’ in Hollywood and, equally, to locate ‘Hollywood’ in the movies as she does implies that Hollywood is all cinema and that all cinema is Hollywood. Powdermaker was by no means alone in this perception, and it is a perception that persists. A widespread ignorance of the diverse range of films and cinemas that exist has resulted in audiences throughout the world for whom, as Geoff King points out, Hollywood is the movies, because this is all, or almost all, they ever see.\textsuperscript{10} It is also the nightmare assessment of all those who castigate Hollywood as the hegemonically powerful global cannibaliser or emasculator of all local cinemas. But this was not Powdermaker’s particular concern: her turn of phrase is more an expression of the difficulty she experienced in trying to fix what and where Hollywood is.

That an anthropologist should locate Hollywood in its people is hardly surprising. But it alerts us to what will become increasingly apparent throughout this dissertation: that how Hollywood is imagined and where it is thought to be situated depends on who is doing the imagining and where they themselves are located. Everything depends upon who is doing the imagining and what their own take is on cinema and its relationship to commerce, art, and other cultural factors. Like many before her and since, Powdermaker found it hard to situate Hollywood. Her perceptions warn of a key difficulty in trying to map Hollywood: the impossibility of dissociating personal taste, experience and location from how it is imagined. Powdermaker shows that Hollywood is only ever imagined – and imaginations are notoriously difficult to contain. It means that no two cinemas, groups of people, or individuals conceptualise it in exactly the same way. While it is precisely my aim to

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid.: 289.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid.:18.
complicate the idea of a fixed notion of Hollywood, this chapter first sets out some of the ways in which it has been defined and located from a number of different perspectives that cohere in a powerful conceptualisation of the globally dominant cinema.

**Typical conceptualisations**

A dream factory, an arm (sometimes an iron fist) of the culture industry, celluloid imperialism, escapist fantasy, commerce, nostalgia – all these terms give expression to how Hollywood is variously imagined and all draw conceptual boundaries around the globally dominant cinema to distinguish it from other cinemas.\(^{11}\) Despite the plethora of definitions, however, common sense tells us that some ‘thing’ we call ‘Hollywood’ does exist and it can therefore be recognised, defined and, presumably, located. For many critics, filmmakers and audiences the term ‘Hollywood’ operates like a brand name which creates certain expectations and brings with it a guarantee that these expectations will be satisfied. For many, Hollywood’s guarantee exists in the apparently uniform way in which its films tell a story. Bordwell confirms this, stating that ‘the very label carries a set of expectations, often apparently obvious, about cinematic form and style.’\(^{12}\) Thus it is the films’ aesthetic, the combination of narrative style and the formal filmic properties of mise-en-scène, sound and editing technique, which is commonly perceived to be Hollywood’s single outstanding, and for some, egregious, characteristic. This, for many, is where Hollywood is located: in the film text and in a style known as ‘classical Hollywood cinema’.

As discussed in the Introduction, while in recent years there have been an increasing number of approaches from academics concerned to analyse cinematic margins and transnational cinematic connections, my focus is on the basic formalist model of classical narrative cinema and a neo-formalist critical approach to textual analysis. The neo-formalist critical approach is one that seeks out and finds the classical Hollywood cinematic paradigm. The combination of these two paradigms

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presents a view that has filtered into the public domain and largely coincides with Hollywood’s own view of itself or, rather, with Hollywood’s dominant view of itself. Neo-formalism has its supporters within the academy and it also has provoked strong rejoinders. For many film theorists neo-formalism is problematic because of its emphasis on the film text, often to the exclusion of cinemas’ institutional properties. To appreciate the implications of this scholarly dispute for my argument I shall examine this approach more closely. Criticism of neo-formalism as a means of understanding cinema need concern us only insofar as this approach impacts upon ways in which Hollywood is imagined and my argument for how it might be re-imagined.

**Hollywood’s version of itself**

To present my argument about how Hollywood is typically imagined, and about why and how it might be re-imagined, it is important to note that audience expectations of pleasure play a large part in the widespread dominant conceptualisation. Audience expectations of the Hollywood form and style carry strong implications of the role that predictability and thus uniformity play in delivering pleasure. Hollywood’s own version of itself has also contributed to this paradigm of a uniform narrative style and film form. Hollywood has never been reluctant to promote how it wanted the rest of the world to conceptualise and experience it. Audience expectations of Hollywood are cleverly visualised in a late 1950s or early 1960s promotional film that also reveals what Hollywood expected of its audiences for which I the following close reading:¹³

**A Hollywood promotional film.**

Walking towards the camera is a typical white, urban American family – father, mother and junior, their 10 years old (or so) son – in a typical American Main Street. Just as they’re about to pass the movie theatre, and few towns would have been without at least one in those days, a voice apparently emanating from the camera

hollers: ‘Pardon me, folks! Would you like the thrill of your lives?’

Note the friendly, colloquial, and inclusive use of the term ‘folks’. This, we quickly surmise, is the Voice of Hollywood speaking, apparently emanating from the camera. Junior says ‘Sure!’ as most children would, and runs eagerly towards the camera. Less sure, his father pulls him back: ‘Come on, son, he’s not talking to us.’ ‘Oh yes I am!’ intercedes the Voice. ‘I’m talking to everyone who loves adventure, romance, mystery, danger.’ Voice of Hollywood isn’t talking only to the average John and Jane Doe and little Johnnie Junior represented in this short promo any more – he’s also talking to you and me. Like the Doe family, we’re pulled in.

The Does are literally pulled in: the film cuts to a theatre interior where we find them settling into their seats in a darkened auditorium. They look up expectantly at the screen, which we see flickering on their upturned, wide-eyed faces as Voice of Hollywood continues: ‘The magic chair takes you back in time to two thousand years ago. To Nero and the chariot race.’ At this point the film cuts to the Panavision ultra-widescreen excitement of the chariot race from Ben-Hur (William Wyler, 1959) in which Charlton Heston is upholding freedom and justice in biblical times.

It cuts back to Johnnie, with whom we – or some of us, at least – have begun to identify: he is engrossed in the action of this powerful peplum genre film on the big screen. Nothing on the small television screens of the period could possibly look this good, this exciting … and certainly not this big. Is Johnnie identifying with the larger-than-life on-screen hero? You bet he is! When it cuts back to Ben-Hur, the camera is positioned from within the chariot to give the point of view of the charioteer: we see in front of us the horses’ powerful rumps, their tails streaming out towards us in clouds of dust, as they gallop thunderously around the stadium.

Should we be in any doubt about the process of identification, we next see John Junior, liberated from his seat in the stalls and superimposed inside the chariot, dressed in a toga and holding the reins. He – and we too, it seems – are now driving

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14 After World War II, migration from urban centres to suburbia and more rural districts where there were no picture theatres replaced this ‘typical’ scene.
15 Subsequently subtitled ‘A Tale of the Christ’, this MGM film was 217 minutes long, cost $4 million to make – twice the maximum at the time – was the top-grossing film in North America in 1959. It was nominated for 11 Oscars and won 9.
16 This promotional film engages in Hollywood’s increasing anxiety at this time when urban cinema audiences decreased as significant numbers of people moved to the suburbs or smaller towns where there were no cinemas, and television audiences increased.
the chariot. This is promptly confirmed. Speaking to both audiences, Voice of Hollywood tells us: ‘Now you’re part of the race. Your heart is pounding as you speed over the ground to the plaudits of your fellow Romans.’ And for many audiences, indeed it is. Courtesy of Hollywood, we too can escape our daily lives by finding pleasure in the way Hollywood tells its stories. We are all little Johnnie Does now.

This reading of the promotional film reveals a Hollywood perception of how its stylistic norms are commonly ‘read’ and understood. It shows Hollywood telling us that ‘Hollywood’ exists in its narrative style and formal properties, and that these create and satisfy expectations. And unlike the norms of this cinematic paradigm, the film also shows us how this is achieved. The expectations are of a coherent set of filmmaking practices and stylistic norms that achieve viewer identification. This is accomplished by seamlessly stitching audiences into the illusory nature of the representation – just as John Doe Junior, identifying with Ben-Hur, is ‘sewn’ into the chariot. This technique of ‘seamlessness’, or ‘suture’, achieved by a continuity style of editing, lies at the heart of classical narrative cinema. Audiences are presented with a narrative which appears continuous, as if there are no ellipses or disjunctures of time and space. The goal is verisimilitude, or ‘reality’, and the desired outcome is an ‘invisible’ style and a realism which gives the impression of being natural or innocent. In this stylistic paradigm, as Martin Scorsese noted, ‘Everything is at the service of the narrative.’ In other words, narrative is king, and style, being entirely

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17 Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson in The Classical Hollywood Cinema observe that classical Hollywood cinema, although an ‘excessively obvious cinema’, also hides all technique in order to promote verisimilitude.
18 ‘Suture’ is a medical term for sewing up a flesh wound. For a concise explanation of the notion of ‘suture’ used as a critical psychoanalytic (specifically Lacanian) concept, see Susan Hayward, Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts. London and New York: Routledge, 2006: 378.
20 Scorsese is interviewed in ‘Hollywood style’, episode 1 of American Cinema (Alain Klarer, 1995). New York director Martin Scorsese, one of the ‘Movie Brats’ of the new/post Hollywood era, has flirted with Hollywood for most of his professional career while maintaining his independence. Many critics suggested that he finally succumbed to Hollywood norms with The Departed (2006). That this is a remake of the Hong Kong film,
subservient to it, does not (normally) draw attention to itself.²¹ It is a technique which, as Thomas Elsaesser explains, contributes to the widespread perception of Hollywood as a factory process (thus distinguishing it from art cinema):

> Everything is made to count, everything is put to use. Nothing is wasted … like a modern car production line, where profitability means a minimum of components, arriving just in time and capable of being assembled into several models.²²

The unproblematic depiction in the promotional film of a cinema that talks to everyone and which everyone can understand is very much a part of a Hollywoodcentric approach to cinema. It promotes Hollywood’s own version of itself as the narrator of universal stories using a universal language. This notion of film as a language, and of a universal language, is widely offered as an explanation for Hollywood’s global success and its difference from other cinemas.

### A Universal Language?

The idea of Hollywood film as a universal language proposes first that the stylistic norms of the classical narrative style operate according to a set of invariable ‘grammatical’ laws, and second that despite manifest diversity between and within cinemas these apply – or should apply - to all cinemas. Cinematic storytelling is thought to be governed by rules, with each individual type of shot, transition or other formal filmic property possessing a predetermined meaning. It is a notion with a long history, and it seemed to make sense particularly in the days of silent cinema. The popularity of this idea influenced studio mogul Carl Laemmle to name his studios

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²¹ There is undoubtedly a paradox here. The classical Hollywood narrative style offers the creative, imaginative and, at times, unpredictable thrills and spills of adventure, romance, mystery or action stories as the promotional film suggests. At the same time it also promotes itself as possessing an aura of predictability and reliability with the studio logos – MGM’s lion, 20th Century-Fox’s floodlit deco skyline, Paramount’s mountain peak, RKO’s transmitter, Universal’s globe, Columbia’s torch lady – all acting as seals on a guarantee of pleasure.

'Universal’ even before Hollywood gained global ascendency; W.G. Griffith told Lillian Gish that film would ‘make all men brothers because they would understand each other’. The idea of a universal language did not, however, disappear with the advent of sound in the late 1920s. By this time Hollywood had achieved dominance in almost all markets around the world and the main characteristics of classical Hollywood cinema had become established norms.

The notion of film as language, however, is a trope. It appears to make sense, perhaps because, as Christian Metz once said, cinema is easy to understand but difficult to explain: it apparently helps elucidate what’s going on when one watches a film and it accords with a view that Hollywood has been happy to promote. James Monaco dismisses the notion of film as a language very simply, by pointing out that it ‘is not a language in the sense that English, French or mathematics is. First of all, it’s impossible to be ungrammatical in film.’ The idea of a cinematic universal language is similarly unsustainable. Miriam Hansen traces the origins of this myth to the days of early cinema, when the idea of cinema providing the means to overcome divisions of nationality, culture, and class played upon ‘the utopian vision of a means of communication among different people(s)’. This proved a useful defence for the fast-growing and increasingly popular film industry against the vociferous condemnations of cinema as a pernicious form of corrupting mass culture for the illiterate new immigrant urban working class in the US. It also represents a teleological argument, ignoring the existence of a range of different cinematic styles and in particular the co-existence of a very different style in early cinema known as

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24 Indian (Bollywood) and Egyptian cinemas are the last remaining cinemas to dominate their nations/regions. Others in the relatively recent past that proved more popular in their own region than Hollywood include Japanese and Hong Kong cinemas.


26 Monaco, *How to Read A Film*. 157.

27 Hansen, *Babel & Babylon*: 76.
the ‘cinema of attractions’. This modifies the canonical story, pointing to a visual style of storytelling with a different set of norms that persisted and are very apparent in, for example, the spectacle of the chariot race in Ben Hur.

Film is not a language, nor is it universal: it possesses not grammatical laws but codes and conventions developed by individual filmmakers and cinemas, and these, by their constant use, construct stylistic norms and help create audience expectations. Paul Willemen refers to the assumed universality of film language as a ‘film-theoretical malpractice’ and argues ‘this illusion is promoted to ignore the specific knowledges that may be at work in a text, such as shorthand references to particular, historically accrued modes of making sense (often referred to as cultural traditions)’. He makes the forceful argument that since the Hollywood model of character narration is accepted as the norm in Euro-American Film Studies, the modes of studying Hollywood narrative and its counter-cinemas have been presented as equally universal and normative, duplicating and confirming the position of the economic power enjoyed by Hollywood.

By virtue of its dominant position in the marketplace, watching Hollywood movies is how most people learn how to ‘read’ a film, and its particular codes and conventions can appear to be the norm for all cinema. Yet the myth of film language persists. Monaco suggests this is because ‘film is very much like language … An education in the quasi-language of film opens up greater potential meaning for the observer, so it is useful to use the metaphor of language to describe the phenomenon of film.’ The idea that film is a language may be useful for this purpose, but it also contributes to the idea of a classical Hollywood cinema which is contained and stable. While apparently signalling universality and thus an absence of borders, it erects borders.

30 Ibid.
31 Monaco, How To Read A Film, 160.
When a film breaks the so-called rules, audiences exposed only (or mostly) to the Hollywood norms – that is, most people throughout most of the world – tend to see not simply a different style of filmmaking, but ‘bad’ filmmaking, from which they derive little or no pleasure.\(^\text{33}\) I shall next examine how perceptions of audience pleasure impact upon the way in which Hollywood is typically imagined.

**Expectations of Pleasure**

Pleasure, of course, is highly subjective. But Hollywood’s global success is widely perceived to be the result of the pleasure it delivers through meeting audience expectations of its dominant narrative form and style. As already noted, the ‘Hollywood’ brand name is held to carry a guarantee of a particular type of pleasure that distinguishes it from other cinemas. This pleasure is widely thought to be escapism – a term that has become largely synonymous with Hollywood. As director and actor Sydney Pollack explains it, Hollywood’s success is ‘measured in terms of the distance it took you away from your own life’\(^\text{34}\). Screenwriter, producer and director Joseph Mankiewiecz, offers a more nuanced perception, maintaining that audiences ‘want to escape not to a different galaxy, not to a different world, but to ‘their own world as they might have wanted it to be’\(^\text{35}\). Hollywood escapism, however, is not always seen in a positive, or even a neutral, light. Like the closely related concepts of entertainment and fantasy, it lies in polar opposition to the intellectual and emotional respectability of many non-Hollywood cinemas which claim to treat reality – and thus, it is implied, audiences – with more respect.

From this notion of escapist pleasure, audience passivity, even stupidity, is often implied and inferred\(^\text{36}\). The Hollywood ‘happy ending’ is a good example of the

\(^\text{33}\) This explains why many audiences condemn films which do not conform to Hollywood’s stylistic norms, and helps explain why there are not large audiences for non-Hollywood movies in most parts of the world.


\(^\text{35}\) *Ibid.* Ideas about Hollywood, realism and escapism are explored in numerous film such as the US independent film *Purple Rose of Cairo* (Woody Allen, 1985) and in the mainstream Hollywood film *Last Action Hero* (John McTiernan, 1993).

\(^\text{36}\) In ‘There’s No Such Thing As A “Good” Movie’ I suggest this inference is fuelled by a slippage between a dislike of popular or mass culture and a dislike or distrust of the masses. Jane Mills, *The Money Shot: Cinema, Sin and Censorship*. Sydney: Pluto Press Australia, 2001: 3–18.
passive pleasure derived from the alleged pabulum that the globally dominant cinema supposedly serves up. Although celebrated and derided, not least in Robert Altman’s satirical film *The Player* (1992), the ‘happy ending’ is not as inevitable as is generally believed. Rather, the classical narrative stylistic norm delivers closure in the sense of tying up all narrative strands, a narrative device for which the term ‘happy ending’ has become shorthand. Audiences commonly associate closure with pleasure and pleasure with Hollywood escapism. Underlying this formulation lies a dualism between the supposedly intellectually lazy, unthinking pleasure of Hollywood offers and the intellectually active pleasure offered by many of Hollywood’s ‘others’. Film critic Chris Herrington’s comments on the films of US independent filmmaker John Cassavetes are a typical example of this dualism:

And, more than any other American filmmaker, Cassavetes represents the polar opposite of Hollywood escapism. His films blatantly accentuate everything that mainstream fictions aim to conceal. Hollywood films process the world for us: They introduce problems and resolve them; they reach conclusions more tidy than the ones we’re forced to make do with in real life – that’s their appeal. Cassavetes’ films, on the other hand, withhold solutions.

On a more academic level, Peter Wollen constructs a grid of binary oppositions between mainstream and countercinema. He argues that ‘pleasure’, one of mainstream cinema’s ‘seven deadly sins’, takes the form of an entertainment style that aims to deliver audience satisfaction and intellectual passivity. He opposes it to ‘unpleasure’, one of countercinema’s ‘seven cardinal virtues’ which he argues is a provocative style that aims to deliver dissatisfaction among audiences who are prepared to question the ‘reality’ that Hollywood aims to create. For Wollen, ‘closure’ is another deadly sin, and it lies in polar opposition to countercinema’s virtue of ‘aperture’.

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Escapist entertainment, fantasy, a strong and seamless narrative, closure and pleasure: these are just some of the lynchpins of the Hollywood stylistic norms. They are what audiences have come to expect of a film carrying the ‘Hollywood’ brand name, and they are expectations that Hollywood has encouraged and often satisfied. Films that contravene these codes and conventions might seem ‘virtuous’ to a film theorist like Wollen, but they seem unsettling and ‘unfinished’, and thus badly made and unpleasurable, to many audiences. They fail to deliver what many have come to expect of a film, whatever its provenance. This points to a highly influential method of reading a film which, for many, is not a conscious act.

I next address this issue of the neo-formalist critical paradigm: how the film text is read and the effect this has on how Hollywood is imagined. My argument is that the way most audiences read films is influenced by the neo-formalist method of textual analysis. By focusing on the formal textual qualities of a film this tends to ignore or obscure the globalising processes that facilitate the understanding that cinema is also a social, economic and political institution.

**The Neo-formalist Critical Paradigm**

Nowhere is Hollywood more thoroughly analysed, presented and promoted than in the work of Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson in their book already referred to, *Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*. Rooted in neo-formalist poetics and cognitive psychology, their approach to film analysis is of particular relevance to this dissertation because it has had a significant influence on how national and other cinemas are conventionally analysed in relationship to dominant narrative cinema. Gill Branston believes that their approach, embodied in some of the most widely studied Film Studies books in the Western world and beyond, has resulted in a methodological template which is the theoretical equivalent of the Hollywood blockbuster.40

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Based on extensive empirical research involving the textual analysis of over three hundred movies the authors depict a monolithic cinema reliant upon ‘notions of decorum, proportion, formal harmony, respect for tradition, mimesis, self-effacing craftsmanship, and cool control of the perceiver’s response – canons which critics in any medium usually call “classical”’. They depict Hollywood as a classically unified film practice resulting from a coherent system whereby aesthetic norms and the mode of production reinforce one another. They support their argument with a paradigmatic neo-formalist method of textual analysis that focuses on the films’ formal stylistic properties. In this critical paradigm, Hollywood is located in the films’ aesthetics.

The thoroughness of Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson’s research is undeniable, and, as Ian Christie argues, neo-formalism offers a critical tool which is invaluable for critics who wish to sharpen their perceptions of mainstream cinema. As a method for analysing cinema, however, their approach presents problems for my central argument that Hollywood is not a monolithic, homogenous and homogenising cinema consigning all other cinemas to a self-defined condition of otherness and peripherality. It reinforces an unacceptable totalising notion of Hollywood that pays scant attention to heterogeneity, fails to look outside the films’ formal stylistic properties, and sees these properties only in terms of how they serve narrative concerns. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith encapsulates a major problem with their model: ‘there is more to films than is allowed for in the theory of narration’. Richard Maltby and Ian Craven also offer a useful corrective pointing out that it provides only a partial study of Hollywood. It is an approach that ‘assumes that a study of the industry and its technological development is only important to the extent that it contributes to the close examination of film texts’ Maltby and Craven’s solution is to extend how we imagine Hollywood to include the processes of distribution and exhibition, and to see its style in terms of a commercial aesthetic.

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43 Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, ‘How films mean, or, from aesthetics to semiotics and half-way back again’ in Gledhill and Williams, *Re-inventing Film Studies*: 14
Several other film theorists have pointed to the inadequacies of a model that focuses on the formal stylistic properties of film to the exclusion of the wider institutional and socio-economic, political and ethical aspects of cinema. Their arguments are only of concern to my argument for the need to re-imagine Hollywood to the extent to which they shed light on how this critical paradigm reinforces the conventional perception of a bounded monolithic Hollywood positioned at the centre of a stable screenscape.

Elizabeth Cowie challenges the hegemonic status of the Wisconsin thesis, arguing that it has got Hollywood all wrong in the first place by over-emphasising causal motivation, logical coherence and other ‘well-made’ narrative features. Christopher Williams takes issue with their definition of classical Hollywood as ‘mainstream’ which necessarily involves ‘storytelling, unity, realism, naturalism, emotional appeal, decorum, proportion, harmony, rule-governed but self-effacing craftsmanship, and mainstream-ness’. He argues that Hollywood has always manifested decorum and a lack of decorum, and is concerned with form and formal relations which may be harmonious or non-harmonious. With regard to tradition and norms, there is much evidence of Hollywood both respecting and striving to destroy and/or change them. More heterogenous than their paradigm allows, it is interested in fantasy, construction and articulation as well as in mimesis. Hollywood’s craftsmanship, he points out, is undeniable (although often uncredited or undervalued), but it is by no means always self-effacing. Hollywood believes it is certainly interested in spectators’ responses, and in trying to understand and perhaps control them, but without the confidence about how to do so that Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson impute. Williams also shows that there is nothing particularly ‘cool’ about its attitudes to any of these concerns: many Hollywood films have distinct aesthetic qualities, but these do not necessarily include elegance or unity. As for the notion of a ‘mainstream film style’, Williams notes that while Hollywood is undoubtedly the single most significant centre of filmmaking in the world, and its films are ‘by and large the most distinctive body of work’, this work is by no means so unified in its stylistic properties as to function as one style. He argues forcefully that there are other styles, all culturally, socially and even economically different and

45 Christopher Williams, ‘after the classic, the classical and ideology: The differences of realism’, in Gledhill and Williams, Re-inventing Film Studies: 206–20.
vigorous enough to make the labelling of Hollywood as mainstream a crude and misleading reduction.

Another major flaw in this critical paradigm lies in its insistence upon the resilience and constancy of the classical paradigm to the exclusion of any sense of the significance of variations within that paradigm between different periods: for Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, the classical Hollywood cinema has remained stable throughout. Miriam Bratu Hansen argues that their model supports a concept of Hollywood as a monolith with codes and conventions perceived more as rigidly defined ‘rules’ and with highly policed borders despite there being an abundance of evidence to the contrary in the diverse range of films that Hollywood produces. Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson’s conceptualisation of classical Hollywood cinema, as she perceptively observes, is so totalising that it fails to account for the ‘appeal of films as diverse as Lonesome, Liberty, Freaks, Gold Diggers of 1933, Stella Dallas, Fallen Angel, Kiss Me Deadly, Bigger than Life, Rock-a-by Baby (add your own examples).’

Koichi Iwabuchi disputes the value of the neo-formalist critical paradigm from the perspective of Japanese cinema, a national cinema with a varied history of non-domination and domination by Hollywood, arguing the need for a model that does not reproduce a centre–periphery model. From yet another perspective, Brian McFarlane and Geoff Mayer argue that an emphasis on the determining role of the aesthetic norms prevailing at the end of the 19th century neglects the importance of the ‘ethico-socio-political’ norms, especially the discursive role of the classical cinema, in ‘naturalising’ reality into ethical consideration.

These are but some of the critiques of the formalist model of classical narrative cinema and of neo-formalism in particular as a critical approach. In fairness, Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson explain that they are dealing with the norm and that their research supports this concept of the norm. They nonetheless choose to ignore the complexity of external influence, arguing that the assimilation of ideas from other cinemas is part and parcel of classical narrative cinema’s essence.

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46 Miriam Bratu Hansen, ‘The mass production of the senses: Classical cinema as vernacular modernism’, in Gledhill and Williams, Re-inventing Film Studies: 336.
Nor can they be held responsible for the ways in which their approach has been understood or misunderstood. Nevertheless, theirs is a totalising theory reliant upon notions of cinematic essence and a universal language telling universal stories. They present a monolithic cinema with borders so strictly policed that nothing external troubles them: when convenient, their model allows things to appear in the form of their apparent opposite. Classical Hollywood cinema in their view is ‘a paradigm so powerful that it regulates whatever violates it’.  

The emphasis that their model of textual analysis places on the films’ formal properties has created a counter-dynamic within Film Studies that jettisons the film text. I do not propose abandoning the film text. The analysis of the formal, stylistic properties of the film text remains an important part of my approach. I shall next address how I propose to mobilise the film text in order to see film aesthetics and beyond them.

The Film Text

Textual analysis is a contentious issue in Film Studies. The undue influence of the neo-formalist model of textual analysis discussed above is symptomatic of this contention. Other objections emanate from the growing interest in reception theory, which removes the focus from the text and places it on audiences. As Tessa Perkins points out, in the late 1990s Film Studies ‘moved from textual determinism to audience determinism’. Hansen saw the problem from another perspective, arguing that post-colonial theory suggested that the textual account of Hollywood’s classicality reproduced, even if unwittingly, ‘universalist norms mobilized, not least,
for purposes of profit, expansion, and ideological containment’. As a result, it contributed to a tendency for some film theorists and critics to deny much, or even all, value to the textual analysis of cinema. These ideas converged on the growing impact of globalisation theories which shifted the emphasis from text to context without recourse to either interpretive meta-narrative or textual frameworks.

Toby Miller’s scholarship exemplifies this approach. His interventions in the debate about Hollywood’s global cultural domination offer valuable empirical data in support of locating Hollywood in what he and his co-authors of Global Hollywood 2 call the ‘new international division of labour’. In an earlier polemical argument Miller attacked Film Studies and the significant role textual analysis played in how cinema is currently taught and practised. Arguing for an analytical approach that focuses upon labour relations he stated:

Enough talk of ‘economic reductionism’ without also problematizing ‘textual reductionism’. Enough valorization of close reading and armchair accounts of human interiority without establishing the political significance of texts and subjectivities within actual social movements and demographic cohorts. Miller returned to the attack in Global Hollywood and its sequel, Global Hollywood 2. In his introduction to the latter he explores the reasons for Hollywood’s success and launches a valuable argument for an ethically and socially responsible form of Film Studies. Addressing ‘the vacuum left by textual analysis’, he critiques the neo-formalist approach: ‘unlike textual reductionists, we do not assume that it is adequate to interpret a film’s internal qualities or its supposed “positioning” of mythic spectators’. In seeking to explain the global success of Hollywood he makes a strong plea for balancing a socio-economic analysis with a

51 Hansen, ‘The mass production of the senses: Classical cinema as vernacular modernism’: 339.
54 Miller, Govil, McMurria, Maxwell and Wang, Global Hollywood 2: 5.
representational analysis. But although Miller and his co-authors argue in these two volumes for a more diverse approach to film analysis than the textual fetishisation used in orthodox academic Film Studies, their response is to eschew virtually all textual analysis and discussion of aesthetics.

Miller and his fellow authors are by no means alone in turning away from the film text, but of those who do, they offer possibly the most cogent and detailed critique of the neo-formalist critical paradigm. They make an important and an entirely valid point: textual analysis has failed to explain the global success of Hollywood, and in harnessing textual analysis to audience studies based on cognitivist theory this paradigm also fails to ‘engage political and social history, and social theory on the human subject, the nation, cultural policy, the law and the economy’.  

My argument is that the formalist model of classical Hollywood narrative cinema and a neo-formalist critical approach fails to reveal a great deal more about what Hollywood is, where it is located, and how it relates to other cinemas.

Is there, then, no place within Film Studies for aesthetics and the analysis of the stylistic properties of the film text? While I am critical of the neo-formalist textual analysis framework, I nevertheless argue that the film text should remain at the centre of film analysis. As I outlined in the Introduction, I make a distinction between ‘textual analysis’, a term I reserve for the neo-formalist paradigm which focuses on aesthetics and a film’s formal stylistic properties, and the method of ‘close readings’ that I use, which offers a more textured, or multilayered, understanding of the impact of globalising processes upon the film text. Using his mutant formalist’ approach in an analysis of Hong Kong action cinema, Adrian Martin resists what he calls ‘the twin terrorisms of either a too-specific and enclosed national cinema analysis … or a too-rigid, empirically minded neo-formalism today associated with David Bordwell and the Wisconsin school’.  

My approach is not the same as Martin’s which, by combining ‘materialism and ecstasy’, aims to go to ‘the edge of the cut’, but like his, it is a transformative, hybridising approach which refuses the ‘pessimistic paradigm’ of ‘intractable binary opposition’.  

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55 Ibid., 6.

56 Martin, ‘At the Edge of the Cut’: 179.

57 Ibid.
however, aims to go outside the frame entirely, and to follow the vectors of cultural flows into the realm of a transnational imaginary.

In his introduction to *Chinese Films in Focus: 25 New Takes*, Chris Berry offers a detailed objection to an approach that jettisons the film text. While accepting the timeliness of calls for understanding cinema as a social, economic and political institution as well as a set of texts, he argues that approaches such as Miller’s can be problematic, for the following reasons:

First, they may exaggerate the degree to which Film Studies has neglected the institutional.

Second, they risk empiricism, implying a divide between the supposed subjectivity of textual interpretation and the objectivity of investigations into the so-called ‘real world’ – the ‘data’ of the latter is also interpreted.

Third, they risk falsely dividing Film Studies between the institutional and the textual. Important though all the areas Miller mentions are, seeing, responding to and making sense of individual films is at the centre of them all.  

Calling attention to the way critics of the neo-formalist critical paradigm set up an opposition between an empirical institutional study and a textual interpretation, Berry suggests that Film Studies requires ‘a range of approaches to the cinema that understands the singularity of the film and the importance of the cinema as an institution without trying to divide them or set them in opposition to each other’.  

To Berry’s three points I add a fourth: the analysis of the film text does not have to exclude the wider context of globalising processes. There is no need to be fearful or damning of formalist, or neo-formalist, technique: what is required is some modification of the neo-formalist critical paradigm. I argue that when the close reading of the film text is linked to globalising processes it becomes possible to identify the traces of the cultural flows in the films’ aesthetics and to trace their movements through permeable national, cinematic and other cultural borders. The micro-analysis of the film text thus leads to the macro-analysis of cinema as a social, economic and political institution. I do not claim that the flows can only be traced in the film text, but rather that to remove the analysis of films from Film Studies is

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blinkered, and will not assist in the task of understanding transnational cinematic relationships.

Modified in this way, my model for the close reading of the film text does not bolster a paradigm that places Hollywood at the centre of a centre-periphery model underpinned by polar oppositions. It shows the cinematic terrain to be far more varied and more complex than is typically revealed by the conventional textual analysis. As I argued in the previous chapter, what is required for globalising processes to be seen is a paradigm shift in which the question ‘What is Hollywood?’, so often asked of a film, is replaced by the question ‘Where is Hollywood?’ Miller and his co-authors are symptomatic of a trend that does, indeed, ask this question. But by discarding textual analysis, they see only what they refer to as the ‘New International Division of Labour’, which, for them, is Hollywood’s ‘real’ location. This, I argue, is but one aspect of the multiple intersecting disjunctive ‘scapes that characterise film culture and which exist in constantly varying concatenations: Hollywood’s location cannot be in one place only.

In Part 2 of my thesis I demonstrate how, when Appadurai’s model is applied to the textual analysis of individual films of Hollywood’s supposed others, it reveals a range of globalising and hybridising processes within a highly volatile screenscape. The result is not textual reductionism: I offer an approach which unsettles the perception of Hollywood as stable and fixed and complicates the totalising conceptualisation of classical narrative cinema. It decentres the widespread Hollywoodcentric approach of so much critical analysis. It also allows me to show the boundaries of cinematic categories to be porous. Cinemas are revealed as a series of sites where cultural flows overlap and cross borders in both directions. I show that it offers the means of demonstrating that the film texts themselves can reveal the traces of these flows and, furthermore, allow us to map the dynamic trajectories of these flows.

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60 See ‘Conclusion’, in Miller, Govil, McMurria, Maxwell and Wang, Global Hollywood 2: 333–70.
Conclusion

I have argued that placing the analysis of intercinematic relationship within a framework of disjunctive global cultural flows challenges the perception of Hollywood as the implacable antagonist of other cinemas which need to be protected from it. This traditional perception derives from an analytical model of binary division which posits that all smaller local cinemas necessarily and continuously engage with and against the globally powerful Hollywood in a vertical relationship of assimilation and opposition. It furthermore reinforces a concept of Hollywood as a bounded cinematic space with a patrolled landscape and fixed impermeable borders. The notion of porous borders is thus central to my study: it troubles the way in which Hollywood is conventionally imagined and offers a way for it to be re-imagined in terms of transnational negotiations, hybridities, appropriations and pluralism.

In the second part of my dissertation I challenge both the influential cinematic and the critical paradigms described in this chapter by demonstrating that they fail to observe, or ignore, the globalising processes which destabilise the conventional perception of Hollywood. To do this, as I have indicated earlier, I propose modifying the conventional method of textual analysis to enable me to demonstrate the links between globalising processes and film analysis. The subsequent case study chapters demonstrate that when analysed within the context of disjunctive global cultural flows, each of the cinemas I have selected show a Hollywood imagined differently from the conventional conceptualisation. I show that their varied definitions and locations are not fixed because these non-Hollywood cinemas are themselves not fixed. They are in constant flux as people, ideas, images, technologies and finance travel at varying – and increasing – speeds and intensities between cinemas in a dynamic and multidirectional mechanism of interchange and change. Thus while Hollywood is itself constantly changing, it is also being redefine and relocated by cinemas that are themselves also constantly changing.
PART 2

CASE STUDIES
Chapter Three

Avant-Garde Cinema

‘Ars gratia artis’ (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer logo)

No cinema has quite such a long history of self-declared polar opposition to the dominant mainstream cinema than the avant-garde although its opposition, as I shall show, has by no means been consistent. At times it has been conceptualised as a radical and parallel phenomenon, operating alongside the mainstream but with neither having little or any influence on each other. Writing of the American avant-garde P. Adams Sitney states: ‘The precise relationship of the avant-garde to American commercial film is one of radical otherness. They operate in different realms with next to no significant influence on each other.’ At other times it has been imagined in terms of a ‘reactive’ or ‘critical’ relationship, continually challenging the norms of dominant cinema, with its popular appeal and classic narrative style. Either way, it is commonly conceptualised in terms of its belligerent opposition to all that a conservative and non-innovative narrative Hollywood is imagined to be. Located outside Hollywood, the avant-garde is inexorably linked binaristically to the dominant cinema, by which it is negatively defined as Hollywood’s radical other.

A compelling reason for selecting the cinematic avant-garde for analysis is its commitment to self-critique which Renato Poggioli describes as a ‘culture of self-negation’. This forms a link to Hollywood even as it apparently attempts to rupture

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the connection. It is also evidence of further dualisms. The notable reflexivity of much avant-garde cinema is widely, if incorrectly, assumed to be absent from classical Hollywood cinema, which is commonly thought to suppress all evidence of its production practices. Many avant-garde filmmakers, highly conscious of their oppositional role, chose to make this the very subject of their films. It also often informed the way in which they made them. This, as David E. James argues, reflects ‘the strength of Hollywood’s gravitational pull’ and is evidence of a tradition among avant-garde filmmakers of a self-consciousness ‘about their industrial other and about their own otherness.’

Avant-garde films, therefore, can provide substantial visual and aural evidence to test my argument that the relationship between Hollywood and its supposedly polarised radical other is characterised by processes that show the two cinemas have not been in a permanently fixed state of opposition.

Largely, although not exclusively, I shall focus on the period of film history between the two major European wars of the twentieth century. This was a period when Hollywood was intent upon securing its hegemonic power in various ways that included the imposition of international trade restrictions, and when the codes and conventions of classical Hollywood cinema were honed and established. It coincides with the emergence of the cinematic avant-garde both in Europe and the US as Hollywood’s significant other, and it illustrates how Hollywood itself was typically conceptualised at this time. It offers scope to explore and challenge notions of purity and essence that are often assumed to exist within fixed and impermeable borders at a time well before the disjunctive global cultural flows had intensified and accelerated to their present levels.

In summary, it is the factors separating the two cinemas, as well as the transformative tensions and interchanges linking them, which make this particular intercinematic relationship valuable as a case study. The long history and complexity of their relationship allows me to map how Hollywood was conceptualised at a time when the classical narrative style first emerged, and to show how this contributed to

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a pattern for border crossings and creative tensions between Hollywood and its others in later periods. The avant-garde’s conscious commitment to self-critique and reflexivity facilitates my search for Hollywood in places where orthodox film analysis fails to find it. The avant-garde is so widely seen to be in complete opposition to all that Hollywood is widely imagined to be and stand for that it could be said to be Hollywood’s ‘elsewhere’. If the avant-garde is seen as Hollywood’s ‘alibi’, that is, where Hollywood is not, the avant-garde can help us see more clearly where Hollywood is. This notion of ‘elsewhereness’ offers cogent justification for selecting the avant-garde as the initial case study.

**Definitions and Naming Processes**

An issue that arises in many, if not all, of Hollywood’s others is that of taxonomy and the borders that categorisation processes erect as markers of difference. This is reflected in the proliferation of names that accompany constant attempts to define and redefine local cinemas in opposition to the norms of the globally dominant Hollywood. The history of the term ‘avant-garde’ is particularly revealing in this respect. While the military connotations might seem to point to the sort of ‘face-off’ between Hollywood and its others, the term is not without ambiguity. Pertinent to this chapter are the questions Michael O’Pray asks which highlight the trope of militancy commonly associated with the avant-garde:

> Who represents the main army and who the enemy? The main army could be the ‘true’ idea of cinema and film itself and the enemy, the dominant traditional cinema. Or the main army could be the mainstream cinema, and the avant-garde its advanced group foraging for new techniques, forms of expression and subject-matter.⁶

There are no simple or consistent answers to these questions. The issue is further complicated by the fact that although the avant-garde is frequently referred to in the singular, thus suggesting a single and homogenous cinema, historically it has comprised a number of different, often conflicting, strands which reveal a cinema at

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war with itself. While typically thought to exemplify a cinema unified by its status as an art cinema in polar opposition to the commercial mainstream, each strand pursued different political, economic, narrative and aesthetic agendas. While some avant-gardists used their films as weapons to pepper shots at commercial cinema, others knocked – sometimes hammered - on its door asking or demanding to be let in. And nor was Hollywood always inevitably and implacably resistant to the avant-garde: some avant-gardists snuck in, as it were, while others were invited.

The early etymological gymnastics of the term ‘avant-garde’ provide a foretaste of the contestations and border crossings that were to come. It was initially coined in early 19th century France to denote a small troop of soldiers that explores the enemy terrain ahead of an advancing army and plots a course for the army to follow. The term made its first foray across disciplinary borders when it was appropriated in the 1820s by French socialist theorists who applied it to radical political movements. Crossing another disciplinary border, it was next adopted by the Parisian art world to describe the Impressionist paintings rejected by the officially sanctioned Academy in 1863 and defiantly shown to the public at the celebrated Salon des Refusés. This overt critique of conservative taste and artistic convention is widely cited as the point of emergence for the innovative, politically radical or experimental cultural practice that evolved into an ‘art for art’s sake’ movement across literature, poetry, drama, music, painting, architecture, design and, eventually, cinema.

While this last usage continued, and is in general use today, a slightly different meaning also evolved, when the term became interchangeable with ‘modernism’. By World War I it was applied to various modernist aesthetic groupings, particularly those closely connected to painting, such as cubism, Futurism, Dadaism, Constructivism and Surrealism. The term eventually made it across inter-cultural borders into cinematic space in the 1920s, when a group of French film theorists and filmmakers such as Louis Delluc, Germaine Dulac, Jean Epstein and Abel Gance, took a conscious decision to create a cinema they themselves called ‘the avant-garde’.7 The term came to denote a cinema with closer ties to painting and the visual

arts than to the melodrama and theatre of commercial mainstream narrative cinema. In addition, over the years it developed a wide range of meanings and connotations that referenced cinematic processes such as the mode of production and the professional status of the filmmakers. It should be noted that each particular art form or strand within the avant-garde has its own history, its own associations and enmities, and often its own particular mainstream, which it is thought to be in advance of or to exist in a relationship of enmity with. Thus, when referring to the avant-garde it is customary to adopt the relevant adjective to distinguish one art form from another, and from the more general category that subsumes all the different forms. To refer constantly to the ‘cinematic’ or ‘filmic’ avant-garde, however, is cumbersome and I shall use these descriptors only when required for reasons of clarity.

Having dispensed with the adjective, I now turn to the noun. The term ‘avant-garde’ has had a troubled history, with regular calls for it to be discarded in favour of alternative names. These include ‘experimental’, ‘montage’, ‘absolute’, ‘pure’, ‘non-narrative’, ‘underground’, ‘expanded’, ‘poetic’, ‘visionary’, ‘formal’, ‘materialist’, ‘formalist-structuralist’, ‘minor’, ‘amateur’, ‘counter-cinema’ and ‘mutant’ – and this by no means exhausts the list. The problematic issue of naming was illuminated in US film writer J. Hoberman’s interview with a number of US avant-garde filmmakers in 2000:

J. Hoberman: First, a problem of terminology. Experimental, underground, and avant-garde all carry historical baggage. Peggy, what do you say when people ask what kind of movies you make?

Peggy Ahwesh: Experimental films. It’s an OK shorthand to explain I’m working as an individual and keeping my choices close to home.

JH: Emphasizing artisanal production.

PA: Definitely.

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Brian Frye: Personally I try to stay away from using the words at all, because when people ask me that question, it generally means they have no idea what they’re talking about. It’s really hard for some people to even conceive of films that aren’t standard features. I mean, that’s my experience, trying to explain what I do to my parents and their friends.

JH: What about the New York Underground Film Festival? Any connotations there?

Gavin Smith: Well, this year, there seems to be a marked increase in what they’re calling ‘experimental.’ The festival director, Ed [Halter], said that’s what the festival was gravitating towards …

JH: I’ve heard some people use Ken Jacobs’s term ‘mutant cinema’ – a description to suggest filmmaking that doesn’t look ‘normal’ but is also something further evolved.

Astria Suparak: I think ‘mutant’ sounds derogatory. ‘Underground’ might be more acceptable to younger generations who associate this term with music and counterculture.9

Each name indicates a new direction, a different conceptualisation, and a range of diverse agendas of filmmakers, critics and audiences both inside and outside the avant-garde.10 That ‘avant-garde’ was not applied to film until more than 20 years after cinema’s first public screenings in 1895 explains Peter Wollen’s apparently paradoxical view that ‘the avant-garde made itself felt late in the cinema’.11 This does not mean avant-garde films did not exist before the formal adoption of the term. The orthodoxies of film history, however, have tended to use the emergence of Hollywood and its classical narrative style to set its birth date. This is because whatever the label, the avant-garde is typically defined in terms of its oppositional relationship to the commercial mainstream. The choice of ‘amateur’ as the preferred term of many American avant-gardists, for example, indicates a dislike, even

contempt, for professionalism which is equated with commercialism: ‘amateur’ became a badge of pride, with connotations of artistic integrity and thus opposition to the professionalism of industrialised Hollywood cinema.\textsuperscript{12}

Each of the alternative terms adopted by the avant-garde reveals a different theme, preoccupation and often, although there have been many instances of overlap, a unique ideological position as well as a specific aesthetic stance. Many of these positions and trajectories have been fiercely fought over in internecine battles that occasionally spilled over into the mainstream domain. As I have discussed earlier, disputes about titles indicate disagreement about where borders lie and what is contained within these borders, and what lies within is typically thought of as a defining essence. Attempts to fix borders, and thus content, tend to ignore not only flux and change within a particular period but also flux and change from one period to another. As I show, attitudes towards art and distinctions between bourgeois and popular taste, differed among avant-gardists in different nations and continents and also at different periods. So, while an opposition to commercial narrative cinema and a privileging of personal expression over profit motive might appear to be the \textit{sine qua non} of one particular avant-garde group, there were others – the Soviet montage filmmakers and the post-World War II US abstract animator Robert Breer, for example – who were greatly attracted by the popular, anti-intellectual elements of commercial cinema.\textsuperscript{13}

Like the French avant-garde of the 1920s, many later avant-gardists also enjoyed – and employed – the vaudeville trick photography of much early commercial cinema.\textsuperscript{14} Nor did the Soviet filmmakers spurn the mass appeal of ‘low’

\textsuperscript{12} Hence Jan Horak’s title, \textit{Lovers of Cinema}, for his study of the first American film avant-garde, although, as David E. James and others have pointed out, many American avant-gardists were professional filmmakers who also worked in the commercial sector which, as this chapter argues, supported and produced its own avant-garde work.

\textsuperscript{13} See Miriam Bratu Hansen, ‘The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism’, in Williams and Gledhill, \textit{Reinventing Film Studies}: 332–50. Of Robert Breer, Michael O’Pray writes: ‘In [his] early years, Breer is firmly in the absolute cinema tradition of the German graphic animation movement of Richter, Ruttman and Fischinger. It is only later in his career that Breer begins to acknowledge the Hollywood cartoon tradition which in itself was essentially a graphic visual system and not a literary one’. O’Pray, \textit{Avant-Garde Film}: 64.

\textsuperscript{14} O’Pray writes that Maya Deren’s work ‘was seen by some … as repetitive of the French inter-war films of Man Ray and Léger/Murphy. But Deren’s use of montage to establish
genres such as the western, gangster and chase movie genres produced by the Hollywood studios and mainstream cinemas in other nations.\(^{15}\) Paradoxically, several of the less politicised avant-gardes, such as those with stronger affiliations to painting and art movements, not only spurned the industrial mainstream cinema but were suspicious of film itself, castigating the medium as a sign of the demise of art in an age of mechanical reproduction. Thus some avant-gardists rejected the term ‘film’ altogether, preferring to call their work ‘cine-poems’, ‘light poems’, ‘rhythms’, ‘symphonies’ or, as the Italian Futurists Arnoldo Ginna and Bruno Corra referred to their filmic artwork, ‘chromatic music’. This lack of unity among the avant-garde filmmakers reached its apogee with the Surrealists, who directed much of their scorn at the avant-garde itself.

These taxonomic processes are closely implicated in a binaristic model of film analysis. It should be noted that defining the avant-garde in terms of its polar opposition to the values, aesthetics, narrative style or mode of production of classical Hollywood cinema often meant the exclusion of many films from the avant-garde canon. In his discussion of the pre-classical period, Jan-Christopher Horak explains why this occurred: ‘[i]n the canonical text of film history, the evolution of avant-garde cinema is teleologically structured as a progression toward ever more sophisticated forms of film art’.\(^{16}\) Similarly, Hollywood’s evolution is teleologically structured as a progression toward the ever more commercial. Thus early cinema:

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\text{despite its intense formal and technological experimentation, was eliminated } a \text{ priori from the classic avant-garde canon because of the subsequent avant-garde’s opposition to commercial, narrative cinema. Yet early cinema’s multifarious discursive practices were indeed avant-garde, so that the concept}\]

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\(^{16}\) Horak, \textit{Lovers of Cinema}: 3.
of an avant-garde in opposition to the norm appears only after the institutionalisation of classical narrative in the mid-teens.¹⁷

There are numerous examples of films from this early period that challenged contemporary artistic practice as well as the emerging film conventions of mainstream European and US cinemas and can thus be described as avant-garde.¹⁸ Artists attached to modernist art movements made experimental and innovative films from at least 1910, when the above-mentioned Futurists, Ginna and Corra, experimented by hand painting abstract cubes, stars and dots in the colours of the solar spectrum, to represent rhythm, onto unexposed film stock.¹⁹ In the absence of a generic term for such films, and indicative of a fairly widespread avant-gardist rejection of cinema’s roots in theatrical melodrama and narrative – the Cubists in particular were notable for their demand for a ‘pure’ or ‘absolute’ cinema which rejected illustration and storytelling – the names of various European modernist art (painting and sculpture) movements were adopted by individual cinematic sub-genres and movements which subsequently became included in the avant-garde canon.²⁰

This sheds further light on what gets missed when fixed and impermeable borders are erected around cinematic categories underpinned by binarisms. Avant le lettre there are many films from the pre-classical period which manifest all or some of the widely accepted characteristics of the avant-garde. Apart, that is, from an opposition to the codes and conventions of a globally dominant commercial

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¹⁷ Ibid.: 5.

¹⁸ Many of these are released on DVD and include the following anthologies: Unseen Cinema: Early Avant-garde Film 1894–1941, curated by Bruce Posner. Anthology Film Archives, 2005; The Lumière Brothers’ First Films, narrated by Bertrand Tavernier. Kino Video in association with The Institute Lumière, 1998; Landmarks of Early Film, Vol. 1, Film Preservation Associates. 1994; Landmarks of Early Film, Vol. 2: The Magic of Méliès, Film Preservation Associates, 1994.

¹⁹ These films no longer exist, but Corra wrote about them in 1912 in an early work of film theory, Abstract Film – Chromatic Music. This tradition of ‘pure’ or ‘direct’ film formed an avant-garde style whose practitioners included the New Zealander Len Lye, whose abstract film advertising the British General Post Office (GPO), Colour Box (1935), contributed to the British avant-garde documentary movement of the 1930s, and the Scottish film artist, Norman McLaren, who drew, painted and scratched directly on celluloid.

²⁰ French surrealist Louis Aragon was to refer to the theatre as cinema’s ‘indomitable enemy’ (cited in A.L. Rees, A History of Experimental Film and Video: From the Canonical Avant-Garde to Contemporary British Practice. London: BFI Publishing, 1999: 21).
mainstream cinema in the form of Hollywood. (And how could they, since Hollywood and its classical narrative style as a set of norms did not yet exist?) When the avant-garde is defined only by being other to Hollywood and each cinema is ascribed essences that exist only within its own borders, it becomes hard to locate the avant-garde inside Hollywood, and vice versa.21 This explains why films that share many of Hollywood’s aesthetics and values have not been included in the avant-garde canon. It also explains why the shared debt of Hollywood and the avant-garde to many experimental and innovative yet commercial filmmakers of early and silent cinema has been largely ignored.

Redefining the conventional temporal boundaries also redefines the conventionally accepted geographical boundaries. This allows us to see that the early avant-garde was not the specifically European phenomenon that orthodox film history maintains. Jan Christopher Horak found that when writing a book at the end of the twentieth century on the history of early American avant-garde cinema which was for the most part a compendium of avant-garde films made before the ‘official beginning’ of the avant-garde in the United States’ the conventional wisdom was that there were no avant-garde films made in the United States prior to the 1940s, or, if there were, they were thought to be completely derivative of European models’22

The trick photography and vaudeville specularity of films such as *Jack and the Beanstalk* (1902) and *Dream of a Rarebit Fiend* (1906) by American commercial filmmaker Edwin S. Porter, for example, are now a recognised part of the avant-garde canon. Hollywood’s supposedly intransigent radical other also existed in close geographical proximity, as David E. James’s research reveals:

The film-producing companies that became the major studios settled [in Los Angeles] in the twentieth century’s first decade, inaugurating the industry that grew to become the most powerful cultural force of the century … and to make

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21 Kristin Thompson disagrees with this argument: ‘It seems to me that it is only after the formulation of classical Hollywood norms that we can meaningfully speak of an avant-garde alternative.’ Kristin Thomson, ‘The Limits of Experimentation’, in Horak, *Lovers of Cinema*: 68.

22 Jan Christopher Horak, ‘Foreword’ in Posner, *Unseen Cinema*: 7
the city the entertainment capital of the world. But as soon as they did, people
outside the studios – and sometimes in them – began to make films on contrary
aesthetic and political principles: some understood their activities as art rather
than commerce, some were politically inspired, and some made films for
recreation and the sheer pleasure of the exercise of their faculties …

This discussion of the term ‘cinematic avant-garde’, what it has denoted and
connoted and when and where it has been located, reveals a history of many battles
on several fronts. It also reveals a history of concord and convergence. The
taxonomic process that has erected – or attempted to erect – impermeable borders
around the avant-garde has proved inadequate to the task of defining a cinema that,
as I argue, can be shown to have been in constant flux and never fixed in a state of
permanent opposition to Hollywood.

Unsurprisingly, the demise of the avant-garde has been announced with about
as much regularity as alternative names have been proposed. I am content,
however, to agree with A.L. Rees, who writes: ‘although “avant-garde” is not an
altogether happy term, and many filmmakers reject it, its survival in film criticism
suggests that it may not yet be drained of all content’.

Markers of Difference

The borders separating the avant-garde from Hollywood have been shored up by a
long list of binarisms which are important to understanding how both cinemas are

23 James, ‘Avant-Garde Cinemas in Los Angeles’: 3 (emphasis added).
24 In the early 1930s, the French film critic and theorist Léon Moussinac declared that the
avant-garde was dead due to the invention of sound. In 1967 the US cultural critic Clement
Greenberg, asking ‘Where is the Avant-Garde?’, suggested that if it wasn’t actually dead it
was well and truly lost (cited in Rees, A History of Experimental Film and Video: 11). Much
postmodernist criticism suggests that the avant-garde has been entirely incorporated by the
mainstream: Renato Poggioli, for example, argued that the avant-garde became ossified and
consumed by the mainstream art movements (Renato Poggioli, The Theory of the Avant-
Harvard University Press, 1968); Peter Burger argues that the contemporary avant-garde
merely rehearses the arguments of early avant-gardists without delivering what was
promised (Burger, Theory of the Avant-Garde). The experimentation, montage and many
other formal elements used in MTV music videos are often cited as examples of the avant-
garde’s morbid status.
conceptualised. They reveal how the avant-garde has defined itself binaristically: ‘art’, ‘non-narrative’, ‘experimental’, ‘independent’ and ‘underground’, for example, all indicate a cinema conceptualised as an antagonistic, critical and counter-cultural phenomenon. While several of these polar oppositions are common to many other non-Hollywood cinemas – commerce versus art being an obvious example – for the most part the markers of difference between the avant-garde and Hollywood focus on aesthetic elitism versus middlebrow mass culture, a radical form and content versus an ideologically conservative approach, and experimentation and innovation versus Hollywood’s standardised approach towards the new. If homogeneity, continuity, seamlessness and the impression of reality are all typically held to characterise the classical Hollywood cinema style, then heterogeneity, dissonance, rupture and realism or surrealism are widely thought to characterise the avant-garde style. As an analytic framework, the dualisms spill over into ideas about production, distribution, exhibition and reception, colouring attitudes towards audiences and reinforcing value judgments about both cinemas. Scott MacDonald vividly describes the popular experience of these cinematic borders:

No one – or almost no one – sees any alternative film without first having seen mass-market commercial films … and their sense of what a movie is has been almost indelibly imprinted in their conscious and unconscious minds … whatever particular manipulations of imagery, sound and time define these first avant-garde film experiences as alternatives to the commercial cinema [they] are recognisable only because of the conventionalised context viewers have already developed. The first response is ‘this isn’t a movie’ or ‘you call this a movie?’ or ‘too long’ … By the time we see our first avant-garde film, we think we know what movies are, we recognise what ‘everyone’ agrees they should be and we see the new cinematic failures-to-conform as presumptuous refusals to use the cinematic space (theatre, VCR viewing room) ‘correctly’.26

From the other side of the division, however, Hollywood is the failure. James Peterson, for example, condemns Hollywood, and implicitly its audiences, claiming it ‘lulls its viewers into stultifying passivity; the avant-garde demands the viewer’s

active participation, and ultimately offers a healthier experience’.\(^{27}\) This academic health warning is echoed by a contemporary online commentator for whom Hollywood is the pitiless arch-reactionary:

I think that sometimes we forget the fact that Hollywood has never had the stomach to try anything truly new. It’s always relied on independents and avant-garde filmmakers to swim in shark-infested waters before it’s been willing to swim there as well.\(^{28}\)

Some of the polarities are not simply exaggerated; they are untrue. Hollywood has a long history of technological innovation, for example, and the resistance of some avant-gardists towards the invention of sound caused US critic Andrew Sarris to criticise their conservatism.\(^{29}\) My point is that a conceptual model based on binarisms draws a picture of a static relationship of opposition that hides or ignores the dynamics of reciprocities and the common elements. The avant-garde’s self-definition as commercial cinema’s ‘radical other’ is largely propelled by the notion that cinema need not have become a narrative form but could have modelled itself on other high culture art forms, especially painting and music.

But the avant-garde was far from united in its opposition to popular culture and bourgeois art forms, including narrative cinema. A polarised model fails to notice or pay due attention to the narrativity of the French avant-garde of the 1920s, for example. It also ignores the non-narrative impulses manifested in the spectacle and montage in many Hollywood movies. Tom Gunning points out that the antecedents of both cinemas can be traced to ‘the cinema of attractions’ of early cinema, which he describes as an exhibitionist cinema that ‘bases itself on the quality that Léger celebrated: its ability to show something’.\(^{30}\) Traces of this visual style did not entirely disappear with the dominance of Hollywood’s narrative norms but, according to Gunning, went ‘underground both into certain avant-garde practices and as a


\(^{28}\) www.microfilmmaker.com/critiques/unseen.html.

\(^{29}\) US critic Andrew Sarris was notorious for his dislike of avant-garde cinema. Kent Jones writes: ‘Sarris was always bracingly honest about his prejudices, and his greatest was for the avant-garde’ (‘Hail the Conquering Hero’, *Film Comment*, May/June 2005).

component of narrative films more evident in some genres (e.g., the musical) than in others'. Just how far underground is something I explore in this chapter.

While many avant-garde filmmakers critiqued the classical narrative cinema and were self-consciously oppositional, there were also many who worked within the commercial industry, and their films demonstrate an attraction, or perhaps even a debt, to the commercial mainstream. Other markers of what A.L. Rees refers to as ‘the road not taken’ by the mainstream, are the non-realist trick photography, parody, slapstick and other spectacle techniques of early commercial cinema. Murray Smith points out that ‘the surrealist canon of filmmakers includes George Méliès, Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin, and the popular French serial Fantômas’. An animated ‘Charlot’, for example, introduces Ballet mécanique (Dudley Murphy and Fernand Léger, 1924), the celebrated avant-garde film that combines farce with modernist art in a causal narrative-free zone. There is also a range of references to aspects of popular culture such as fairgrounds and mainstream film genres in the films of avant-gardists Hans Richter, Man Ray, Jean Painlevé and René Clair.

These examples refute claims that the avant-garde is a homogenous entity. Its heterogeneity has often been hidden by a focus on the one factor that is generally thought to unite it: the avant-garde’s status as radical other to orthodox narrative filmmaking. To use an example from more recent avant-garde practice, Morgan Fisher’s best known film, Standard Gauge (1984), is a particularly clear example of the range of diverse practices and theoretical positions that has always characterised the avant-garde. Standard Gauge, is an autobiographical account of the time

31 Ibid.: 57.
33 This film’s narrative is often described as circular.
34 They set a trend adopted by later US avant-garde filmmakers such as Maya Deren, Stan Brakhage, Kenneth Anger, and Jack Smith, Michael Snow and Andy Warhol, who all embraced the popular and the mainstream.
36 Fisher worked on the fringes of Hollywood in exploitation cinema as an editor on Roger Corman’s The Student Nurses (1970). Anthology Film Archives describes Standard Gauge as follows: ‘A frame of frames, a piece of pieces, a length of lengths. Standard Gauge on substandard; narrower, yes, but longer. An ECU that’s an ELS. Disjecta membra Hollywood anthologised. A kind of autobiography of its maker, a kind of history of the institution from
Fisher spent working as an editor in the commercial film industry in the early 1970s in which he both interrogates and uses commercial cinema as its subject and form. The film is a single continuous close-up shot on 16mm, the conventional film stock of amateur, experimental or avant-garde cinema, showing a series of short pieces of 35mm film, the standard Hollywood stock, which he salvaged while working professionally. It shows short bits of feature films, trailers, newsreels, commercials, and film leader as his narration discusses the origin or personal significance of each piece and comments on various aspects of the commercial film industry. According to Scott MacDonald, far from seeing himself as detached from the world of mainstream cinema, Fisher used the process of making avant-garde films as a way of examining what he has learned about film from working in the industry. For Fisher, avant-garde film isn’t simply a separate arena of film practice, it derives from commercial film and, paradoxically its derivative status gives it a unique capability to critique the film world that generated it.

The avant-garde, then, is more heterogenous and not always as rigidly unorthodox, non-narrative or implacably opposed to Hollywood as is widely assumed. There is

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37 Fisher worked on the fringes of Hollywood in exploitation cinema as an editor on Roger Corman’s *The Student Nurses* (1970). Anthology Film Archives describes *Standard Gauge* as: ‘A frame of frames, a piece of pieces, a length of lengths. Standard gauge on substandard; narrower, yes, but longer. An ECU that’s an ELS. Disjecta membra Hollywood anthropised. A kind of autobiography of its maker, a kind of history of the institution from whose shards it is composed, the commercial motion picture industry. A mutual interrogation between 35mm and 16mm, the gauge of Hollywood, and the gauge of the amateur and independent. The film is a single continuous close-up that shows a succession of scraps of 35mm film that the maker scavenged during his employment: pieces of narrative features, trailers, newsreels, commercials, and head and tail leader in many varieties. The narration comments on the origin or significance of each piece, and sometimes departs from autobiography to comment on various aspects of the commercial film industry.’ Source: www.anthologyfilmarchives.org/index.php.

38 MacDonald, *Avant-garde Film Motion Studies*: 54–64.
also evidence that the mainstream travelled along the same road. Hollywood has not been uniformly resistant towards unorthodox rupture, visual narrative and other aspects of style commonly associated with the avant-garde. While it is true that the films of Chaplin, Keaton and the Marx Brothers show close links to the often politicised and visually innovative non-narrativity of much avant-garde cinema, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that these were Hollywood filmmakers. The influence of early cinema did not entirely disappear underground, as orthodox film history suggests, once the classical narrative style became the dominant style of Hollywood. Nor did it appear only in some of the more ‘specular’ genres, such as the musical, of classical narrative cinema. The common popular reaction to a first viewing of an avant-garde film as described above by Scott McDonald relies upon the perception and experience of Hollywood as homogenous. Thus few would think to look to jobbing Hollywood director of over 300 studio films, Allan Dwan, for innovation or avant-garde visuality. A popular film guide reinforces his conservative mainstream persona by describing him as a veteran Hollywood director who ‘competently handled commercial movies of every type’, and quotes him crediting his staying power to playing safe: ‘If you get your head up above the mob, they try to knock it off. If you stay down, you last.’

Yet Dwan’s taste for an innovative and disruptive visual narrative could imbue one of his studio films with what is an unmistakably avant-garde sensibility and style. My close reading of the following short scene may be all the more surprising for locating the avant-garde in Sands of Iwo Jima (1949), a Hollywood film well known for being an ideologically conservative propaganda war movie. The scene takes place just as the US marines are about to land on Japanese soil for the climactic battle that the film has been building up to in conventional Hollywood narrative style. This is not, then a specular battle scene.

**Sands of Iwo Jima** (Allan Dwan, 1949)

In a long dissolve the shadows of two men move to the left of frame and slowly fade out as they are replaced by stark diagonal shapes of a ladder to the right of the frame which fade in. To the front of the frame the screen is dominated by a crosshatched

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design of two long cylindrical poles slashing across the screen in a dramatic diagonal design from bottom centre to top right of the frame. Behind these poles is another long cylinder diagonally asymmetrically positioned from centre bottom to top left of the screen. The tops of these hollow cylinders create elliptical disk shapes. The central cylinder swings round to the right of frame to reveal another diagonal cylinder behind it. The abstract cylinders and elliptical shapes are only now revealed to be canon on board the ship.

The film cuts abruptly to a close-up of what we now see are three canons which fan out to create more abstract shapes. The central gun has a dark circular centre with three rings round it. A static camera shot shows one of the guns pan round to the right of frame, revealing yet more abstract shapes and tones of a light-coloured cylinder in front of a dark circle. This is followed by another canon moving into frame and another dark circle.

This cuts to a large close-up of a spiral shape filling the frame. From the centre of this vortex a bright light suddenly flares. The revolving spiral is followed by bright flares and circles which appear to dance round the frame. We have just seen the opening shots of the battle – revealed by the next shot of 6 long, slim canons amid a bellow of smoke. The canon dance up and down in the frame as they fire. The final framing in this sequence is a mid shot of a battleship that fills the left half of the frame as a single canon bellows out a vaporous cloud of smoke and fire.

This sequence combines elements of abstract avant-garde garde with Soviet montage cinema. It has little, if anything, to do with narrative, and in deferring the moment of battle is unaccountably disruptive. The dissonance and rupture have more than an echo, or memory, of Eisensteinian editing technique. The poles, circles, rings, flares and puffs of smoke are carefully – and artfully – designed and edited to create abstract and asymmetrical patterns reminiscent of the abstract avant-garde films of the 1910s and 1920s: the shot of the spiralling vortex with its off-centre flaring circle of light could have escaped from Marcel Duchamp’s Anémic Cinéma (1929). The initial long dissolve dispatches John Wayne from centre frame to outside the frame entirely, and replaces him with abstract, modernist art: this offers Brechtian distanciation by prompting, or proposing, that the audience reflect upon
the filmmaking process. The visual and aural representations of the firing guns deliver further reflexivity by punning on the ‘shot’ of the movie camera.40

My argument is not that opposition between Hollywood and the avant-garde cinemas does not exist. It is that using a system of binarisms to conceptualise these two cinemas hides or ignores difference and discontinuity as much as it hides or ignores sameness and continuity. It proposes homogeneity where heterogeneity exists. It does not allow us to see the complexity of the interactions which show how inappropriate it is to conceptualise the avant-garde as Hollywood’s other. The notion of polarised otherness hides the moments of transfer and crossover, and the processes of hybridisation and of mutual incorporation. The range of film styles and attitudes towards the commercial mainstream on the part of the avant-garde has always been far greater than popularly imagined and than as constructed by the orthodoxies of film history reliant upon a model of binary opposition. It misrepresents the intercinematic relationship by failing to note, as David E. James argues, that Hollywood ‘has been a constant presence, one that enticed as often as it repelled its would-be other and inspired as often as it inhibited it’.41 It similarly fails to note the ideas, images, filmmakers and other cultural material flowing in the other direction – from the avant-garde to Hollywood. For this, an analytic framework of disjunctive global cultural flows is required.

In the following close reading I apply such a model to reveal that traces of a complex pattern of multidirectional communication channels between the avant-garde and the commercial mainstream cinema exist in the avant-garde film text itself. These demonstrate that the relationship is characterised by mutual incorporation rather than by polarised opposition and unidirectional flows from centre to periphery.

40 Adrian Martin describes a similar ‘kinship between action and experimental cinema’ in George Miller’s montage style in Mad Max: ‘At their most intense passages, both types of cinema get down to certain visual and aural phenomena that suggest the most basic and primal set-up of the cinematic apparatus itself: the projection of light upon a screen, and the fact of a viewer seated in front of it … Another aspect of this phenomenon is exploited to the hilt by Mad Max: the kinetics (the French have a better word: cinétism) of graphic lines and shapes … What thus occurs … is a “breaking through”’ of this bedrock of the apparatus to the surface of an otherwise ordinarily representational film – what Jacques Derrida calls (in relation to painting) “making the subjectile appear as such”.’ (Martin, ‘At the Edge of the Cut’: 182).

By tracing the non-isomorphic flows across territorial and cinematic borders I demonstrate that the enmity between these two cinemas has never been as implacable as has been imagined, and that a dynamic relationship has existed in which constantly evolving concepts of Hollywood and the avant-garde can be mapped within each other.

**Un chien andalou (Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, 1929)**

*Un chien andalou* is widely regarded as one of the most significant and influential avant-garde examples of all that Hollywood is not. At first sight it may seem an unlikely place to seek Hollywood, but I have selected it for my close reading precisely because it is such a well-known example of the avant-garde defined in terms of its polar opposition to mainstream commercial cinema. Ambiguity, symbolism and puzzling narrative ruptures abound throughout this film, which has its origins in the anti-art movement of Dadaism. Although it would be a couple of years before Buñuel and Dalí formally joined the Surrealist movement, it is strongly informed by Surrealism. The following reading of the celebrated opening sequence, enables me to demonstrate that the borders between the avant-garde and Hollywood are not the rigid impermeable structures they are typically conceptualised to be.

‘Once Upon A Time …’

A tango plays. An intertitle reads ‘Il était une fois …’ *[Once upon a time …]*. The first shot is an interior close-up of male hands sharpening a cut-throat razor. There is a cut to a head and shoulders shot of a young man standing expressionlessly in front of some gauzy curtains. (Although we’re not told, this man is played by Buñuel: does this indication of autobiographical subjectivity mean it is a documentary? The tango music seems at odds with our expectations of the documentary form which tends – or tended - not to employ music infused with subjective emotion.) With a lit cigarette in his mouth, the man looks down. The film cuts to a reverse shot in a high-angled close-up of male hands – we assume his – sharpening the razor. Immediately after he has tested the blade for sharpness by cutting the thumb of his left hand, the film cuts abruptly back to another head-and-

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42 The French do not conventionally capitalise all words in film titles after the first word. Some non-French writers, however, apply the anglicised convention of capitalising all or most nouns in a title. Where I quote authors who have done this I have retained them as they were written without splattering the text with ‘[sic]’. 

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shoulders shot. (If we were expecting to see blood flow we are disappointed.) He is still smoking and without expression. (Would he not be flinching?) This is followed by a medium shot of the man standing in front of what we now see are glass doors. He opens the door a little and starts to squeeze through. There is then a match-on-action edit to the next shot, an exterior wide framing of him stepping through the door onto a balcony and leaning against its front railings. (The initial interior shots suggested day, with daylight apparently coming through a glass door, but when the man steps onto the balcony it is night-time: has time moved on?) This cuts to another head-and-shoulders shot as, cigarette still burning in his mouth, he looks up to the sky.

Next, we see a shot of the moon, a perfectly round, bright disc in a dark sky. (Is this his point of view? If so, does the dream-like quality of this shot mean the rest of the scene, perhaps the entire film can be understood as his (or the directors’?) dream or a flashback recapturing his past?) It cuts back to another head-and-shoulders shot. Still looking up, the man’s face is almost enveloped in clouds of cigarette smoke. The film cuts to a close-up of an impassive woman’s face, her eyes unblinking and directly addressing the camera. (Where did she come from? She was not on the balcony when we first saw it in wide shot. Is she on the balcony at all?) Standing behind to her right we see part of a man’s torso. (Inexplicably, this is not the man we first saw, who was wearing a plain open-necked, collarless shirt. This man wears a shirt with a collar and a striped tie. Does this mean there are two men?)

With his left thumb and forefinger he stretches open her left eye and brings up his right hand with the razor to the side of her face. (If there are two men, is it likely that they would have identical razors?) He starts to pull the razor across her left eye. She remains completely impassive, unblinking. (Can she be blind?) There is another shot of the moon, this time with a thin strand of dark cloud bisecting the bottom third of its disc. (What does this mean? Stormy weather ahead? Surely, nothing so banal.) There is then an extreme close-up of her staring eye as the razor slices through her eyeball. (She might be able continue looking but can we bear to look?) Viscous fluid oozes out. The scene ends (or is the next one starting?) with an intertitle that reads: ‘Huit ans après.’ [Eight years later]. Playing throughout is a romantic, seductive tango tune. (Why music redolent of passion, desire and nostalgia? This in no way
Few moments in the history of cinema are as violently shocking as this sliced eye. Throughout the film, however, there will be many more moments that contribute to the principle of ‘radical discontinuity’ which A.L. Rees considers a key characteristic of the avant-garde in opposition to the codes and conventions of classical Hollywood cinema, which aims to hide all disruption. Other such moments include: a man on a bicycle, wearing bizarre woman’s clothing, who inexplicably falls off; a mysterious bag containing an equally mysterious wrapped object that remains unexplained; a man and woman passionately desiring and violently rejecting each other for no apparent reason; ants crawling over and out of a hand; rotting corpses that have no narrative reason for being there; an armpit morphing into a sea urchin; a blind – but possibly seeing – man; a dead calf lying draped over a piano; a woman’s dress dematerialising to reveal her naked breasts; a man wiping his mouth away; an androgynous woman standing in the middle of the road looking at a dismembered hand. The time scheme as announced by the intertitles - *Vers trois heures du matin …* (Around 3 am), ‘*Seize ans avant.*’ (Sixteen years ago), ‘*Au Printemps …*’ (Springtime) - mock the classical Hollywood convention of temporal linearity. Devices such as trick photography, montage editing, slow motion, highly unconventional lap dissolves, and superimpositions all mock spatial conventions. The soundtrack, arbitrarily selected alternating passages from Wagner’s *Tristan and Isolde* and a tango, further contribute to the film’s radical discontinuity.

An attack on Hollywood was not the filmmakers’ primary target, but their intentions were opposed to its norms. For audiences accustomed to the classical narrative style the film makes no narrative sense. In its attack on narrative and spectatorial omniscience it espouses the irrational and has an oneiric quality that transcends logic and denaturalises conventional cinematic technique. My reading shows that the film contains the traces of cultural phenomena – ideas, images, techniques – from other non- or anti-mainstream cinemas, and I shall trace some of their passages as they flow across national, cinematic and other cultural borders. Non-commercial influences include the filmmakers’ links with Dadaism and Surrealism. This locates the film as part of the early 20th century modernist art
movement which overtly rejected the literary and theatrical origins of Hollywood’s classical narrative style.\textsuperscript{43} Other non-commercial influences existing in the film itself include Eisenstein’s Soviet montage films and the French impressionist avant-garde films, on which Buñuel had worked, as Assistant to Jean Epstein.\textsuperscript{44} Buñuel and Dalí’s known Freudian concerns in depicting the workings of the unconscious, perceived as irrational, excessive, grotesque and libidinal, put into the frame that which is normally repressed in commercial cinema. The film’s nudity, transvestism and representations of perverse sexual desire are significantly more explicit than the inevitably censored sex insisted upon by the Hollywood studio’s self-censoring Production Code. Its low-budget and collaborative artisanal mode of production – Buñuel has written how the two friends conceived the idea when swapping stories about their dreams, borrowed the money from Buñuel’s mother, wrote the script in less than a week and filmed it in a couple of weeks – locates it at the opposite end of the spectrum from the large-scale, mass-produced, Fordist production process of the Hollywood studios.\textsuperscript{45}

With respect to the film’s distribution and exhibition processes, like the majority of avant-garde films it was deliberately made to be screened in small art circles, art cinemas and cine clubs rather than in the cinemas owned by the Hollywood studios. In contrast to Hollywood which aimed to nurture middle class audiences, Buñuel and Dalí conceived the film as an assault on bourgeois taste.\textsuperscript{46} Irrationality and narrative discontinuity were their dominant guiding principles. According to Buñuel, they rejected any idea or image that had any association with an earlier one and accepted ‘only those representations as valid which … had no

\textsuperscript{43} Michael O’Pray writes: ‘Interestingly \textit{Un chien andalou} was made at the beginning of Bunuel’s involvement with Surrealism and to that extent had no model except for Dulac’s \textit{The Seashell and the Clergyman} and Man Ray’s films.’ (O’Pray, \textit{Avant-Garde Film}: 20).

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{46} Dalí claimed their aim was to kill off ‘ten years of pseudo-intellectual post-war advance’, with the specific target of abstract art and ‘the little maniacal lozenges of Monsieur Mondrian’: \textit{Salvador Dalí, The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí} (trans. Haakon Chevalier). London: Vision, 1968: 212.
possible explanation’. Dalí maintained that the desired effect was deliberately ‘anti-
plastic, anti-artistic considered by traditional canons’. ‘For the first time in the
history of the cinema,’ wrote French surrealist critic Ado Kyrou, ‘a director tries not
to please but rather to alienate nearly all potential spectators.’ What could be more
different from commercial mainstream cinema? Audience alienation has never been
on Hollywood’s agenda.

But I question whether the film is entirely antithetical to Hollywood in terms of
its formal properties and values. There are traces of a more complex relationship
towards the commercial cinema than the model of polar opposition permits:
oppositions certainly existed but my close reading reveals continuities, synergies and
porous borders in an unstable screenscape. Buñuel was not averse to using the
conventional continuity editing techniques of classical narrative cinema. He uses, for
example, the shot/reverse shot format, and point-of-view sequencing, and he also
cuts on action thus employing a Hollywood-style continuity editing technique to
stitch the audience seamlessly into the text. Unlike the many avant-garde filmmakers
who opposed the use of actors entirely, Buñuel took advantage of the star system
with which Hollywood and the mainstream French film industry were both strongly
associated. Both lead actors Pierre Batcheff (credited as Pierre Batchef) and Simone
Mareuil (credited as Simonne Mareuil), were well-known film actors in France –
although deliberate casting against type may have contributed to the film’s shock
value. Audience reception also reveals links to the commercial mainstream.

To the great disappointment of the filmmakers, despite their determination to
launch an attack on bourgeois taste, Un chien andalou proved highly popular with
the bourgeoisie. At the first screening Buñuel had stones in his pockets ready to
throw at what he anticipated would be an outraged audience. The outrage was all
Buñuel’s: the stones remained in his pockets when the film was greeted with

47 Louis Buñuel, ‘Notes on the Making of Un chien andalou’ in Frank Stauffacher, ed., Art in
48 Ibid.
49 Quoted in Roger Ebert, ‘Review: Un Chien Andalou (1928)’, Chicago Sun Herald, 16
April 2000.
50 Many of the credits are incorrectly spelled in the film.
applause. The film had an eight-month run in a Paris art-cinema. Repeating the widely held view of the avant-garde as incoherent and completely opposed to the narrative norms of Hollywood, US critic Roger Ebert writes: ‘to describe the movie is simply to list its shots, since there is no story line to link them’. But Dalí himself offered what sounds very much like narrative coherency when he described the film’s theme as ‘the pure and correct line of “conduct” of a human who pursues love through wretched humanitarian, patriotic ideals and the other miserable workings of reality’. As O’Pray points out, Un chien andalou is not anti-narrative; rather it is a film that plays with narrative. This is some considerable distance from the way in which this film in particular and the avant-garde in general is typically conceptualised.

More Traces and Tracings

These crossovers in the film’s formal properties as well as some aspects of its reception might seem to point to a one-way flow of images, techniques and ideas from Hollywood to the avant-garde. Closer analysis, however, reveals the traces of multidirectional processes at work. As O’Pray argues, Buñuel’s subsequent move to ‘mainstream art cinema was no accident but rather the direction to which Un chien andalou was already pointing’. Although the term ‘mainstream art’ already admits to border porosity as art cinema is typically conceptualised as being distanced from and opposed to the commercial Hollywood studio film. Both Buñuel and Dalí would cross over not only to ‘mainstream art cinema’, but to Hollywood itself. Their subsequent careers reveal an intricate mesh of disjunctive global cultural flows: the filmmakers’ deterritorialising and reterritorialising movements – on some occasions

51 Buñuel achieved his goal in his next film, L’Age d’or (1930), the premiere of which he describes as follows: ‘The extreme right attacked the movie theatre, tore up the paintings in the surrealist exhibit that had been set up in the foyer, threw bombs at the screen, and destroyed seats. It was the “scandal” of L’Age d’or. A week later, Chiappe, civil governor, purely and simply banned the film in the name of public order’ (Quoted in Instituto Cervantes, Buñuel, 100 años: 69).
54 O’Pray, Avant-Garde Film: 25.
55 Ibid.
Through personal choice at others due to political exigency – would cross national and cinematic boundaries which at times intersect and at other times diverge from the flows of ideas, images, technologies and finances in other ‘scapes.

After the critical success of their next film, *L’age d’or* (1930), Buñuel was offered a contract with MGM. This he terminated after visiting Hollywood, which, while scorning its films, he thought ‘close to paradise’.\(^56\) His relationship with Hollywood, however, did not end there. From 1933 to 1935, based in Paris, he dubbed dialogue for Hollywood studios, first for Paramount, then for Warner Bros. In 1938 he was able to put Hollywood’s sophisticated technology to good use, supervising political propaganda films for the Spanish Republic. After the Fascist victory, political necessity mandated a move: he immigrated to the US and eventually took up residence in Hollywood. In 1944, taking advantage of the studios’ global expansionist policies, he was hired by Warner Bros. to produce Spanish-language remakes of their films until the industry opted for a cheaper method of reaching the European market – a simple dubbing technique. Finding Hollywood unreceptive to his screenplays (which included *The Sewer of Los Angeles*, in collaboration with avant-garde artist and filmmaker Man Ray) he moved to Mexico in 1946 where, in addition to many domestic commercial movies, he made the much admired realist film *Los Olvidados* (1950) and two Hollywood/Mexico co-productions, *Robinson Crusoe* (1952) and *The Young One* (1960). But before leaving Hollywood he worked on *The Beast With Five Fingers* (Robert Florey, 1946).

This last film leads to yet another concatenation of non-isomorphic global cultural flows in the life of its director whose career demonstrates that Hollywood and the avant-garde at cannot be hypostasised into two opposite ends of a spectrum with mutually exclusive and excluding goals. The Paris-born Florey’s best known film, *The Life and Death of 9413 – A Hollywood Extra* (1927), illustrates the unique compatibility that existed between Hollywood and the avant-garde in this period and is proof that, as Brian Taves explains, ‘the first popular avant-garde films were created not by independents, but by individuals from within Hollywood who would

continue working there’. Florey’s early films, all widely seen throughout the US, demonstrate not so much a desire to create a separate and distinct avant-garde cinema as to influence mainstream commercial practice. Although made outside the studio system, Hollywood demonstrated its receptivity to the ideas and personnel of the avant-garde when in 1936 Paramount remade Hollywood Extra as Hollywood Boulevard with Florey co-writing and directing. This does not signify death-by-assimilation of the avant-garde. Nor does it support the notions of unidirectionality and binary opposition. Rather, as James writes, ‘in Hollywood’s liminal and interstitial spaces a mutually productive relationship existed’.

Florey would make over sixty films for mainstream Hollywood, many of which demonstrate multiple and diverse convergences of the avant-garde, art cinema and Hollywood classical narrative style. Perhaps the best-known example of his studio films, one which modifies the canonical story of orthodox history, is The Beast with Five Fingers (1947) that connects him to Buñuel. This Warner Bros. horror ‘B’ movie benefited from the deterritorialisation of some key European filmmakers. It stars European immigrant to Hollywood Peter Lorre, and is co-written by Curt Siodmak, who fled Nazi Germany in 1937 when Universal contracted him to write a series of genre horror–science fiction screenplays. Set in Italy, the story revolves around some disloyal and rapacious people (these, significantly, are all Americans) haunted by the dismembered hand of a dead pianist. In scenes redolent of German Expressionist camera angles and lighting, the surreal hand gets its revenge by strangling the evil Americans. Although uncredited, and never mentioned by Florey, Buñuel’s claimed contribution to this film is significant for what it reveals about Hollywood’s receptiveness to avant-garde ideas and images:

I wrote it in order to charge them for an entire sequence, even though it was not filmed (I needed money). I imagined a cut-off hand that had a life of its own. Later, they filmed it and didn’t pay me anything. I wanted to sue the company

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59 Curt Siodmak collaborated with his fellow Germans and soon-to-be Hollywood filmmakers Billy Wilder, Edgar G. Ulmer, Fred Zinneman and his brother Robert on the silent classic, Menschen am Sonntag [People on Sunday] (1929), in which the avant-garde and art cinemas converge.
but I was already here in Mexico and I decided against it. I received my salary at the company, but that was a job I did on the side. As you two remember, there was already a scene with an amputated hand in *Un chien andalou* (1929).

I also used a severed hand that moved in *The Exterminating Angel* (1967).\(^{60}\) Florey disowned *Beast* after Warner Bros., deciding audiences were not yet ready for such a film, added some extra scenes to create what the studio bosses decided would be greater coherence. One of the scenes Florey objected to (as did many critics and audiences) is an epilogue in which a Police Commissario (J. Carrol Naish) explains much of the plot in direct address to camera – and in doing so adds a very avant-garde style of disruption to Hollywood realism. Hollywood, however, was not to disown Buñuel and Dalí’s dismembered hand so easily.

The myriad junctures and disjunctures in the flows of people, ideas, finance, technologies and finances in Buñuel’s career, traces of which originated in *Un chien*, can also be traced in the films of his co-filmmaker, Salvador Dalí. Unlike Buñuel, Dalí found Hollywood congenial and ‘intrinsically surrealist’.\(^{61}\) Visiting in 1930, he stayed with Harpo Marx, with whom he collaborated on a screenplay, ‘Giraffes on Horseback’, which was never made.\(^{62}\) Dalí returned to Europe, where he concentrated on painting and writing. His art became highly popular in the US. It too blurred the boundaries between high art and kitsch, as his melting watches, pyramids, the Tower of Babel, ants, dismembered hands paintings were reproduced on many a living room wall and biscuit tin. In the mid-1940s Alfred Hitchcock invited Dalí back to Hollywood to work on a dream sequence for *Spellbound* (1945).\(^{63}\) Starring

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\(^{62}\) There is a link from Harpo Marx to Robert Florey. The latter co-directed (with Joseph Santley) the Marx Brothers’ first film, *The Cocoanuts* (1929), an early talkie. Harpo Marx also forms a link between Hollywood and Soviet cinema as he was the first ‘cultural ambassador’ to Moscow after the US Government gave diplomatic recognition to the USSR in 1933.

\(^{63}\) This link to Hitchcock offers an opportunity to trace further disjunctive global cultural flows between Hollywood and its alleged diametrically opposed radical avant-garde other; many of Hitchcock’s films reveal the permeability of borders between mainstream commercial cinema and its others. His British silent, *The Ring* (1927), for example, defies classical narrative norms with its circular narrative and contains scenes of innovative
Gregory Peck as a mental patient and Ingrid Bergman as his doctor, Hitchcock intended this film to be ‘the first picture on psychoanalysis’. Psychoanalysis was no longer the sole preserve of the surrealist avant-garde: Hitchcock knew his producer, Robert O. Selznick, would find the idea attractive because of his personal experience of psychotherapy. Dalí’s dream sequence (which Hitchcock broke into four separate sections, partly as a cost-cutting exercise) depicts a gambling club with bizarre draperies painted with giant eyes. In a direct quotation of Un chien andalou’s notorious image (originally Buñuel’s idea), a pair of outsized scissors cuts through the painted eyes. For one British critic, Spellbound is proof that, by 1945, the avant-garde had entered Hollywood not simply as occasional ‘moments’: ‘surrealism had entered the lifeblood of cinema’.  

Dalí remained in Hollywood and further flows can be traced in the lengthy ballet dream sequence in Yolanda and the Thief (Vincente Minnelli, 1945) which were specifically based on his paintings and led to a contract with Minnelli for the dream sequence in Father of the Bride (Minnelli, 1950). Dalí was also contracted by Walt Disney to design a short animated sequence for a compilation film project, Destino. Dalí incorporated many of the well-known visual elements from his paintings and animation artist John Hench proposed the use of new film technology to apply an editing technique that would create the morphing effects Dalí wanted.

dramatic visual symbolism. Combining many of the principles of classical continuity editing style with a specularity typical of the early cinema of attractions sections, Hitchcock’s command of expressionist visual devices enabled him to suggest his characters’ states of mind, most memorably in a Dalíesque shot which ‘melts’ off the screen to evoke a cuckold’s alcoholic daze. Many of Hitchcock’s later films demonstrate a fascination with the filmic possibilities of genre hybridisation as well as with innovation and the experimental. An example of this is his use of the first marketed electronic musical instrument, the theremin, on the soundtrack of Spellbound, which composer Miklos Rozsa used to signal the mental distress of an amnesiac (Gregory Peck). It is thought to be the first example of its use in a Hollywood film.


Disney was no stranger to the avant-garde. He employed abstract artist and animator Oscar Fischinger, who fled from Germany after Nazi attacks on his ‘degenerate’ art in 1936. Fischinger worked on Fantasia, and although he left in disgust when the studio insisted on adulterating his artwork, his influence on ‘The Sorcerer’s Apprentice’ sequence is evident.

Hench is best known for his background, layout, colour and styling work on Fantasia, Dumbo, The Three Caballeros, Alice in Wonderland and Peter Pan, as well as for his
Demonstrating disjunctures between ideoscape, mediascape and financescape, the project was cancelled when the flow of ideas and images from the European avant-garde imagination of Dalí was halted by the post-war economic problems the studio was experiencing at the time. Disney decided a compilation film would not attract sufficiently large audiences to help the studio out of its economic crisis: art and commerce in this instance proved incompatible. The cultural flows, however, did not come to a complete halt.

Some 60 years later Hollywood finance and technology caught up with Dalí’s initial flow of images and ideas when Walt Disney’s nephew, Roy E. Disney, finally gave it the project the green light. Nominated for an Academy award in the best short animation category, Destino (Dominique Monfery, 2003) is evidence of the conjunction of commerce and art. Film critic and historian Leonard Maltin describes the film as a blend of 1940s ‘Disney kitsch and pure Dalí, with an overlay of contemporary sensibility’. It is evidence of further conjuncture with the technoscape, as the following online review reveals: ‘It makes perfect sense that Disney used computer technology to do the 360-degree turns and to make some of the images seem more dimensional than they might in a 2-D cartoon ... Dalí’s work was always very dimensional, and he was keenly interested in playing with perspective.’

But it is the radically dissonant images of bodily rupture, invasion and amputation, the sliced eye and the dismembered hand of Un chien andalou, that best encapsulate the central argument of this chapter for rejecting an analytic model reliant upon binarisms and for adopting the framework of disjunctive global cultural flows. While these images and ideas are widely thought to symbolise the essence of the filmic avant-garde defined in terms of its polar opposition to classical Hollywood subsequent work on the architectural designs for theme parks and hotels. For Hench’s comments on his collaboration with Dalí see http://awn.com/oscars04/?type=shorts&id=destino.

An unconfirmed rumour maintains that Disney made Destino in 2003 only because it was discovered that unless they did so they would lose valuable copyright ownership of Dalí’s artwork. This could be the result of a mindset that positions the avant-garde at the opposite end of the spectrum from Hollywood and refuses to believe in the possibility of the conjunction of art and commerce. Or it could be true. Or partly true.


Ibid.
cinema, they have proved to be far from inexorably other to Hollywood. They are the traces of cultural material visualised by technology that Buñuel and Dalí bequeathed to many other cinemas. The hand appears, as we have seen, in the Warner Bros. B-movie horror classic, The Beast With Five Fingers. It reappears in Oliver Stone’s remake, The Hand (1981), and was later spoofed in Idle Hands (Rodman Flender, 1999). It has a brief cameo appearance in one of Slavko Vorkapich’s montage sequences in What Price Hollywood? (1932), Cukor’s reprise of the Florey–Vorkapich–Toland avant-garde classic, The Life and Death of 9413 – A Hollywood Extra, mentioned earlier. As an image of radical discontinuity, the dismembered hand has crossed national cinematic borders to make a memorable appearance in Akira Kurosawa’s Yojimbo and subsequent films influenced by this particular manifestation of Dalí and Buñuel’s famous dissonant image. The punctured eyeball, meanwhile, some 16 years after Un chien andalou first shocked (and thrilled) art cinema lovers, was given a powerful oneiric role in Hitchcock’s Spellbound. It would also appear in countless horror movies, and as a reflexive comment on the process of watching a film it is nowhere more chillingly represented than in Michael Powell’s Peeping Tom (1960).

If the borders around national cinemas as well as those surrounding the Hollywood studio system proved permeable to the flow of ideas and images emanating from Buñuel and Dalí, so too did those of more recent post-modern, ‘post-Hollywood’ cinema. In an observant piece of flow-tracing by Linda Ruth Williams we learn that ‘[a]t the other end of the century and cultural scale’ an almost identical scene occurs in Terminator (James Cameron, 1984):

The similarities are palpable. We see the Terminator (Arnold Schwarzenegger) laying out a scalpel in preparation, just as Buñuel had prepared his razor with a

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71 As Linda Ruth Williams points out: ‘Eyes have been subject to a range of cinematic violation which few other body parts have had to endure. They are pecked out or penetrated with pins and splinters (The Birds, Suspiria, Zombie Flesh Eaters, Opera), mirror fragments are wedged into them (Manhunter), they are sliced by knives (New York Ripper, Un chien andalou), forced open with metal brackets (A Clockwork Orange), skewered by booby-trapped binoculars (Horrors of the Black Museum), even shot at point-blank range as they look through keyholes (The Dead Eyes of London, Opera). Damage to eyes recurs as a symbol of the worst possible violence, a spectacular last straw in horror far more disturbing even than representations of vital injuries to vital organs. (Linda Ruth Williams, ‘An Eye for an Eye’, Sight and Sound, April 1994: 14.)
stroop 55 years earlier. In both films, immediately before the blade penetrates, we see a close up of a face staring out directly to camera, each face occupying approximately the same frame space. In both films, fingers force open the left eye. At this point, Buñuel cuts to the moon sliced by clouds. Cameron, however, keeps the camera running: the cutaway shot never happens and as in _Un chien andalou_, we see the blade penetrate the eye.\(^72\)

Both films, Williams explains, play with the meaning of the term ‘cut’ as a visual image and an editing technique: expecting one sort of cut, we are given another. The shocking image of the violated eye and dismemberment from which the camera does not flinch (although most audiences do) signifies something different each time it is used – the limits of screen violence and transgression, the proximity of pain and pleasure, horror and comedy, and ‘the correspondence between on-screen eyes and the viewing organs of the spectator’.\(^73\) The sliced eye has the power to metamorphose as it engages creatively with other cinemas. It is referenced in David Lynch’s self-conscious and hybridised cinema, becoming the dismembered ear of the opening sequence in _Blue Velvet_ (1986). It also makes a (non) appearance in the celebrated ear-slicing torture scene of Quentin Tarantino’s _Reservoir Dogs_ (1991) and this time, the camera does flinch: we do not see the slicing. When an eyeball falls into the hands of the owner of the sharpest samurai sword in the world in Tarantino’s _Kill Bill: Vol 2_ (2004), rather than slice it, the protagonist squishes it between her toes.

Every appearance (or non-appearance) is dependent upon a concatenation of global cultural flows that provide a different context every time such images are reproduced. The ideas they symbolise and the way audiences read them vary according to the context in which a film is made, distributed and exhibited. Each time it denotes and connotes something different, revealing hybridising processes conducted across borders which are porous and which allow complex and multidirectional flows of ideas, images, finances, technologies, labour and audiences.


\(^{73}\) _Ibid._: 14–15.
Conclusion

Every analytic model frames how we look at, read and understand a cinema or an individual film. In this chapter I have challenged the model of binary opposition by which the relationship between Hollywood and the avant-garde is conventionally conceptualised – that is, in a state of perpetual opposition and with the avant-garde negatively defined as Hollywood’s ‘radical other’. I have shown how, when Hollywood and the avant-garde are seen to exist at opposite ends of the spectrum, we tend to look at a film such as *Un chien andalou* and see ‘not Hollywood’ and, similarly, we look at a Hollywood film such as *Sands of Iwo Jima*, and fail to see the avant-garde. In this way we see only the limits of experimentation in an apparently conservative Hollywood, and the formal and institutional constraints that limit the incorporation of new ideas to mere ‘moments’.

In such a paradigm the relationship between them appears to be static and reciprocities are hidden or ignored. When analysed within the framework of disjunctive global cultural flows, however, the links and flows between Hollywood and the avant-garde are shown to be fluid and reciprocal. This challenges many of the widely held conceptualisations about what is meant by the categories ‘avant-garde’ and ‘Hollywood’. The flows point to a history of hybridising processes that have been frequently missed or ignored in orthodox film history that essentialises cinematic categories by insisting upon a relationship of polar opposition. The trope of implacable enmity denies the reciprocal nature of the relationship between Hollywood and its other which I have shown to be multidirectional, multileveled and mutual. In response to the central question of this dissertation, ‘Where is Hollywood located?’ I demonstrate that the creative tensions of globalising forces make it possible to find Hollywood in an unbounded avant-garde and the avant-garde in an unbounded Hollywood. The traces of disjunctive global cultural flows in the life and films of Dalí and Buñuel point to a Hollywood which, despite its hegemonic status, cannot be imagined as homogenous and opposed to ideas, images and other cultural flows that exist only in its radical other. If, as Paul Arthur states, ‘Hollywood remains the animating skeleton in the

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avant-garde film closet’, the avant-garde is no less a generative force within Hollywood.\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{75} Cited in James, ‘Hollywood Extras’: 45.
Chapter Four

National Cinema

Along with the director’s name and the year in which the film was completed, a film’s national identity is routinely used by reviewers, critics, distributors and exhibitors as a label to inform audiences. But to inform them of what, exactly? What do audiences expect – or not expect – of a film carrying the label of a particular nation? How do territorial boundaries impact upon the way in which a film is produced or viewed? Are there specific stylistic or narrative characteristics that draw upon a nation’s identity and represent its cultural essence? When a film exhibits images, ideas or actors imported from another nation, does this make it inauthentic or less ‘pure’? Why does Hollywood play such a central role in constructing and defining the cinemas of other nations? And why, although commonly thought to ‘belong’ geographically and culturally to the United States of America, is Hollywood seldom perceived to be a national cinema? These are some of the questions that lie at the heart of this chapter, which interrogates the value of conceptualising national cinema as stable and limited with finite and meaningful boundaries in a fixed relationship to Hollywood. They raise issues concerning sameness and difference, unity and coherence, heterogeneity and homogeneity, and global universality and local particularity. These issues problematise the concept of national cinema and suggest the need to investigate some of the ways in which its relationship with Hollywood is conceptualised. They also open up ways of questioning how and where Hollywood is located.

The process of identifying a national cinema attempts to contain and limit what it can mean and produce. A national label is generally perceived to be a guarantee of ‘otherness’, denoting a cinema that differs from those of other nations; crucially, it is also defined by being ‘not Hollywood’. At the same time, Hollywood is widely perceived to pervade – sometimes to invade – most of its national others. Thomas Elsaesser has pointed to the paradox in this: ‘Hollywood can hardly be conceived …
as totally other, since so much of any nation’s film culture is implicitly Hollywood.¹ The issue here is that of cultural transfer and in the discussion of the way in which the ideas, images and other aspects of a film, genre or oeuvre of a particular nation appear in that of another, Hollywood is not simply one cinema among many others, it is the paradigm by which almost all national cinemas define themselves and are judged.

When national cinema is its other, Hollywood is imagined and located differently from how it tends to be conceptualised in relation to many smaller or local cinemas, some of which I discuss elsewhere in this dissertation. In Hollywood’s relationship with the cinematic avant garde or women’s cinema, for example, the local cinema is commonly perceived to travel from the periphery to the centre, where Hollywood, rather like a spider at the centre of a web, attracts, assimilates and dilutes the once progressive or alternative ideas, images and filmmakers venturing in from the margins. In its relationship with a national cinema, however, Hollywood is perceived to be international, travelling from the centre to the periphery across national and cultural borders where it becomes relocated inside a national cinema. The national cinema, meanwhile, stays still, anchored and determined by the territorial borders of the nation-state. In this model Hollywood has morphed from spider to incubus. Hollywood can – and does – attract foreign filmmakers to Los Angeles, and it also remakes the films of national cinemas, but this is widely interpreted as the inability of the national cinema to resist Hollywood’s internationalising centrifugal pull. Cinema is widely perceived to be intrinsically international but the label is commonly only applied to Hollywood.

Of central concern to this chapter is the process of cultural transfer between cinemas of different nations. In the internationalist model the transfers may be formulated as benign, or relatively benign, or as a decidedly malign form of cultural transfer, referred to as cultural imperialism. Cultural imperialism does not involve exchange as nothing given in return and it denotes unidirectionality, that is the one-way imposition of cultural phenomena and cultural values on the weaker nation and its cinema by the dominant nation and its cinema. In popular rhetoric and Film

Studies discourse cultural imperialism is referred to as Hollywoodisation and is usually synonymous with ‘Americanisation’. Whether the process of cultural transfer is perceived as friendly or destructive, national cinema is conceived as in opposition to Hollywood’s international – that is, its non-national – norm. The relationship between the international and the national is complex because, as Paul Willemen argues, while they are binaristically opposed, they are also ‘inextricably linked because they define each other’.² He also points to a ‘paradoxical tension’: for a national cinema to be defined in terms of its alterity to an international cinema and at the same time for its international other to be located within its borders, requires an internationalist critical framework in the first place.³

This chapter challenges how some national cinemas are typically seen to relate to Hollywood within a framework of internationalism. It also questions the way in which the cultural transfers taking place within this model are typically perceived. As with the cinemas and cinematic categories analysed elsewhere in this dissertation, the term ‘national cinema’ is a labelling device which constructs boundaries between films and cinemas when they may have much in common. A framework in which the international is pitted against the national takes national, cinematic and other cultural borders for granted, and perceives nations and their cinemas as bounded and stable. The model also tends to assume that national identity and tradition are unchanging, and fully formed, thus ignoring internal intertextual dissonances and harmonies.

Not all scholarship offers such a highly schematic definition of, and simplified critical approach to, national cinema as outlined above. Thomas Elsaesser’s study of new German cinema, Ian Higson’s work on British cinema in particular and national cinema more generally, and Tom O’Regan’s analysis of Australian cinema and his study of ideas concerning cultural exchange underpinning the construct of national cinema, for example, all offer highly nuanced understandings of a national cinema and how they relate to Hollywood.⁴ It is the over-simplification of the concept of a

³ Ibid.: 34.
national cinema, one of the issues confronting national cinema scholarship that seeks to deploy and extend the idea of the transnational as a critical concept, that I seek to address in this chapter.

My use of the term ‘transnationalism’ as a critical approach in preference to ‘internationalism’ also requires some elucidation. Related to this is my argument for the notion of ‘cultural transfer’ rather than ‘cultural exchange’ to describe the nature of intercinematic relations. As discussed later in greater detail, in this chapter, for O'Regan and other notable scholars in this field, the two terms ‘transnational’ and ‘international’ are virtually indistinguishable, and ‘cultural exchange’ does not necessarily denote an equality between two parties or deny what has been occurring within the screenscape since the beginning of cinema. Like some other scholars, however, I have concluded that ‘transnational’ is preferable to ‘international’ because the former ‘at once transcends the national and presupposes it’ and the term ‘trans’ connotes ideas of dynamic movement ‘across’ nations rather than ‘above’. The ‘inter’ of ‘international’, however, suggests something ‘between’ nations and connotes or confirms the existence of a category with fixed boundaries and borders. Following a panel discussion on precisely this issue at the University of Warwick conference in 2005 entitled ‘From the National to the Transnational: European Film and Television in Transition’, James Bennett concluded:

At present the precise meaning of the term ‘transnational’ is…unable to be sealed within its hermeneutic confines. …but the term’s leakage is suggestive of how it might 'float' above and across boundaries, usefully providing a critical lexicon for those debates that cannot be reduced or confined to the national.

My arguments for using the terms ‘transnational’ rather than ‘international’ and ‘cultural transfer’ rather than ‘cultural exchange’ in my critical lexicon throughout this chapter thus in no way neglects previous scholarship which has addressed these


8 Ibid.502.
issues but rather seeks to clarify what is often implicit in the use of the earlier terms but which their other uses can tend to obscure.

I do not question that there are unequal economic, political and cultural power relations between Hollywood and most national cinemas: Hollywood is undeniably the most powerfully hegemonic cinema in the world and its dominion has been supported and perpetuated in numerous ways, some of which can be considered forms of cultural and economic aggression. My argument is that this model fails to show the existence of what Doreen Massey calls a ‘global sense of place’, a concept which helps conceive of cinemas as a series of sites – as meeting grounds or intersections for the flows of people, capital, commodities, technologies, images and ideas – rather than as a number of stable and clearly bounded cultural enclosures. I argue that the model in which a national cinema is defined by the concept of an international Hollywood is inadequate to the task of revealing the complexities of a screenscape in which cultural transfers are more appropriately conceived as hybridising and interpenetrative transnational processes. In reconsidering the conventional concept of the national cinema as contained and stable and its relation to an international Hollywood as fixed and one-way, I shall argue that transnationalism is the more appropriate model: it does not completely lose sight of the national but is amenable to revealing the overlapping and multidirectional flows between the global and the local.

Problematising National Cinema

Having indicated some of the problems involved in defining a national cinema, I nevertheless need to outline my terms of reference. At its most simple, a national cinema is a number of films produced within the borders of a geo-politically defined territory, most often a nation-state. They are thought to differ from the cinemas of

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10 This is blurred in the case of several ‘national’ cinemas. Kurdish cinema is produced in various countries throughout the world while it speaks to and of a people who share a cultural identity but who are spread across several nation-states and many of whom seek a single nation-state. Aboriginal cinema is a First Nation cinema produced by peoples from over 200 nations but who live in the nation-state of Australia; ‘queer cinema’ has no nation-state but represents a ‘queer nation’ that is spread transnationally across the globe. An
other nations and also from Hollywood. Other elements usually factored into such a definition include assumptions about how the films are funded and produced, who has made them, the audiences for which they are intended, and where they are viewed. The films of a national cinema are popularly thought to represent, or reflect, the particular cultural identity, history and traditions of the nation that produces them. These assumptions tend to be bolstered by notions of cultural authenticity and specificity, or purity and essence. They also tend to be prescriptive rather than descriptive and are typically applied to what a national cinema ought to be, rather than what it is.

This could suggest that the concept of a national cinema is of no value – an idea often mooted by those who propose that all cinema is now ‘world cinema’, that globalisation is leading towards the disappearance of the nation-state, and that in a battle between cultural homogenisation and cultural heterogenisation, the former is winning. It also pervades utopian dreams of a universal cinema that speaks to everyone. This appears to include Nagisa Oshima who, at the end of his documentary, *Nihon Eiga no Hyakunen* (*One Hundred Years of Japanese Cinema*) (1995), concluded: ‘Now in its second century, Japanese cinema is still experiencing growing pains. Japanese cinema will have matured when we do not recognize it anymore as Japanese, only as cinema.’

I argue that despite increasing widespread discussion of the diminishing power of the nation-state and of global cultural homogenisation, national cinema cannot simply be wished away any more than the nation-state can. Conventional approaches to national cinema are, as Chris Berry suggests, ‘too vested in territorial nationalism’ and ‘the national may not be what it once was’ but, as he also points out, national increasing number of national cinemas are produced by diasporic and exiled filmmakers living within a nation-state other than the one they consider national ‘home’.

11 Translation by Darrell William Davis in ‘Reigniting Japanese Tradition with *Hana-Bi*’, in *Cinema Journal*, 40.4, 2001: 56. Davis suggests Oshima is more ambivalent than his comment implies: ‘when the documentary was shown on Japanese television, Oshima, dressed in a kimono and drinking green tea, introduced it on a stylized Oriental set while chatting with kimono-clad Sawachi Hisae, a noted writer. In such a self-consciously “Japonesque” posture (nearly auto-Orientalist), Oshima invoked the very stereotypes and icons of nationality on display in his documentary – only to locate them as antiques, quaint as the wooden geta (sandals) he wore on his feet. In this performance of his own persona, Oshima both reviewed and questioned the point he made in voice-over in the documentary.’
cinemas have not disappeared. Nor should we discount the impact national borders have on a nation’s cinema since, as Paul Willemen warns, to ignore boundaries of the nation-state can blind us ‘to some of the national dimensions of films’. Willemen further warns of paying insufficient attention ‘to the determining effects of the geographically bounded state-unit’, which encourages ‘a kind of promiscuous or random form of alleged internationalism’ which he describes as ‘an evasive cosmopolitanism masking imperial aspirations’. The dangers of doing so can lead to the imposition of Western-style theories upon non-Western film practices: ‘If we accept that national boundaries have a significant structuring impact upon national socio-cultural formations this has to be accounted for in the way we approach and deal with cultural practices from “elsewhere”’.

Otherwise, reading a film made in one country from within the critical or analytical framework of another ‘may in fact be more like a cultural cross-border raid, or worse, an attempt to annex another culture in a subordinate position by requiring it to conform to the raider’s cultural practices’. Fixing cultural boundaries that accord with geo-political territorial boundaries can serve to obscure mutability and flux, but to ignore territorial boundaries of the nation-state entirely is no solution.

The impulse of Western scholars to explore and colonise, and to impose the paradigms of Euro-American film and aesthetic theories upon non-European practices, also has to be acknowledged. Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto reminds us that writing about national cinemas used to be an easy task: ‘film critics believed all they had to do was construct a linear historical narrative describing the development of a cinema within a particular national boundary whose unity and coherence seemed beyond all doubt.’ Berry usefully elaborates upon Yoshimoto’s argument using Chinese cinema as his example:

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13 *Ibid.*: 156.
Once it might have been possible to produce a list of elements composing something called ‘traditional Chinese Culture’ or ‘Chinese national culture’, or even some characteristics constituting ‘Chineseness.’ Then we could have tried to see how these things were ‘expressed’ or ‘reflected’ in Chinese cinema as a unified and coherent Chinese national identity with corresponding distinctly Chinese cinematic conventions. This would have constituted a ‘national cinema’, but this is no longer possible.\(^\text{17}\)

As the above discussion shows, there is no universally accepted discourse or singular definition of a national cinema. Audiences, filmmakers, politicians, critics and film scholars all have an interest in defining national cinema, and their definitions can be contradictory. As Berry, Willemen and Yoshimoto’s arguments above imply, the ways in which national cinema has been studied have undoubtedly contributed to how they are popularly conceptualised. The apparent obviousness of national cinema scholarship has been called into question by revisionist ideas about the coherence of the nation-state, particularly by Benedict Anderson’s argument for conceptualising nations as ‘imagined communities’.\(^\text{18}\) His concept, however, proposes a community imagined as limited, finite and sovereign, and the extent to which this provides an appropriate framework for conceptualising the specifics of national cinema is questioned by many film scholars. It ignores, for example, the role of diasporic and exilic filmmakers and audiences in many contemporary national cinemas.

In an attempt to make sense of the weaknesses in the various academic approaches to national cinema, Susan Hayward lists three main problematic, or ‘wrongheaded’, assumptions commonly made concerning international Hollywood’s universalism and national cinema’s cultural specificity.\(^\text{19}\) One is that Hollywood provides the only relevant point of contrast in the context of cinematically mediated national identities. The second is that national cinema simply articulates the cultural specificities of a given, pre-existing nation. The third is that nations are stable,
enduring, primordial entities. The first assumption concerns ‘Hollywoodcentrism’ and the central defining role Hollywood plays in how national cinemas are typically defined and discussed. As O’Regan notes, most national cinemas are seen in terms of how they ‘compete with, imitate, oppose, complement and supplement the (dominant) international cinema’.  

In his essay ‘Reconceptualising National Cinema/s’, Stephen Crofts elaborates upon this, listing seven categories of national cinema to illustrate his point that ‘especially in the west, national cinema production is usually defined against Hollywood’. As the title of his essay indicates, Crofts aims to pave the way for imagining national cinema differently by showing that it possesses greater diversity than is commonly imagined. Although he discusses national cinemas which overlap one or more of his categories, thus pointing to the idea of greater permeability and flux than conventionally imagined, he nevertheless reinforces the dominant model – analysing national cinemas in terms of their reactive response to Hollywood. At its extreme, this model focuses on the practices of production at the expense of patterns of reception, failing to recognise how audiences indigenise the ideas and images originating in another nation. It also fails to note the ways in which films can and do domesticate foreign cultural ideas, images and other cultural phenomena. It fails to take sufficient note of the local traditions and events that play a role in the development of a nation and its cinema – each nation and each cinema has its own cultural history of intertextual synergies and frictions. A national cinema’s connections with other national and non-Hollywood cinemas also tend to be ignored or go unobserved. In short, a Hollywoodcentric perspective does not adequately account for what O’Regan aptly calls ‘the messiness of national cinemas’.

Nor is messiness on the agenda of the second and third of Hayward’s ‘wrongheaded’ assumptions: that a national cinema articulates the cultural specificities of a given, pre-existing nation, and that nations are stable, enduring.
primordial entities. One of the main problems with these assumptions is that they presuppose the kind of selective appropriation of history and tradition that promotes an imagined national ‘essence’ that is, or at least can be thought to be, contained by national and cinematic borders. This ignores the extent to which, as Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger have pointed out, various ideologies, myths and ‘invented traditions’ are represented and disseminated in the construction of a unified nation.24 Cinema plays a role in this process by defining, disseminating, and also mystifying national identity and cultural essence in how it visualises it. The process of constructing a homogenous national identity and cultural essence occurs from without and within a nation and its cinema, and results in valorising a notion of ‘purity’, reinforcing stereotypes and upholding cultural binaries. In his discussion of the role cinema has played in the creation of ‘Japaneseness’, for example, Koichi Iwabuchi writes that ‘Japan’s self-Orientalism and western Orientalism strengthen and require each other. They are the opposite sides of the same coin.’25

There are more erroneous assumptions that could be added to this list. Paul Willemen’s discussion of the film-theoretical malpractice of assuming universality of film language, which ignores the striking diversity among national cinemas, is also of obvious relevance to my argument. These ideas and arguments all inform and help shape my own argument, which, as I have already indicated, adds ‘internationalism’ to the list of assumptions that need to be challenged. Internationalism is the widely accepted framing model for intercinematic relations in which national cinema is defined in binary opposition to Hollywood’s international norm, and it is accompanied by a general belief that the processes of cultural transfer often serve Hollywood’s imperialising purposes.

In the following close reading of Zatoichi (Takeshi Kitano, 2003) I show how limiting this model is. It is a reading that intentionally raises more questions than answers, which I address in more detail later in this chapter. My reading allows me to launch my argument for discarding the model of internationalism – a model that is underwritten by a process of cultural transfer that includes cultural imperialism – in favour of applying the more fluid model of globalising processes to show that cinema

is a profoundly transnational institution. It also enables me to introduce the Japanese national cinema as the Hollywood national other which will provide the main focus of this case-study chapter.

While a detailed history of Japanese national cinema is beyond the scope of this chapter, Japan’s complex and varied history of cultural resistance, welcome and, at times, reluctant capitulation to US domination in general, and to Hollywood cinema in particular, provides valuable historical material. Japanese cinema also introduces new boundaries – between East and West and between Asian and non-Asian – in addition to those conventionally thought to exist as markers of difference between Hollywood and its national others. Zatoichi furthermore allows me to introduce the character of the Japanese swordfighter, who will wind his (and occasionally her) way through this chapter in a number of guises. What he looks like, the century to which he belongs, the guise and gender ‘he’ adopts, the genre in which he appears, and the national cinema and cultural specificity he supposedly represents do not remain constant. In the Japanese swordfighter we find a labile, culturally hybridising and border-crossing figure who is constantly travelling between the local and the global, the national and the transnational, to give cinematic substance to the concept of globalising processes.

**Zatoichi (Takeshi Kitano, 2003)**

Zatoichi (‘Beat’ Takeshi), a 19th century itinerant, blind masseur and super-skilled swordsman, looks like no other Japanese swordfighter. He looks very different from his earlier representations, played by Shintaro Katsu in Kenji Misumi’s 1962 film, *Zatôichi monogatari (The Tale of Zatoichi)*, which led to 25 sequels and to more than 100 television episodes. Takeshi’s Zatoichi might twitch and scratch in a manner reminiscent of Toshiro Mifune’s swordsmen in Akira Kurasawa’s samurai classics, *Shichinin no samurai (Seven Samurai)* (1954), *Yojimbo* (1961) and *Tsubaki Sanjûrô (Sanjuro)* (1962) – films widely perceived by Western audiences to be the apotheosis of Japanese national cinema and the swordfighting genre. But the 21st

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26 ‘Beat’ Takeshi is Takeshi Kitano’s nickname which he sometimes uses for screen and live appearances.

27 Shintaro Katsu played the title role in all 26 of the *Zatoichi* films between 1962 and 1989 and directed the last. He also played the role in all four seasons of the television series.
century representation of a classic Japanese character in Zatoichi questions his very ‘Japaneseness’. The single and immediately arresting difference resides in an aspect of the mise-en-scène: he has blond hair.\textsuperscript{29}

Zatoichi’s bottle-blondness raises several questions about the concept of national cinema, its relationship to Hollywood, and issues of Hollywood’s international reach and national particularity. These issues are heightened by the fact that Zatoichi is played by Takeshi Kitano, who, in addition to being the main star, is also the film’s director, writer and editor. In other words, this is not a small part played by an extra – we are meant to notice this character. As Richard Dyer comments, along with blue eyes, blond hair is ‘uniquely white, to the degree that a non-white person with such features is considered, usually literally, to be remarkable’.\textsuperscript{30} So remarkable that some Western critics and audiences felt the need to make sense of it by looking outside Japanese cinema and to reference the Aryan swordfighter in the US film Blind Fury (Phil Noyce, 1989) rather than any bona fide Japanese screen swordsman in an ‘authentic’ jidaigeki (historical period drama) or chanbara (sword-fighting) film.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{28} That many Western audiences perceive Japanese jidaigeki (historical period films) and especially the chanbara (swordfight) genre films as authentically Japanese and the essence of Japan’s national cinema could be because for many years this was the entire Japanese cinema they ever saw. These were the films that were selected for and by international film festivals and for arthouse cinemas that exhibited ‘exotic’ foreign films. There is a widespread belief that Western audiences will not want to see a Japanese film that is similar to an occidental film.

\textsuperscript{29} As a masseur with links to yakuza (gangster) low life, Zatoichi lacks the necessary credentials to be a member of the samurai warrior class of pre-industrial Japan. The medium of cinema, however, enables Zatoichi (the character and the films) to be closely identified with the samurai. The Zatoichi films and the samurai sub-genre both belong to the chanbara genre, and Misumi’s original film was advertised as ‘ushering in a new era of the Japanese samurai film’. As an itinerant, Zatoichi shares the constantly wandering life style of a ronin, or masterless samurai, and in most films Zatoichi meets, usually respects, and invariable fights a samurai warrior, most of who were masterless by the 19th century. In a film of particular genre-melding, border-dissolving, cinematic magic, Zatôichi to Yôjinbô (Zatoichi Meets Yojimbo) (Kihachi Okamoto, 1970), the actors Katsu and Mifune meet and fight as the latter revisits his celebrated role as a ronin in Kurasawa’s Yojimbo (1961) and its sequel, Tsubaki Sanjûrô (Sanjuro) (1962).


\textsuperscript{31} Two examples are the reviews by Finger Jones (at www.efilmcritic.com/review) and David Stratton (at www.quickflixx.com.au/public/tools/viewmovie/Zatoichi/21030.aspx). Blind Fury is a low-budget film shot in the Hollywood action style of the time (with a tinge of paracinematic schlock), produced by a small independent company, Interscope Communications. Blind Fury offers evidence of porous borders between East and West, North and South, linking the Netherlands, Australian, Japanese and Hollywood cinemas. It is
Is the colour of Zatoichi’s hair a trace of Hollywood’s international reach? If so, is it an example of friendly cultural exchange between East and West in which America cinema initially appropriated Japanese cultural material and Japanese cinema responded by appropriating a Western hair colour? Or does it symbolise something more sinister: is it evidence of US cultural imperialism – the destruction an ‘authentic’ Japanese genre, the dilution of Japanese cultural identity, and the imposition of Western, specifically US, values? The film’s world distribution contract with Miramax, a totally owned subsidiary of the Disney corporation well known for interfering in many of the foreign (i.e. non-US) films it distributes, could be read as more evidence of Western domination. Were the bottles of peroxide in the hair stylist’s budget Kitano’s sly comment on the powerlessness of Japanese national cinema to resist Hollywood’s economic and cultural hegemonic power? If more proof of one-way flows from Hollywood to Japan was sought, it could be found in the domestic (Japanese) box office, which Hollywood has dominated for the past 20 years.\textsuperscript{32}

Before leaving Zatoichi to explore these issues in greater depth there is one more scene that offers scope to explore the Japanese national cinema’s relationship to Hollywood. The remarkable - much remarked upon - penultimate scene has raised further suspicion that the film is evidence of Hollywoodisation. After a brief and expertly staged swordfight in which Zatoichi kills five highly skilled (and seeing) opponents and then unmasks and blinds the gang leader in an awesome high-voltage spray of blood, the film cuts to a crazy, hedonistic tap dance played out to music with a strong hip-hop rhythm. From one perspective – for many non-Japanese audiences, at least – despite the music, it is a distinctly Japanese tap dance: Japanese drums are beating, everyone is wearing period Japanese costumes and hair styles, and on their feet are the uniquely Japanese traditional geta (wooden sandals). Alterity to Hollywood is marked in other ways. Having primed audiences to expect a traditional rural religious or folk festival, this tap dance breaks with the conventions of classical

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\textsuperscript{32} In 2006 Japanese films earned more than Hollywood films for the first time since 1986. The top three biggest earners, however, were all Hollywood blockbusters.
Hollywood cinema by being superfluous to the narrative. For many audiences it appears both out of place and out of time. The sequence is such a significant departure from *chanbara* or *jidaigeki* genre films that, once again, audiences felt compelled to seek references outside Japanese national and cultural borders to make sense of it.\(^{33}\)

Western critics described Kitano’s tap dance scene in terms of ‘Samurai-meets-Busby Berkeley’, diluting the film’s ‘Japaneseness’ and sullying its purity. Or, more ominously, as a form of cinephagy in which the hegemonically more powerful globally dominant cinema exerts its inexorable influence to devour its national other. The trope of cannibalism is fairly common in descriptions of Hollywood’s internationalism and its role as a cultural imperialist.\(^{34}\) In this instance, Katsumi Yanagishima’s cinematography and Kitano and Yoshinori Oota’s editing skills contribute to what many feel is an example of Hollywoodisation by creating a scene recalling the celebrated 1930s MGM musicals of classical Hollywood cinema. Low-angle shots of the dancers’ feet and legs mirror the decorative limbs of the Hollywood chorus-lines and high-angle shots capture the shape and form of the dancing troupe, creating the sort of choreographed visual patterns for which the Hollywood musicals are renowned. So powerful is the presence of Hollywood and so strong is the belief in national cultural authenticity for English reviewer Philip French that he comments:

> there are jokey scenes that European audiences might think detract from the film’s purity ... In particular there is a westernised finale in which the liberated farmers break into an elaborately choreographed Hollywood-style finale.

\(^{33}\) Two examples of the many reviews that make this point are: Michael Rechtshaffen on www.hollywoodreporter.com: ‘His cast of character actors play their colorful parts in perfect syncopation with composer Keiichi Suzuki’s infectious, rhythmic score, building in intensity to that giddy curtain call that’s equal parts Busby Berkeley and Riverdance’; Dan Mancini at www.dvdverdict.com/reviews/zatoichivol1.php, who writes: ‘Zatoichi was a wildly popular modern folk hero in Japan long before Takeshi Kitano dumped peroxide on his head and began to formulate visions of CGI arterial spray and Busby Berkeley-esque village festivals.’

\(^{34}\) Stephen Prince writes: ‘While other national cinemas – Hong Kong and India, for example – match or surpass Hollywood’s rate of film production, no other matches its worldwide reach or omnivorous appetite for devouring overseas talent and properties’ (‘Special Section: International Film’, *World Literature Today*, October–December, 2003: 1; www.ou.edu/worldlit/onlinemagazine/2003winter/01-Oct-Dec03-contents.pdf). In his essay ‘Disjuncture and Difference’, Appadurai employs the cannibalisation trope to describe the disjunctive relationship between nation and state and the tensions between cultural homogenisation and cultural heterogenisation.
Everyone tap-dances and you half expect to hear that the lead performers are Samurai Davis Jr and Ninja Rogers.\(^35\)

The tap dance may furnish further illustration of the extent to which Hollywood is perceived as the international norm and as the central defining reference point for its national other. Entirely without warning, the dance evolves into a visually innovative end-credit sequence in which all the main characters are cut in and out of the merrily tapping chorus line in a series of jump cuts. All, that is, apart from Zatoichi/Kitano, who is thus not credited in this way. Does Zatoichi’s/Kitano’s absence suggest that there is no more space on the world’s screens for an ‘essentially’ Japanese character and a Japanese auteur?

This may not be not such a fanciful conjecture, because the celluloid swordsman who hit the world’s screens the following year was Hollywood superstar Tom Cruise in *The Last Samurai* (Edward Zwick, 2004), a film that for some heralded a Hollywood high-concept takeover of the genre.\(^36\) The ironies in this film’s narrative are hard to avoid. Set in the 1870s, the plot concerns Nelson Algren (Cruise), a dissolute Civil War veteran hired to train the modernising Emperor’s troops in Western weaponry technique to take on a band of fundamentalist samurai who are disrupting the building of a US-style railroad they believe is destroying the traditional Japanese way of life. Algren, however, gets sidetracked by the poetic beauty of the *bushido* ethic of the doomed samurai and swaps sides. But to no avail: the new-fangled railroad, a potent symbol of modernism, is here to stay.\(^37\) Taking up

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\(^36\) The next swordsman to hit the world’s arthouse screens was, in fact, Yoji Yamada’s Oscar-nominated *The Twilight Samurai* (2002), which was made before *Zatoichi* but was not released in most Western countries until a month or two after. As its title implies, the warrior in this film is close to extinction. With the light fading fast on the Tokugawa shogunate era (1603–1868), he questions the *bushido* code and dies as Japan is entering the accelerated modernisation of the Meiji era. The obsolescence of the samurai class is a persistent motif in samurai films. It was a strong theme in the satirical films of Yamanaka Sadao and Itami Manusaku in the 1930s as well as in Akira Kurosawa’s post-war samurai films. Unlike the Tom Cruise film, Yamada’s film is unequivocal about the value of samurai culture: it has none – apart from providing the narrative theme, ideas and images for films.

\(^37\) Peter Bradshaw notes that the film broadly takes as its inspiration ‘a folk memory of Kurosawa’s *Seven Samurai* and its Western transmission. [Zwick’s] samurai are basically just real non-quiche-eating, non-moisturising men, albeit men with an occasional refined taste for poetry’ (Peter Bradshaw, ‘Review: The Last Samurai’, *The Guardian*, 9 January 2004).
their swords for one last stand, Algren and his samurai comrades-in-arms prove to be still targets for fast bullets.

Thus a US citizen introduces the Japanese to gun-law to replace the rule of the sword. As will the US Army of Occupation in the wake of the Pacific War in 1945, when *chanbara* films were outlawed on the grounds that the sword was feudal and vengeful but the gun was acceptable because it symbolised individualism and self-defence. The film’s overt narrative theme of cultural imperialism may or may not have been lost on the film’s star (also its producer), who commented: ‘It’s about the Japanese meeting the Industrial Revolution and it’s the death of one culture and the birth of another. It is a process that continues through history.’

Criticism that interprets cultural transfer as cultural imperialism holds Hollywood responsible for the disappearance of national and local cinemas by preventing their development or production. Thus the spectacular dance in *Zatoichi* can be read as a form of cultural imperialism. It could also be read as Kitano slyly indicating ambivalence towards Hollywood’s hegemonic and homogenising power by giving his audience an ending that echoes a classic Hollywood musical finale but, by absenting himself from it, also disavows Hollywood. And in doing so he creatively demonstrates a productive outcome of the tensions between two cinemas. Kitano/Zatoichi does not, however, disappear completely from the end of his film: he gives himself the last word and shot. The film cuts from the happy tappers to a close-up of Zatoichi ending in a freeze frame. We learn that this Zatoichi may differ from all the others in another significant way: he may not, after all, be blind. His final words create an enigma: opening his eyes for the first time he looks direct to camera and says: ‘Even with my eyes wide open … I can’t see a thing.’ What is it that he – or we – can or cannot see?

First, what does the persistent search for Hollywood’s international presence in one of its national others allow us to see? It seeks and tends to find a culturally determined national cinema with Japanese national identity and cultural essence and difference corralled behind national and cinematic borders. It shows cultural transfer as a one-way flow from the West to the East, from Hollywood to the national

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cinema. In showing us a bounded cinema with the potential to be destroyed or polluted by Hollywood’s ‘foreign’ presence, it shows a national cinema in binary opposition to international Hollywood. What many Western audiences and critics look for in Kitano’s films tends to be either Japanese authenticity or the destructive influence of Western directors and styles. Kitano’s long takes, for example, are said to be inherited from Ozu, a director whose film style is widely admired for its distinct ‘Japaneseness’.

For those determined to see the cultural transfers as cultural imperialism, however, this can be a roundabout means of locating Hollywood, because, as Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto has described, Ozu has also been praised by Western critics for his knowledge and mastery of classical Hollywood cinema norms. When Kitano’s films are subjected to scrutiny from this perspective, the essence of international Hollywood can be located in the ‘antique sentimentalism’ of his film Dolls (2002), which, for one Western critic, indicates that Kitano is no longer Japanese because it reveals the director to be ‘channelling not Ozu, but D.W. Griffith’. The violent yakuza (gangster) narratives of some of Kitano’s other films are also said to reveal a debt to Hollywood – they are compared to the films of Martin Scorsese, whose own artistic position in the borderlands between Hollywood and US independent cinema is well known. Not even Kitano’s differences from Western cinema are exempt from the Hollywood yardstick, as the ‘deliberate amateurishness’ of his visual and structural approach in Zatoichi has been ascribed to a polarised resistance to Hollywood.

Second, what does this model prevent us from seeing? When a national cinema is defined in terms of its otherness from international Hollywood in a centre–periphery model, the connections between different national cinemas tend to get left out of the equation. From a non-Hollywood perspective, for example, Zatoichi’s peroxide hair could be read as a reference not to (or not only to) US cultural imperialism but to Japanese imperialism, and as a macro-regional reference to the blond wig worn by the morally weak Japanese martial arts fighter character in the Hong Kong feature Fist of Fury (Lo Wei, 1972). According to Fist of Fury’s DVD

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41 Ibid.
cover, this is an ‘an epic tale of national rivalries’ in which Bruce Lee, as a loyal servant of the Hong Kong nation, ‘battles against Japanese Imperialist forces determined to subjugate his people’.  

The interchanges with Japan’s own cultural traditions, forms and practices in Zatoichi can also go unnoticed in a textual reading placed in the context of internationalism. From a non-Hollywoodcentric perspective, the tap dance can be read not (or not only) as a dialogue with the 1930s Hollywood musical but with Japanese film history. It is a response to the traditional peasant dance in a celebrated chanbara film, Miyamoto Musashi kanketsuhen: kettō Ganryūjima (Samurai III: Duel on Ganryu Island) (Hiroshi Inagaki, 1956), a film that contributed to the reinvigoration of the genre almost 50 years earlier. Innovatively fusing invented tradition with social realism, the dance in Ingaki’s film is an altogether less exuberant affair, with much formal drumming and a heavy-limbed style of choreography which is entirely motivated by the narrative, whereas the dance in Zatoichi is not. A focus on Hollywood and an insistence upon national cultural purity makes it difficult to see that, by breaking with tradition, Kitano is also

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42 The Fist of Fury DVD was released by Universal Studios in 2005. The wig begs the question, of course, as to why the Japanese imperialist character in a Hong Kong movie is given a Western-style hairpiece in the first place. Kinnie Yau Shuk-ting sheds valuable insight on the reception of this film: ‘Despite the anti-Japanese sentiment and the negative depiction of Japanese people throughout the film, Fist of Fury was a big hit when it was released in Japan. Japanese were portrayed in a very funny way in Fist of Fury, wrongly wearing Hakama [a garment resembling a long pleated divided skirt traditionally worn by samurai] and even sporting blonde wigs. However, most Japanese spectators claimed that they did not feel any sense of resentment because they did not recognise themselves in these grossly unreal and “stupid” characters. Moreover, apart from the dynamic fighting style portrayed in the film, the spirit of the Chinese warrior was admired as a “lost treasure” by some of the Japanese audience – a spirit once found in their own bushido (or samurai) movies. Nevertheless, Raymond Chow, the President of Golden Harvest, reportedly worried that the anti-Japanese sentiment in Fist of Fury would irritate the Japanese audience and this may explain why certain changes were made in the Japanese version. One of these was the famous scene where several Japanese are teasing [a Chinese character] in front of a signboard outside a park reading “No Dogs and Chinese Allowed.” One of the Japanese says “if you walk like a dog of our Japanese Empire, I’ll take you in [the park]” but the Japanese subtitle was simplified to “If you walk like a dog, I’ll take you in”. The scene of a Japanese stripper dancing at a feast was also cut out in order to protect the image of Japanese from denigration’ (Kinnie Yau Shuk-ting, ‘Interactions between Japanese and Hong Kong Action Cinema’, in Meaghan Morris, Siu Leung Li and Stephen Chan Ching-kiu, eds, Hong Kong Connections: Transnational Imagination in Action Cinema. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005: 44–45).

43 The villagers in Samurai III are celebrating in the mistaken belief that a band of brigands have been vanquished: the plot requires them all to be in one place on the other side of the village from a hut where a fire breaks out as a signal for the brigands to swoop.
continuing in the innovative footsteps of Misumi’s earlier film, *Zatôichi monogatari*, which was said to usher in a new era of the samurai film, with a swordsman who followed not the *bushido* code of the samurai warrior nobility but the low-life criminal code of the *yakuza*. This desire to reinvent the *jidaigeki* – a trend that Kurosawa was also involved in – has long been part of Japanese national cinema history.

While the legitimacy of a Hollywood-centric critical reading is not necessarily denied by the authorial intentions of the director himself, Kitano’s response to queries relating to foreign influences broadens our understanding of the complexity of these issues. Kitano is dismissive of the usually Eurocentric ‘search-for-the-foreign-influence’ school of film analysis. He does not accept Hollywood as the only or even the central influence, citing a combination of his own experience in the popular *manzai* (stand-up) comedy, in which tap dancing was a prerequisite for the performers, traditional Japanese kabuki theatre, and contemporary Japanese and African-American dance and music:

I didn’t like the Gene Kelly type of tap dancing. But when I discovered the type of tap dancing Gregory Hines performed without music, I thought it was amazing …

A few years ago, I became acquainted with the Japanese tap dancing team called ‘The Stripes.’ I was completely fascinated by their dancing … The way that scene is executed is much closer to kabuki… Those dances are a lot slower on stage than the dance in the film, but the rhythm is the same. I did my modernized rendition of typical festival dancing scenes in a period piece. I let Japan’s top tap dancers, appearing as farmers and carpenters,

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44 For a review of this debate, see Yoshimoto, ‘The Difficulty of Being Radical’: 338–53.
45 *Manzai* is a popular form of stand-up comedy originating in Osaka.
46 Gregory Hines (1946–2003) was a noted African-American dancer/actor whose film appearances include *The Cotton Club* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1984).
47 In drawing upon kabuki theatre as an influence, Kitano is tapping into a fascinating flow of etymological connections: because the individual kanji characters of the word ‘kabuki’, from left to right, mean ‘sing’, ‘dance’, and ‘skill’, ‘kabuki’ is sometimes translated as ‘the art of singing and dancing’. These, however, are *ateji* characters that do not reflect actual etymology. The word ‘kabuki’ is believed to derive from the verb ‘kabuku’, meaning ‘to lean’ or ‘to be out of the ordinary’; thus ‘kabuki’ can be interpreted as meaning ‘avant-garde’ or ‘bizarre’ theatre.
dressed in traditional kimonos, wooden clogs and straw sandals, do the latest style of tap dancing backed by hip-hop rhythms.\textsuperscript{48}

The above readings of scenes from \textit{Zatoichi} suggest that when cultural transfers between national cinema and Hollywood are analysed within a framework of internationalism, the relationship between them is conceptualised as a binary ‘face-off’. The model of ‘internationalism’ perpetuates a Eurocentric (or Western) approach to the definition of national cinema by placing Hollywood at the centre, often proposing cultural imperialism in the form of Hollywoodisation (or ‘Americanisation’) as the problem, and reading films in such a way as to impose an occidental analytical framework on oriental films. This obscures or ignores the degree of cultural diversity, interpenetration and overlap, the creative tensions and resulting hybridities that characterise so much cinematic activity. Hollywood’s dominance in the world film market cannot be denied but, as Yoshimoto has argued, this does not automatically mean that the Hollywood cinema has been dominant trans-historically or trans-culturally. We need to put Hollywood in specific historical contexts: instead of talking about Hollywood as the norm, we must examine the specific and historically changing relations between the Hollywood cinema and other national cinemas.\textsuperscript{49}

To do this I shall first examine internationalism as the centre-periphery model which poses Hollywood as the norm, and second, investigate the processes of cultural transfer that are seen to underwrite this model.

\textbf{Challenging Internationalism}

Most Western histories and introductions to Japanese national cinema begin by pointing to its international origins. When films were first screened in 1896 Japanese audiences watched Western movies on imported US and European camera-projectors – Thomas Edison’s Kinetoscope, the Lumière Brothers’ \textit{Cinematographe}, and the Vitascope of the German-born US inventor Siegmund Lubin. Within two years Japanese-made films were being made and exhibited, but French, US and British


\textsuperscript{49} Yoshimoto, ‘The Difficulty of Being Radical’: 254.
films continued to dominate the market as they did everywhere else. Many of the early Japanese-produced films fuel the argument that Japanese cinema assimilated and reproduced what is known as the international style from the start, making only minimal concessions to domestic audiences and national cultural specificity. Thus in terms of genre and style, the early Japanese films are said to have copied images and ideas that originated in the West. These included street scenes, rural scenes, trains, sea-scapes, boats, female dancers, skits featuring trick effects, family dinners, religious ceremonies, dramatic stage theatre, ethnographic subjects, documentary war footage and reconstructed battle scenes.

From another perspective, however, the first Japanese-made films are also said to show evidence of national identity and of ‘Japaneseness’, and the beginnings of a so-called uniquely Japanese national cinema. Western images, ideas and narrative styles were indigenised in ways that significantly differentiated the Japanese films from those of other nations: there were rice fields rather than sunflower fields, geisha dancers replaced butterfly dancers, Shinto rather than Christian ceremonies, the 1904 Russo-Japanese war not the Boer War, and kabuki theatre rather than Shakespeare, Ibsen or Molière. This, of course, was before Hollywood emerged as the globally dominant cinema and also before there was anything that could be properly called a national Japanese cinema. But describing these early films and emerging genres in such terms posits a number of binarisms in which the West is opposed to the East and an international style and content is opposed to a quintessentially Japanese style and content. It adopted a pattern for what would be seen as a dichotomy defining and framing most national cinemas as international Hollywood’s static and immutable other. It assumes national identity and tradition were already fully formed, fixed in place and unchanging.

As indicated earlier in this chapter, while film scholarship as well as popular rhetoric has widely endorsed the model of internationalism, this does not mean that what subsequently came to be called ‘transnationalism’ was necessarily denied. For O’Regan, cinema ‘is from inception international’. O’Regan uses the terms ‘international’, ‘cultural exchange’ and ‘cultural imperialism’ to describe what I and many others refer to as transnational cultural circulations: ‘Films circulate across national, language, and community boundaries reaching deep into social space. Audiences, critics, and filmmakers appropriate, negotiate, and

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50 O’Regan, ‘Cultural Exchange’, in Toby Miller and Robert Stam, eds, A Companion to Film Theory: 262. O’Regan uses the terms ‘international’, ‘cultural exchange’ and ‘cultural imperialism’ to describe what I and many others refer to as transnational cultural circulations: ‘Films circulate across national, language, and community boundaries reaching deep into social space. Audiences, critics, and filmmakers appropriate, negotiate, and
that ‘cinema has always been international, both culturally and economically’. Darrell William Davis describes cinema as ‘an institution that is profoundly, inescapably international’. Internationalism, furthermore, is perceived to frame the concept of national cinema. Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, for example, argue that cinema’s very internationalism contributed to the development of national cinema. Describing the first two decades of cinema in almost prelapsarian terms, they observe that this was a period when ‘cinema was largely an international affair’ and when ‘films circulated freely from country to country’ and ‘technical and artistic discoveries made in one country were quickly assimilated elsewhere …’ World War I, however, disrupted the free flow of films. While some national film industries benefited from this disruption, for others it interrupted the international circulation of films causing the internationalism of the early years to falter as stylistic influences could no longer circulate so freely across national borders. This, Thompson and Bordwell maintain, contributed to the birth of national cinemas, as it enabled ‘some nations [to develop] distinctive film styles’. At this point the binarism of an international Hollywood in opposition to national cinema emerges in their analysis, as they argue that from this moment on ‘most countries had to struggle to compete with [Hollywood], either by imitating its films or by finding alternatives to them … The struggle against Hollywood domination would shape much of what happened within national film industries for decades to come.’

In framing national cinema, the international stabilises it. The various usages of the term ‘international’ have a bearing on my argument as they demonstrate some of the slippages in meaning that have impacted upon and obscured our understanding of national cinema and the processes of cultural transfer. When used in a political


54 *Ibid.*: 79.
context, ‘internationalism’ has historically signified interventionism (often military), denoting binary opposition to national ‘isolationism’, or ‘nationalism’. In a cultural context, as Akira Iriye defines it, ‘internationalism’ signifies mutual cooperation, and a sense of shared values across national borders, achieved by a process of cultural exchange which aims to minimise cultural jingoism.\(^{55}\) While ‘cultural internationalism’ often connotes ideas about the mobility of culture coupled with a tolerance of cultural diversity, the term’s origins include ideas concerning nationalism and fixed cultural and national boundaries aimed to exclude. The term ‘internationalism’ became common currency after the end of World War I as territorial boundaries were drawn around nation-states when the European map was redrawn, with ‘nation’ defined as a cultural and/or ethnic entity and ‘state’ defined as a political and geopolitical entity. The latter, however, frequently overrode the former, with the victorious nations imposing geopolitical boundaries often in complete disregard of cultural and ethnic realities. This leads directly to the notion of cultural imperialism, of which Hollywood is so frequently accused. Thus ‘international’, a term often understood to mean or imply cooperation and the dissolution of boundaries, can also define and delimit: it can reinforce the existence of rigid national and cultural boundaries and involve coercion.

The dominant critical paradigm of internationalism within which the cultural transfers between nations and their cinemas take place is supported by the widespread use of imagery that makes it seem organic, natural. Thompson and Bordwell refer to a process of ‘cross-pollination’.\(^{56}\) Davis writes of ‘an international consciousness inseminating the film industries of all countries from the moment of their inception’.\(^{57}\) Tom Gunning employs the same metaphor, writing of ‘the international crisscrossing and artistic cross-fertilization of films’.\(^{58}\) Higson refers to ‘cultural cross-breeding’.\(^{59}\) O’Regan regards internationalism as an inherent trait, writing that it ‘is in cinema’s nature to cross cultural borders within and between

\(^{56}\) Bordwell and Thompson, *Film Art* 1993:407
\(^{58}\) Cited in Davis, *Picturing Japaneseeness*. 1996:225
nations’. Naturalising and thus normalising internationalism tends to obscure difference, and is similar to the notion of a universal film language – which, as already mentioned, is widely presumed in spite of the striking diversity between different national film industries. Paradoxically, for something so widely perceived as natural, when Hollywood is located in the national it is often regarded as unnatural, as a perversion which, as unwanted ‘foreign’ matter, is to be resisted.

Before addressing the issue of cultural transfer and of ‘unwanted foreign matter’ in particular, I shall locate the first appearance of the celluloid Japanese swordsman, to suggest that he points to the emergence of a national cinema that is not framed and contained by an internationalism. He initially appears among the very first Japanese-produced films in kyuugeki, an early cinema swordfight genre. These one-reelers are not simply a Japanese version of the highly popular Western genre of boxing fights that were shown all over the world. Nor are they a manifestation of film that has captured an immutable cultural essence. Rather than demonstrate the emergence of a uniquely Japanese screen culture defined in opposition to international cinema, or a cinema that is defined by internationalist ideas, they point to Japanese modernising processes and intertextual dialogue between kabuki theatre and the emerging film art. Yoshimoto explains that kyuugeki (the word literally means ‘old school’) initially derived from traditional kabuki theatre and developed into more popular film entertainment when the stage and proscenium arch were dropped and non-kabuki elements were infused into the form – these included specifically filmic devices and techniques such a trick photography. Thus the early evolution of the Japanese screen warrior cannot be regarded as evidence of either the internationalisation of Japanese cinema or the Japanisation of international cinema; it is more like ‘an effect of intertextual fermentation’, to use Yoshimoto’s description – the creative outcome of the tensions between Japanese and Western cinema, cinema and theatre, tradition and modernism.

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60 Tom O'Regan, ‘Cultural Exchange’ in Miller and Stam, eds, A Companion to Film Theory. 2004:262
62 For a detailed and illuminating analysis of the origins and history of jidaigeki see Yoshimoto, Kurasawa: 205–45.
For Iwabuchi, the assumption of internationalism ‘confirms the territorialisation of cinematic culture and fails to transcend the Eurocentric Universalism of “the West” and ethnocentric Particularism of “the non-West.”’. He suggests that if ‘we want to disenchant ourselves from the essentialist view of national cultural identity, we have simultaneously to debunk reciprocal imaginings of other communities as monolithic entities, and recognise the fragmented, multiple and mobile nature of all identities’. Along the lines of Appadurai’s suggestion to focus on ‘process’ rather than ‘trait’, Iwabuchi cites Clifford James to propose: ‘We have to ask “what process rather than essences are involved in present experiences of cultural identity”’.\(^63\) Eric Cazdyn also offers valuable insight into the problematic assumption that the West frames the East in an argument that equally applies to the binary division between the international and the national:

I have always found it strange that many people understand film as a Western invention that, despite being deftly adapted by the Japanese, still leaves traces of the West on every print that is made. Is there not a similar logic in saying the invention of the Western printing press marks every Japanese shohetsu (prose narrative) as Western? … Film may well be contingent on modernization, and modernization may well have happened in the West first, but modernization is part of a world structure that seems infinitely more productive to understand as having no firsts, only dependencies.\(^64\)

Cazdyn further proposes a way of rethinking the conventional notion of cultural transfer between international Hollywood and national cinema in terms of domination and control. He suggests that rather than the conventional binarisms, the formulation ‘same and other’ could be usefully applied. This, he argues, might help forestall ‘a discourse of firsts, hierarchies, and absolute difference or identity’ and allow a way of seeing that the national and the rest of the world, ‘however different or the same they may be’, are constitutively related.\(^65\)


\(^65\) *Ibid.*: 4.
Cultural Transfer

O’Regan maintains that cultural exchange underwrites internationalism, and that how we identify it and evaluate its standing and direction fuel a central dispute within Film Studies. While O’Regan uses the term ‘cultural exchange’, I prefer to use ‘cultural transfer’, since ‘exchange’ implies a two-way trade in which something is given in return for something else and this, as I shall discuss, does not always occur. O’Regan’s definition of cultural exchange, however, is sufficiently broad to embrace every type of cultural transfer at every level, as he applies it to:

the circulation – the giving, receiving, and redisp osition – of cultural materials among differentiated socio-cultural formations. The component parts of the cultural exchange process – from the distribution mechanisms to the materials circulated and the formations that send and receive – are immensely varied in incidence, form, and purpose.

Throughout its history, Japanese national cinema has experienced cultural transfers in most of its forms. That foreign cinema has always played a large part in the development of Japanese cinema is undeniable, and is attested to by the inclusion of up to fifteen pages of notes on foreign films at the end of almost every chapter of Junichiro Tanaka’s massive five-volume *A History of the Development of Japanese Film* (published between 1957 and 1980). Were further evidence sought, it can be found in the long list of foreign films from a wide range of nations that Akira Kurasawa mentions in his book *Something Like an Autobiography*. Textual evidence also exists in the films themselves. Referring to the cultural transfers that took place in the 1920s and 1930s, for example, the critic Tadao Sato writes:

In the 1930s respect for the psychological realism of French films encouraged film-makers to inject a delicate psychological nuance into their work … Eisenstein’s montage theory came to exert a strong influence on the leftist ‘tendency films’ (*keijo eiga*) popular around 1930 and resulted in a fad for an extreme style of editing.

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66 See O’Regan, ‘Cultural Exchange’: 262–94.
67 Ibid.: 263.
It cannot be inferred that Japanese cinema simply adopted Western film ideas, images and structural conventions. There are also many examples of Japanese cinema indigenising foreign input and using the components of cultural transfer for its own ends. In the aftermath of the Great Kanto earthquake of 1923, for example, an event that seriously impaired Japanese production levels for some years, when the industry was rebuilt it adopted the Hollywood system of vertical integration to control the distribution and exhibition sectors in order to minimise the number of foreign films, especially the highly popular Hollywood ones, being imported. The tendency to trace all innovation to cultural transfers from the West is a delusion as Sato points out in the following example:

The neorealism of Italian films also had certain, though not necessarily strong, effect since their subject matter of social problems and their documentary style had already been experimented with in Japanese films of the 1930s. What is at issue is not whether cultural transfer takes place, but, as O’Regan suggests, the nature of the transfer, its standing, how much there is and where it originates. Hollywood plays a central role in the widespread ambivalence towards cultural transfer. A minimal amount usually means cultural transfer is simply ‘part of the wallpaper – a cause for neither celebration nor denigration’; a little more transfer and Hollywood can be thought ‘a desirable catalyst for understanding and reinvigorating local tradition’. Too much, however, and ‘the desire for cultural exchange readily turns to repulsion’. In the last instance, Hollywood is conceived as:

usurping national sovereignty, recklessly distorting cinema markets globally, and contaminating local audiences. Hollywood dominance of domestic screens and of box-office receipts breaches the sovereign national culture and turns the cinema away from its natural inclination. Action is therefore necessary to counter Hollywood’s ‘imperialising’ presence so as to ensure the survival of local traditions, the transmission of social and aesthetic values, even culture itself.

69 Ibid.
70 O’Regan, ‘Cultural Exchange’: 273.
71 Ibid.: 276.
O’Regan describes cultural imperialism as just one form of cultural exchange, at the far end of an attitudinal spectrum. Other analysts describe cultural imperialism and cultural exchange as two different models to make a distinction between benign cultural transfer and something that is much more than simply ‘too much’ but is coercive and destructive. To claim that ‘cultural imperialism’ is a significantly different concept from ‘cultural exchange’ or ‘cultural transfer’ need not imply that all cultural exchanges are benign and that parity exists between all cinemas. As O’Regan states, the unequal dynamics between large, economically robust exporting cinemas and weaker cinemas implies a constant ‘risk of substituting local culture with that of another’. While the cultural transfer model does not ignore economic, political and cultural asymmetries, nor does it confront or explain the causes and effects of declining national production statistics or of Hollywood’s determined international expansion, which includes ownership of overseas distribution and exhibition networks. O’Regan explains a limitation in cultural transfer as a theoretical paradigm in this way:

Our film politics, our film policy-making, our film appreciation, and our film criticism are deeply ambivalent about cultural exchange. We take it for granted, embrace it, and repel it in equal measure. We simultaneously see cultural exchange as an ordinary and integral part of the very constitution of the cinema, and as something so extraordinary as to require urgent critical and policy remedy.

For many film analysts the imbricated issues of neo-colonialism, US foreign policy, third world cultural and political resistance, and Eastern objections to Orientalism require another paradigm. As O’Regan states: ‘The cultural exchange model speaks too much of a benign utopian internationalism and too little of unequal exchanges.’

**Cultural Imperialism**

The argument for cultural imperialism takes issue with the cultural transfer model for failing to account adequately for the realities of dependent development,

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73 *Ibid.*: 269.
74 *Ibid.*: 272.
underdevelopment, unequal exchange, world-systems history, centre–periphery relations and cultural and media imperialism. Where cultural transfer makes little of the inequalities in cultural and economic power, cultural imperialism stresses the inequality and emphasises the cultural coercion involved. There is a great deal of evidence, much emanating from Hollywood itself, to support the cultural imperialism argument, which sees Hollywoodisation as an extension of Hollywood’s hegemonic power beyond mere marketplace superiority. In the 1920s, for example, Will Hays, President of the US industry’s trade association, the Motion Pictures Association of America (MPAA), argued that trade no longer follows the flag, ‘trade follows the film’.

It is hard to think of a better filmic visualisation of cultural imperialism than that in Wim Wenders’ film *Kings of the Road* (1975). Unable to get the words of a US pop song out of his head, a character comments, ‘The Americans have colonised our subconscious.’ Ironically, this New German Cinema film adopts the form of a very Hollywood genre, the road movie. It is a road which the film suggests has space only for an American model: a few scenes earlier this character saw a car drive into a river and sink. The car that sinks is, of course, a Volkswagen. But Wenders’ despair was only partial because, at least in part consciously and willingly, Hollywood also informed Wenders’ own cinematic practice and provided him with an aesthetic and ideological framework to oppose the recent filmmaking traditions in his own country, then divided into East and West Germany. That cultural imperialism remains an issue within the film world is clear from the recent comment of Gilles Jacob, Director of the Cannes Film Festival, who stated unequivocally: ‘America is not just interested in exporting its films. It is interested in exporting its way of life.’

The cultural imperialism thesis has strong resonances to the US–Japan cinematic relationship. Not only does the Japanese cinema have a longer history of resistance to Hollywood market dominance than many others; it also experienced Hollywoodisation in a particularly concentrated form during the period of US occupation, from 1945 to 1952 after the Pacific War. Arguments about cultural imperialism in Japanese cinema emerged throughout the 20th century whenever the

cultural transfers were seen to be asymmetrical. They also inform Western studies of Japanese cinema which fail to observe the internal intertextual transfers and flows. The issue was seldom clear cut, and it often overlapped with discussion and argument about modernisation. When the Shochiku production company was set up in 1920, for example, its policy was a proclamation in favour of modernisation rather than submission to Hollywood’s increasing hegemonic power:

> The main purpose of this company will be the production of artistic films resembling the latest and most flourishing styles of the Occidental cinema; it will distribute these both at home and abroad; it will introduce the true state of our national life to foreign countries, and it will assist in international reconciliation both here and abroad.\(^7^8\)

The Japanese studios in the 1920s ‘held up Hollywood and European spectaculars as cinematic standards par excellence’, and yet, as Davis points out, firm control of the burgeoning film industry was retained in domestic hands.\(^7^9\)

A similar example of modernisation can be seen when the *jidaigeki* film emerged in a new, invigorated form in the aftermath of the Great Kanto earthquake. Few doubt that the innovative nihilistic samurai who engaged in satirical and comedic swordfights in the films of this period were influenced by the then hugely popular Hollywood silent comedies, in particular the swashbuckling adventures of Douglas Fairbanks films. ‘The list of Japanese films that adapted or imitated Hollywood productions,’ Yoshimoto points out, ‘by merely changing characters’ names and physical settings is endless.’\(^8^0\) But these films cannot be regarded as evidence of either the Hollywoodisation of Japanese cultural imperialism or the Japanisation of Hollywood. Rather, the impulse came from young, modernist filmmakers of leftist tendency who were anxious to make a break with the traditional and conservative influence of kabuki theatre.

Another influence was the energy created by small independent companies attempting to break the near-monopoly of the large companies created in the newly set up vertically integrated industry. ‘The vitality of *jidaigeki* in the 1920s and

79 *Ibid.*: 29
1930s,’ writes Yoshimoto, ‘was inseparable from young filmmakers’ anarchistic rebellion against the establishment and, at an institutional level, small production companies’ struggle against large capital.’ In this environment, cultural imperialism proved a valuable weapon for repressive governments anxious to control cultural policy, stem modernisation, and promote a particular ideology of national identity through cinematic representations and genres. Thus the golden age of *chanbara* films ended in the mid-1930s with the government denouncing American cultural imperialism in order to justify their suppression of leftist film movements and the dismantling of small independent companies by the majors. Ironically, the government’s repressive policy was greatly helped by the existence of a vertically integrated film industry which, as noted above, was a structure directly copied from Hollywood.

Japan unquestionably experienced US cultural imperialism during the post-Pacific war years of American occupation. The cultural control of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP) in the 1940s was incontrovertibly coercive and unidirectional. According to David Desser, ‘America, through its occupation army, virtually forced Japan to adopt Western ideals.’ There was nothing ‘virtual’ about it, as Desser himself elucidates:

> It was no longer a case of gradual adaptation, there was no choice, through a complex series of edicts … Japanese society was changed forever … Filmmakers were as much a part of the occupation army’s attentions as any other segment of society. America had discovered the power of film for propaganda during the war and was determined to utilize the medium to bring democratic ideas to Japan after the war.\(^2\)

The Americans invested heavily in cultural imperialism, subjecting Japanese cinema to a stringent censorship code. The celluloid Japanese warrior was very directly affected: he more or less completely disappeared as ‘the principles of feudalistic loyalty and revenge’ in films depicting the *bushido* code, *seppuko* and swordfights were outlawed. An arguably perverse obsession with the sword saw a total clampdown on swordfights while gunfights were permitted on the grounds that the

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\(^1\) *Ibid.*: 222.

former was an instrument of feudal revenge while the latter is a weapon of self-defence and individualism.\textsuperscript{83} This effectively outlawed most \textit{jidaigeki} films, and was a blatant attempt to impose American ideology upon the nation. This experience of cultural imperialism, however, makes it possible to see that it is inappropriate to describe other instances of transfer in quite the same way.

The celluloid swordfighter re-emerged only slowly after the Occupation ended in 1952. The Japanese censorship board that replaced SCAP initially restricted the number of \textit{jidaigeki} films to one per month for each film production company. Japanese filmmakers responded by creating a different kind of \textit{jidaigeki}, in which a type of period detective story replaced the samurai narrative and the warrior morphed into a gun-toting criminal. But the Occupation censorship and its aftermath were not the only reasons for the absence of the warrior from Japanese screens: post-war filmmakers responded to what Yoshimoto describes as ‘the necessity of asserting radical newness of post-war Japan, even if it turned out to be only imaginary’.\textsuperscript{84} It is in this cultural environment that the \textit{chanbara} film would be reinvented, albeit in a radically different form, exemplified most notably by Kurosawa’s \textit{Seven Samurai}, the initial impetus for which came not from the classical Hollywood westerns of John Ford, as widely alleged, but from a desire to make a new type of \textit{jidaigeki} film.\textsuperscript{85}

Occidental critics who focus on the influence of Hollywood on this and other films by Kurosawa – he is frequently called the ‘most Western’ of Japanese filmmakers – play a Hollywoodcentric game. In this critical scenario, the globally dominant cinema is the global template and, whether adopted or resisted, its influence is seen as all-pervasive. Such criticism fails to consider the specificity of the institutional site of discourse and ignores – as it also minimises – the interplay of national intertextuality. While the concept of cultural imperialism addresses the void left by the model of a benign cultural transfer, it fails to address the complexities of cinematic cultural relations, in which flows are not unidirectional and there is not necessarily any coercion. It locates an international Hollywood at the centre and a national cinema at the margins, with little or no power to offer anything to either the


\textsuperscript{84} Yoshimoto, \textit{Kurosawa}: 227.

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.: 238.
centre or to a heterogenous world cinema. In this model, Hollywood is conceptualised as the powerfully destructive cultural transmitter and national cinemas as passive cultural receivers. Just as problematic is the notion of audiences as ‘cultural dupes’, participating in this process not only by ingesting the Hollywood movies that are allegedly imposed on them but also by adopting north American values and ways of being and thinking. The model fails to account for the highly fluid movement of cultural phenomena between cinemas and within national boundaries or for the hybrid nature of cultural landscapes. As Iwabuchi points out, ‘the asymmetrical encounter of various cultures results in the transformation of an existing cultural artefact and the creation of a new style’.  

The border-crossing swordsman

The issue of unidirectionality is, perhaps, the most contested element of the cultural imperialism thesis. Empirical refutation of this notion can be found in a number of reception studies which demonstrate how audiences and filmmakers read Hollywood and transform aspects of Hollywood from their own local or regional perspective. Refutation, as I shall show, also exists in the films themselves. My argument is that, as Jonathan L. Beller points out, the one-way street notion ignores, or fails to see, how ‘new forms of circulation interrupt and rechannel dominant circulation’.  

From the very beginnings of Japanese national cinema, transnational thought has found its apotheosis in the often itinerant, culturally hybridised border-crossing character of the swordsman, who emerges from the interstices of time and place and is constantly transformed and recreated in response to the creative tensions between the global and the local. Over the years he has responded to the asymmetrical and overlapping influence of Japanese modernising and anti-modernising impulses, to cultural transfers from Hollywood and other foreign cinemas, to overt cultural imperialism in the form of the heavy censoring hand of US Occupation, and to pressures and movements internal to Japanese cultural developments. If Takeshi’s

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86 Iwabuchi, ‘Complicit Exoticism’: 40.
swordsman looks very different from the classic Japanese character and breathes innovative life into the genre it is partially because he is part of a long tradition in Japanese cinema in which an apparently immutable cultural essence and ‘Japaneseness’ is shown repeatedly in new ways, constantly taking the genre in new directions.

We saw him first emerge at the end of the 19th century in the filmed theatrical kabuki performances of kyugeki films. Over the next two decades he crossed into a new genre as he acquired trick cinematographic effects imported from Western cinema, he was framed and unframed by kabuki theatre, and he moved faster and more daringly as he imitated and competed with the silent Hollywood sword-brandishing Zorro and other movies of the 1920s. Rokuhei Susukita’s script for Woodcut Artist (1923) has swordfighting scenes that are clearly modelled on Hollywood action movies of the time – there is evidence of very ‘untraditional’ fast action and editing, for example. But these scenes and the film’s samurai, who were rebellious, cynical and rowdy individualists, do not represent triumphant US homogenisation or Western universalism; rather they express an antipathy towards the loyal, submissive prototype and the typical balletic movements that Japanese cinema inherited from kabuki. In the 1930s the swordsman cut a comic, satirical figure in the films of Sadao Yamanaka and Mansaku Itami whose samurai were the hybridised outcome of Japanese and foreign – not necessarily Hollywood – ideas, images and technologies. And so he travels on, appearing, disappearing and reappearing, losing and regaining his sight, sometimes relinquishing his sword for a gun, in numerous guises. Each new guise invites us to rethink ways in which the Japanese cinema relates to essentialist views of national cultural identity and to Western cinema’s universalising internationalism.

Kurosawa’s screen warriors were a part of the tradition in which the jidaigeki genre was constantly reinvented. Like many who preceded them – and like Misumi’s and Kitano’s warriors, who would follow – the swordsmen Kurosawa introduces to cinema question notions of cultural essence and challenge the idea of unidirectional transfers and cultural coercion. When he first walks into frame in Seven Samurai, we have been primed to expect a saviour. We are accompanying a group of desperate farmers to town as they go shopping for a samurai warrior to deliver them from raping and pillaging brigands. Unlike the majority of samurai films which set the
narrative in the 19th century, Kurosawa and scriptwriter Hashimoto Shinobu aimed to break the stalemate of *jidaigeki* immediately after the US Army of Occupation had withdrawn by setting it in the Sengoku period in the 16th century, when the future of a unified state was threatened by civil war. Its narrative theme was also innovative: ‘There had never before been a Japanese film,’ writes Joan Mellen, ‘in which farmers hired samurai, or an evocation of the social upheaval which made credible such an idea.’

In a mid shot, the small group of defenceless farmers stand in a busy thoroughfare bewildered by the town, the crowds and the endless stream of samurai passing by. They are intimidated by the superior social class of the samurai and baffled by the sheer choice: the town seems to be swarming with homeless samurai, or ronin. Static head and shoulder shots of the farmers looking first to their right, then to their left, and back again to their right, are intercut with travelling head and shoulder shots of samurai walking up and down in front of them. Rather than show us a single traditional type, Kurosawa shows us that diversity exists: the farmers have to decide between tall, short, old, young, hirsute and glabrous samurai. At the same time, apart from their sword, patterned clothing and manifest arrogance, Kurosawa also shows us that they look much like the farmers – dishevelled, poor and hungry. Finally, one of the farmers looks meaningfully at his companions and walks eagerly out of frame in pursuit of a ronin he has just seen. This sequence of shots is accompanied by slightly comic music which hints that the farmers are due for a pratfall. Which is promptly delivered, but in a sequence in which comedy turns to tragedy. Next, there is the trademark Kurosawa transition, a wipe, to a wide shot in which a samurai is giving the poor farmer a beating. Here is no noble samurai following his *bushido* code of honourable moral principle, but a dirty-looking, overweight and arrogant mercenary whose price is higher than the poor farmers can afford. He calls the farmer a fool for even asking and stomps off, giving the farmer a kick as he exits frame. The farmer is left bowed down in the dust until his fellow farmers slowly help him to his feet. The music for this shot is solemn, with a male choir who sound as if they are groaning in sympathy.

In *Yojimbo* (Akira Kurasawa, 1961) the warrior Sanjuro (Toshiro Mifune) again looks very different from conventional depictions of the samurai warrior. In the

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opening shot he comes into frame with his back to the camera and idly scratches his head, as if he is uncertain which way to go. This is appropriate for a samurai in the 1860s at the end of the Tokugawa dynasty, which, as a caption informs us, was brought to an end by the emergence of a middle class. Trusting to fate to decide for him, our warrior, Sanjuro, who will become known simply as the bodyguard ‘with no name’, finds himself in a small township which, if it appeared in a Hollywood western would be described as ‘a one-horse town’. Except this is a jidaigeki film. In his comparison of the western and the jidaigeki genres, both of which are usually set in the 19th century when an era is coming to an end and the gun-toting cowboy will be as redundant as the sword-brandishing samurai, Yoshimoto points out that the western, called ‘horse opera’,

requires the iconographic image of horses. The horse in the Western is an important means of transportation and movement and often emphasises the vast expanse of desolate landscape to be traversed … In the jidaigeki … the horse is not a crucial narrative or iconographic component. There is no new territory to be conquered, no wilderness to be tamed …

Jidaigeki does, however, have dogs, and as Sanjuro enters this tiny, closed-down rural township we see the celebrated image of a mean-looking cur padding towards camera with a dismembered hand in its mouth. Sanjuro is completely baffled and looks round as if to say, ‘Where did that come from?’ It may or may not have come from the equally celebrated dismembered hand in Buñuel and Dali’s Un chien andalou. And it probably did not originate in the Hollywood western which had long influenced jidaigeki images. Its outrageousness and inventiveness indicates Kurosawa’s determination to take the genre and the screen warrior in a new direction. The film ignores kabuki conventions and delivers popular entertainment rather than the art cinema with which jidaigeki had always been formally related. With its graphic violence, Kurosawa raises the level of realism in Japanese cinema. At the same time he plays with the soundscape: Sato Masaru’s musical score uses ‘wrong’ instruments and realistic sounds such as human flesh being torn apart can be heard. He also uses blood in ways entirely new to Japanese cinema at the time – it gushes, spouts and flows in ways that will challenge and spur on filmmakers such as Quentin Tarantino in the years to come. Yojimbo introduced a new hybridised sub-

89 Yoshimoto, Kurosawa: 233.
genre to Japanese cinema that would become known as ‘cruel film’ (zankoku eigai). And to confirm his commitment to hybridisation, Kurosawa added humour as well as CinemaScope technology that had only very recently been imported from Hollywood.

The border-crossing swordsmen in these films point to a future where hybridising processes accelerate in speed and intensity as national and cultural borders become evidently increasingly porous. As is well known, Hollywood would remake Seven Samurai as The Magnificent Seven (John Sturges, 1960) and Sergio Leone would reinvent Yojimbo as Per un pugno di dollari (A Fistful of Dollars) (1964) as a spaghetti western. Yoshimoto’s observation about the role of the horse in the western was not lost on Leone: in his Tex-Mex borderlands movie (filmed in Spain) the warrior rides into his god-forsaken town not on a horse, but on a mule. The humour is still there, the warrior is still masterless and nameless, the fights are as splendid as a low budget genre can provide, and even some of the borders are the same. The same is true for yet another western version of Yojimbo, this time by US independent filmmaker Jim Jarmusch. In Dead Man (1995), our warrior has a name, but it is not, strictly speaking, his own, as it is that of the dead English 19th century poet and visionary, William Blake (Johnny Depp). The town is again a ‘one-horse town’ without a horse – and to emphasise the point, the town is called Machine. When Blake rides into this town it is by iron horse, and upon his arrival he sees not a dismembered hand but a sexual act of fellatio so lacking in human feeling that it seems disembodied. The dismembered hand does make an appearance when it is reincarnated later in the film as a dismembered head.

In this transnational screenscape the warrior is no respecter of generic, nation-state or other cultural boundaries. He has encountered porous borders at every turn and his various guises have emerged from the creative tensions of disjunctive cultural flows. In his long life, in addition to the textual borders of traditional kabuki theatre and cinema, he has crossed national borders in multiple directions. To mention Italy, Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, India, Malaysia, Australia and France Hollywood, and US independent cinema is simply to mention the best known. Generic borders have certainly proved no obstacle: he has appeared in chanbara, western, gangster, detective, film noir, gun fight, martial arts, kung fu, road movie, musical and comedy films. The borders of sub-genres have delivered a particularly
rich vein of hybridised celluloid warriors – these include the spaghetti, chop suey, hamburger and curry westerns, as well as the Hong Kong wuxia pian (swordplay) films. ‘He’ has also crossed gender boundaries: Shurayukihiime (Lady Snowblood) (Toshiya Fujita, 1973), for example, spawned Uma Thurman as The Bride (with no name) in Quentin Tarantino’s two-volume Kill Bill (2003, 2004). The borders between the seeing and the blind are not the only somatic borders the warrior crosses, with Helen Ma in the lead role as a physically impaired warrior in the Hong Kong film, The Deaf and Mute Heroine (Wu Ma, 1971). The warrior has lost a limb in another Hong Kong film, the Zatoichi-inspired One-Armed Swordsman (Zhang Che, 1967). The borders between media forms have also proved porous: warriors have travelled to and from film and television, anime and manga, and he has mastered kung fu and judo in addition to the gun.

He has crossed the borders apparently separating high culture (The Seven Samurai), art cinema (Le Samouraï (Jean-Pierre Melville, 1967)) and popular culture (Yojimbo, The Magnificent Seven, The Way of the Dragon) with the greatest of ease. These have revealed the borders to be porous in complex ways: Yojimbo was received as popular, low art in Japan, but as high art or art cinema elsewhere in the world. He also appeared in low-budget US independent cinema which is often seen as art cinema (Dead Man, Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai (Jim Jarmusch, 1999), and the Hollywood blockbuster (Last Man Standing (Walter Hill, 1996), The Last Samurai). He has pushed the boundaries of the phenomenon of stardom, having been played by actors as diverse as Yoshiro Mifune, Clint Eastwood, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Forest Whitaker, Tom Cruise, Uma Thurman, Bruce Lee, Gordon Lui and also stars (and unknowns) in east Asian films too numerous to mention.

In listing these filmic categories, the impossibility of containing the increasingly hybridised warrior within borders becomes obvious. Tarantino seized the opportunity to exploit these porous borders in Kill Bill Vol I and Vol II, making transparent the outcomes of creative tensions between jidaigeki, the yakuza, the Hollywood gangster film, and the kung fu action films of China and Hong Kong in the syncretised character of Pai Mei (Gordon Lui). In Kill Bill Vol II, Lui plays a lone kung fu master who demonstrates his unparalleled swordsmanship skills to his pupil, The Bride with no name (Uma Thurman), in scenes that combine slow-motion balletic kabuki theatre style with trick photography reminiscent of the kyugeki films
of a hundred years earlier. At the same time Pai Mei is an uncanny ghost of the character Lui plays in *Kill Bill Vol I*, in which he is the bald-headed, masked *yakuza* bodyguard, Johnny Mo.

**The Transnational**

The above exploration of ways in which a screen character crosses national, generic and other cultural borders has enabled me to question the conceptualisation of an international Hollywood in binary opposition to its national others. It challenges a notion of Hollywood success gained by the unidirectional imposition of cultural power, and of a national cinema perceived as ‘authentic’ only to the degree to which its borders prove resistant to cultural transfer from outside. The border represents both a crossing and an intersection, and implies divergence and difference. The notion of hybridity is crucial to an understanding of these diverse, multidirectional border-crossings, because the influence of Hollywood on national film cultures is, as William van der Heide argues, ‘more complex than the cultural imperialism argument allows for’.\(^{90}\)

As noted above, the term ‘international’ suggests something ‘between’ nations, thus confirming the notion of bounded national and cultural categories containing national identity and cultural essence. As a framework for analysing national cinema it does not adequately permit us to see the mobility and instability of cultural categories which lead to the deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation of culture. The concept of the ‘transnational’ is to be preferred, because it in effect disregards nationally demarcated boundaries, and conceives of culture as not limited to the ‘national’. The transnational allows us to resituate the national in ways that do not totally disavow it but do allow for the transcendence of national borders. Replacing the international paradigm with a transnational paradigm opens up a space in which cinemas can be seen as a series of sites. In these multiple sites, heterogenous elements encounter and transform each other and identity formation is a continuous process across porous borders. In these flows the transnational emerges, and it is not possible to see the national as pure or stable. The overlapping interpenetration, across and within borders, shows national cinemas to be invariably hybrid. They constantly

mix cultural phenomena and are always remaking and reinventing themselves rather than remaining immutable and fixed.

My analysis of numerous *jidaigeki* and non-Japanese swordfighting warrior films leads me to question the validity of conceptualising fixed and impermeable borders between an international Hollywood and its national other. Cinema’s samurai warrior shows that borders are sites of interaction, more complex and nuanced than the framework of internationalism, with its processes of cultural transfer or cultural imperialism, can explain or interpret. In that model, Hollywood’s influence is seen to be pervasive and destructive of local heterogeneity and of local and national ‘authenticity’. It fails to acknowledge that something more complex is occurring.
In 1959 Jean-Luc Godard shot his first feature-length film, *A bout de souffle* (Breathless), a seminal film of *le nouvelle vague*, or French New Wave. Noted for its originality and radical discontinuity, Godard nevertheless maintained that his film was part of a continuous recycling process that ‘remade’ classical Hollywood cinema. Twenty-four years later the compliment was returned in the form of Jim McBride’s New Hollywood remake, *Breathless* (1983). The French New Wave and Hollywood – classical and new – clearly belong to different time zones, and Paris and Los Angeles lie continents and oceans apart, separated by national, linguistic and other cultural boundaries. While these differences might suggest borders that are

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1 I have made my own translations, checking against the soundtrack, the English subtitles on the Fox Lorber/Winstar DVD (2000) and the continuity script in Dudley Andrew, ed., *Breathless: Jean-Luc Godard, director*. New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995: 33–146. In this instance, the DVD, which frequently abridges the dialogue, gives: ‘… it’s a new Franco-American understanding’. Andrew offers: ‘… this is truly a Franco-American encounter’. The dialogue is indistinct, but rather than ‘rencontre’ (encounter) or ‘entendement’ (understanding), from under the bedclothes Michel seems to be saying ‘vraiment un rapprochement’ (a coming or bringing together, an establishment or the re-establishment of harmonious relations, a reconciliation). I infer that Michel is making a punning reference to sexual intercourse and to (and chuckling about) the post-war trade and diplomatic agreements which were still hotly contested in France, especially the Blum-Byrnes trade agreements which dealt with film imports. Other definitions of ‘rapprochement’ (a word which entered the English language in the early 19th century) include: i) the re-establishing of cordial relations, as between two countries; ii) the state of reconciliation or of cordial relations; iii) reconciliation. ‘Reconciliation’ denotes i) act or fact of coming or being drawn near or together; ii) getting two things to correspond; iii) rapprochement. Synonyms include: agreement, cordiality, detente, friendliness, friendship, harmonising, harmony, reconcilement, reconciliation, reunion, softening.

2 The English translation of Godard’s film title is *Breathless* but I shall refer to his film as *A bout de souffle* and McBride’s film as *Breathless* throughout.
fixed and impermeable, the dislocations and relocations involved in the cycle of an original text (French New Wave), its precursor (classical Hollywood cinema), and its remake (New Hollywood) make it difficult to discern where Hollywood is located and where either it or the New Wave begin or end.

The New Wave comprises a body of written criticism and a small number of films produced by a group of relatively young critics and filmmakers closely associated with the influential Parisian journal of film criticism and analysis, *Cahiers du cinéma*. The best-known members of the group include Claude Chabrol, Jean-Luc Godard, Jacques Rivette, François Truffaut and Eric Rohmer. André Bazin, the *Cahiers* co-founder (with Jacques Doniol-Valcroze and Joseph-Marie Lo Duca) and its first editor (1951–58), is widely acknowledged as its intellectual and spiritual father. The distinguishing stylistic, narrative and thematic aspects of the New Wave films are all disputed. It is variously described as an artistic school, a movement or moment rather than a cinema, a style, and a genre, and referred to as new cinema, counter-cinema, avant-garde and/or, more simply, radical.

Despite its enduring and far-reaching influence, the New Wave is generally considered to have lasted only four or five years, starting in 1957 when Truffaut filmed *Le Beau Serge* and ending around 1962/63, when Chabrol made the highly commercial *Landru/Bluebeard* (1962) and Godard filmed his European-Hollywood co-production, *Le Mépris/Contempt* (1963). For some it originated in the 1948 seminal article by novelist, critic and filmmaker Alexandre Astruc entitled ‘*Naissance d’une nouvelle avant-garde: la caméra-stylo*’, which launched the notion of the ‘auteur’ among French film critics in the post-war period. For others its antecedents lie far away from Paris and in the films of the hitherto undetected ‘auteurs’ of the classical Hollywood studio system. And there are those who locate its conception in the Hollywood B-movie, specifically the film noir sub-gangster

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3 Astruc argued that cinema was evolving into a new means of expression equal in cultural value to painting and the novel: ‘After having been successively a fairground, an amusement analogous to boulevard theater, or a means of preserving images of an era, it is gradually becoming a language. By language, I mean a form in which and by which an artist can express his thoughts, however abstract they may be, or translate his obsessions exactly as he does in the contemporary essay or novel. This is why I would like to call this new age of cinema the age of the “caméra-stylo” (camera pen)’ (first published in *L’Ecran français*, 30 March 1948, reprinted as ‘The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: La Camera-Stylo’, in Peter Graham, ed. and trans., *The New Wave: Critical Landmarks*. Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1968: 17–23.

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movies. As for its end date, while for many this is fixed in the mid-1960s, when the New Wave films evolved into an overtly political counter-cinema in ideological opposition to Hollywood form and content, for others it has never ended. Film critic Mike Sleeper, for instance, locates it in today’s screenscape:

Tarantino has … been passed the torch from Truffaut and Godard; not all of his fans realize the debt his films have to the French New Wave … In the dazzling world of Tarantino, LA is just a few miles down the road from Paris.

As noted elsewhere, the business of naming and categorising tends to become tyrannically concerned with inclusions and exclusions and with constructing fixed and or impermeable borders around essence. I suggest, however, that the term ‘wave’ usefully connotes a cinematic category that is fluid and in perpetual motion. In oceanographic discourse waves are said to create a disturbance that propagates and carries energy; waves exist in a medium through which they travel, and they transfer energy from one place to another without any of the particles of the medium being permanently displaced. This aptly describes the relationship between the New Wave and Hollywood, which I shall show is remarkable for its persistent ebb and flow.

Difference between the New Wave and Hollywood is typically thought to reside in the oppositions between European high art and Hollywood mass-produced entertainment, and between European tradition and the debased commercialism of contemporary capitalism. I argue that this framework of binary opposition fails to see the mutually transformative processes in a labile cycle of flows that make these oppositions conceptually redundant. In a number of close readings of scenes from A bout de souffle I place my critical analysis within a framework of disjunctive global cultural flows to show the film text to be a mosaic of allusions in which multiple temporalities co-exist within mobile geographies. This enables me to reveal a dynamic process in which dislocation, relocation, reconciliation and transformation are necessarily linked.

The central organising theme of this chapter is the role allusion plays in linking the ‘original’ to its precursor and its remake. Godard was aware of these links: referring to his ‘taste for quotation’, he summed up his role in a circulatory and

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4 www.imagesjournal.com/issue03/features/tarantino1.htm.
The notion of ‘remake’ problematises the idea of impermeable boundaries between the original text, its precursor and its remake. The very act of alluding to what went before transforms both the prior text and the original, and the reconciliation between them produces something that is simultaneously remade and original. It further problematises the notion of origin, or birthplace, and therefore of location. Attention to the remake, as Lesley Stern argues, ‘makes it impossible for us to think of cinematic texts as closed and discrete objects, [and] such attention equally makes it impossible for us to think of films, in general, as either aesthetic objects or cultural artifacts’. I use the precursor-original-remake cycle to suggest a means of remapping Hollywood by looking both inside and outside the borders of the frame to show allusion as the traces of cultural phenomena flowing across temporal, spatial and cultural borders usually imagined to be impermeable.

Remapping Hollywood
The following discussion outlines my main reasons for selecting this particular Hollywood other which will show how the French New Wave contributed to the remapping of Hollywood. Many of the motifs relating to Hollywood’s relationship to the New Wave are discussed elsewhere in this dissertation – while they are not unique to the French New Wave, it presents a unique set of junctures and disjunctures in the globalising processes. It emerged just after World War II, when Hollywood and European cinemas were experiencing considerable disruption and change, and when new cultural alignments were appearing in the screenscape. It thus offers the opportunity to analyse some of the issues analysed in other case study chapters from a valuably different perspective. This recognises that the dynamics of globalisation cannot be understood as a monolithic process affecting all cinemas in the precise same way at any one time. Rather, it suggests that globalisation should be understood as multiple processes and multiple overlapping temporalities that are

7 Lesley Stern, ‘Play it Again, Sam: Retakes on Remakes (review)’ in Modernism/Modernity, 7(1), 2000: 192–94.
attuned to the empirical realities of specific local situations. Such recognition supports my contention that globalisation reveals itself at the level of the local to show how, as Mette Hjort maintains:

local conditions resist some aspects of globalization while proving hospitable to others [and] illuminate the value of an analytic framework which acknowledges a critical awareness of the various cultural and agential paths that underpin the globalising processes.

The main binarisms held to exist between the New Wave and Hollywood are those between art and commerce and innovation and tradition. These are widely thought to differentiate Hollywood from many, if not most, of its others, and to define them in negative opposition. In this case the binary opposition is complicated by the New Wave’s relationship to the French national cinema of the time. Hollywood was not a target as the Cahiers group were committed to challenging the French cinematic status quo, and in particular the 1950s conservative high-culture strand of large-budget realist literary adaptations and costume dramas which were themselves made in opposition to the low art that Hollywood represented for many. In a celebrated Cahiers essay entitled ‘Une certaine tendance du cinéma’ (A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema), Truffaut led the attack on what he dismissively called the ‘tradition of quality’ and which, with clear oedipal implications, the Cahiers group contemptuously called the cinéma de papa (old fogies’ cinema).

Unlike many of Hollywood’s others, the New Wave expressed a high regard for Hollywood. The Cahiers group were not uncritical of the globally dominant commercial cinema, but their criticism did not necessarily diminish their admiration (often adulation). This predisposition was a result of the social and political conditions of post-war France, in which the criss-crossing vectors of various global cultural flows helped to create the necessary conditions for the public discussion and eventual widespread acceptance of their views. Ideologically, in France at this time American popular culture – especially Hollywood movies, which had been banned during the war – represented freedom from totalitarianism. From the perspective of

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9 Hjort, Small Nation, Global Cinema: 25.
the Hollywood studios, France represented a new European market to conquer. Intersecting flows of image, ideology and financial gain are clearly revealed in the summer of 1944 when the liberating US Army brought with them between 40 and 50 dubbed Hollywood movies. The studios were determined to capitalise upon the initial post-war disarray of the French cinema and, aided by a series of trade agreements, promptly did so. The Blum-Byrnes trade negotiations of 1946 and 1947 settling the French war debt by the exchange of US movies for French luxury goods resulted in Hollywood dumping a backlog of around 2000 movies in France. While there was some opposition to this – notably from the influential French Communist Party, who voiced concern about American cultural imperialism – for the most part the French public (and, of course, French film exhibitors) welcomed the chance to see the films of which they had been deprived during the war years.

The Cahiers critics were among those who were delighted by this outcome of the trade agreements, and the impact of these US movies upon their critical practice was considerable. After four war years of cultural drought, in the immediate post-war years they could immerse themselves in Hollywood movies and, importantly, view films in entirely novel ways. In the absence of many French or other European films, and with the incentive of low-priced US product, some Parisian cinemas screened nothing but Hollywood movies or screened the entire oeuvre of individual Hollywood filmmakers or studios serially over a single weekend or short season.11

The New Wave passion for, and critical reassessment of, Hollywood engendered widespread debate. That their ideas were disseminated so thoroughly in France was facilitated by a film culture that flourished in the form of numerous ciné-clubs and journals in this period – these developed at least partly because of the earlier wartime disruptions in distribution and exhibition patterns. Jim Hillier suggests a further reason: because the Cahiers group showed Hollywood cinema to be socially ‘critical’

11 The number of American films screened in France increased from 38 in the first half of 1946 to 338 in the first six months of 1947. In 1948 Pierre Kast, one of the few socialists among the Cahiers group, warned that French production levels were dropping, but by the early 1950s the balance of French versus American films was not very different from its pre-war level, and box office records indicate that the public enjoyed both Hollywood and French cinema.
but not directly ‘political’, their ideas and films were attractive to the largely apolitical French intellectual life in the 1950s.12

**The Critique-cinéastes**

The New Wave is distinguished from many other non-Hollywood cinemas by its contribution to film theory. By no means homogenous in all respects, the *Cahiers* group were nevertheless united in a common project: to produce film criticism in the form of written and/or film texts, and to deliver a film theory and an aesthetic based, in large part, on a critical admiration of classical Hollywood cinema – in particular, for ‘low’ genre cinema.13 The sudden flood of Hollywood movies in post-war France meant that the *Cahiers* critics became adept at identifying patterns in filmmaking style and technique that had not been discerned by critics or audiences before. They developed an argument about film authorship, the *politique des auteurs*, that concerns the (re)discovery of Hollywood directors in a previously unobserved relationship to mise-en-scene and genre. Most Hollywood directors, if they had been noticed at all, had been generally dismissed as production-line *metteurs-en-scène* producing mass culture at the bidding of the studios. The *Cahiers* critics identified many of these directors as film artists, people they now revered as ‘auteurs’. They argued that genre directors such as Alfred Hitchcock, Howard Hawks, John Ford, Otto Preminger and Samuel Fuller transcended the constraints of the classical Hollywood studio mode of production. Genres once dismissed as low culture and pulp fiction for the masses were transformed into art. Their reassessment of Hollywood led directly to a critical remapping of Hollywood which would influence how Hollywood was imagined and where it was culturally located around the world. As Jim Hillier explains:


13 Jim Hillier points to the heterogeneity of the *Cahiers* group of critics and filmmakers: Bazin and Rohmer were close in their Catholicism and their theses about the realist vocation of film, but Bazin argued strenuously against Rohmer on Hitchcock and Hawks; Rivette and Godard admired Rossellini for reasons very different from those of Rohmer; Rivette and Godard were more inclined to ‘modernism than most of their colleagues; Kast was distinguished by being almost the only one with clear leftist, anti-clerical sympathies but, like Bazin, he opposed aspects of the *politique des auteurs*, although for different reasons; Truffaut was personally close to Bazin but distanced in taste and values. See Hillier, *Cahiers du cinéma. The 1950s*: 4–5.
the closer Cahiers moved towards what had traditionally been conceived as the ‘conveyor belt’ end of the cinema spectrum, the more their ‘serious’ discussion of filmmakers seemed outrageously inappropriate. As it happens … the more they outraged in this way, the more acutely they raised critical questions, however unsystematically, about the status and criticism appropriate to film as an art form, in which unsystematic divisions were constantly being made between art and commerce.¹⁴

The Cahiers critics and filmmakers combined this radically new perception of Hollywood with a critical and aesthetic delight in blurring the boundaries between film history and their own filmmaking practice by incorporating and referencing many ideas and images of the Hollywood ‘auteurs’ and genres in their own films. For these New Wave directors – referred to as critique-cinéastes (the term conveys the incorporation of critical practice into their filmmaking practice) – most of whom began their film careers as critics writing for Cahiers du cinéma, theory and practice were indistinguishable, as Godard acknowledged in a 1962 interview:

All of us at Cahiers thought of ourselves as future directors. Frequenting ciné-clubs and the Cinémathèque was already a way of thinking cinema and thinking about the cinema. Writing was already a way of making films, for the difference between writing and directing is quantitative not qualitative … As a critic, I thought of myself as a film-maker. Today I still think of myself as a critic, and in a sense I am, more than ever before. Instead of writing criticism, I make a film, but the critical dimension is subsumed. I think of myself as an essayist, producing essays in novel form or novels in essay form: only instead of writing, I film them … there is a clear continuity between all forms of expression. It’s all one.¹⁵

The reference to continuity brings me to the last point in this overview of the ways in which the French New Wave contributed to a remapping of Hollywood: it concerns allusion. There is a paradox in a cinema widely perceived as radical, innovative and intellectual but which gained its reputation in part because of its passion for and

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¹⁴ Ibid.: 8.

inclusion of multiple allusions, quotations and citations from classical Hollywood cinema widely perceived as conservative and anti-intellectual. The *Cahiers* group was not unique in taking popular film culture and Hollywood in particular, seriously, and Godard was almost certainly knowingly exaggerating when he claimed, ‘We were the first directors to know that Griffith exists. Even Carné, Delluc and Rene Clair [i.e. the French avant-garde, or *premier vague*, of the 1920s], when they made their first films, had no real critical or historical background.’

But his comment accurately points to how film history, especially knowledge of Hollywood cinema, thoroughly permeated the New Wave writing and filmmaking practices. As already mentioned, this is not to suggest that the New Wave was uncritical of Hollywood, nor that it ignored non-Hollywood cinemas. But these *critique-cinéastes* had a significant impact upon the global screenscape by arguing that in Hollywood, commerce and art could and did co-exist. This they demonstrated in their practice of allusion, as I shall next discuss.

**Allusion as a Critical Practice**

Allusion collapses the distinctions between commerce and high art and between a global cinema and a local cinema to create a mosaic in which past, present and future co-exist and mutually transform each other. In two cinemas often defined in opposition to one another, allusions are evidence of ‘*un Franco-Américain rapprochement*’. Many critics and audiences, however, dismiss the practice of allusion as empty appropriation, unimaginative borrowing, or theft, and a sign of artistic sterility. For others, however, it indicates a knowing, art cinema which distinguishes it from classical Hollywood cinema. Either way, as Lesley Stern warns, practices of allusion tend ‘to invite critical responses that revel in endlessly

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16 *Ibid.*: 60.

17 Jacques Aumont writes: ‘It can never be emphasised too much that Rossellini was the filmmaker who had the most direct influence in the *Cahiers* group, at least as much as because he met them regularly and urged them amiably, but insistently, to make films themselves, as because of his ‘Bazinian’ mantle of glory as the inventor of neo-realism.’ Jacques Aumont, ‘The Fall of the Gods: Jean-Luc Godard’s *Le Mépris* (1963)’, in Susan Hayward and Ginette Vincendeau, *French Film: Texts and Contexts*. London: Routledge. 2000: 177.
proliferating identification (of allusions, citations, quotations, and patternings of similarity and difference).\textsuperscript{18}

To break out of this ‘critical vortex’ as Stern describes it, I shall show in my close readings for this chapter that the allusions are both cultural phenomena flowing across temporal and spatial borders, and conduits through which it flows. I argue that the reputation of the French New Wave as an oppositional or radical cinema cannot be allowed to hide its role in reconciling numerous differences and paradoxes. The French New Wave was other to French national cinema and to Hollywood, and it was also a part of both. It created discontinuity while producing continuity. It existed simultaneously locally and transnationally. It survived for only a relatively brief space of time, and it also endures. A visual medium, it used a ‘camera-stylo’, or camera pen, with which it ‘wrote’ classical Hollywood cinema, while rewriting it at the same time. ‘New’ and ‘radical’, its innovation involved also creating its antecedent, or precursor, within a classical Hollywood cinema which was widely perceived as conservative and antithetical towards innovation. In these and other contradictions or paradoxes, allusion plays a key reconciliatory role. To demonstrate the role it plays, I start with a close reading of the opening frames of \textit{A bout de souffle}, a moving picture that, paradoxically, starts without a picture and without movement.

\textbf{A bout de souffle (Meeting Michel)}

The screen is black. The official censorship number fades in: ‘Visa Contrôle cinématographique No 22275.’ This fades to black and, juxtaposing the new with the old, original jazz piano music can be heard as another title fades in: ‘CE FILM EST DÉDIÉ A LA MONOGRAM PICTURES’ (‘This film is dedicated to Monogram Pictures’).\textsuperscript{19} This reference to the Hollywood studio of the 1940s known for its B-

\textsuperscript{18} Stern, ‘Play it Again, Sam’: 192–94.
\textsuperscript{19} Although not unknown in cinema, the dedication is a somewhat literary device, a type of transtextual relation which French cultural theorist Gerard Genette defines as ‘all that which puts one text in relation, whether manifest or secret, with other texts’. Genette refers to the dedication as an example of ‘paratextuality’, that is, the relations within the totality of a literary work between the text proper and its ‘paratext’ – titles, prefaces, postfaces, epigraphs, illustrations, and even book jackets and signed autographs. The paratext is made up of all the accessory messages and commentaries which surround the text and which can become virtually indistinguishable from it. See Robert Stam, ‘Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation’, in James Naremore, ed., \textit{Film Adaptation}. New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000.
movies is unsettling to audiences accustomed to more rigid boundaries between commercial and art cinemas. The caption fades out and is replaced by the film title, ‘A BOUT DE SOUFFLE’ (‘Breathless’), which fades out to black.

The first live action shot then fades in and the front page of a popular newspaper, Paris Flirt, fills the screen. We have come to watch a film made by a known intellectual but we find ourselves reading a newspaper, and a trashy one at that. There are small cartoons down either side of a full-page risqué sketch of a young woman in frilly panties and a midriff-revealing bolero, holding a rag doll. This provocative ‘baby doll’ might lack the dignity bestowed by a Tennessee Williams screenplay and direction from Elia Kazan on Carroll Baker in the Hollywood movie Baby Doll (1956), but traces of her nevertheless exist in this image. In a voice-over we hear a male voice: ‘All in all, I’m a stupid prick … All in all, if it’s gotta be done, it’s gotta be done.’ The words create an association, rather like a soft echo, with John Wayne’s tough ‘a man’s gotta do’ screen persona. Yet the young man in his early twenties who lowers the paper to reveal himself in a head and shoulders shot is more boyish than macho. While conventionally dressed in a shirt, tie and tweed jacket, a lack of conformity is hinted at by a fat cigarette rakishly stuck to one side of his mouth and a fedora with its brim tipped down low over his eyes.

Here is yet another Hollywood reference: the fedora was often worn by private detectives, gangsters, mafiosi, or other ‘tough guy’ characters in 1940s Hollywood films and is especially associated with film noir characters such as Humphrey Bogart in The Big Sleep (Howard Hawks, 1946) and The Maltese Falcon (John Huston, 1941). From beneath his hat brim, the young man looks from left to right and then stares directly to camera, thus directly at us – a literally confronting and far from

20 Paris Flirt was a popular daily newspaper that published fiction and strip cartoons. Among its contributors were crime writer Georges Simenon and Asterix illustrator René Goscinny.
21 Michel says ‘Après tout, je suis un con. Après tout ci, il faut. Il faut!’ which translates literally as ‘After all, I’m a cunt. After all this, it must needs. It must needs.’ The DVD subtitles offer: ‘So I’m a son of a bitch. After all, it’s gotta be done. It has to.’ Andrews’ screenplay translation offers ‘All in all, I’m a dumb bastard … all in all, if you’ve got to, you’ve got to.’ My translation reflects a mock-macho tone in his voice.
22 In Stagecoach (John Ford, 1939), the Ringo Kid (John Wayne) is widely believed to have said: ‘A man’s gotta do what a man’s gotta do.’ In fact, when asked why he intends to stay and avenge his family’s murders rather than try to escape to Mexico, the Ringo Kid says: ‘There are some things a man just can’t run away from.’
conventional shot with the power to disturb audiences in its reflexivity. He removes the cigarette from his mouth and, in a gesture borrowed from an unconscious Bogart tic in several classic Hollywood films, rubs his thumb over and around his lips. The gesture originated in Hollywood, but relocated to this French film it is transformed and creates something new. We can trace this gesture across the Atlantic and back in time as well as forwards, as it will reappear, again relocated and transformed, in the Hollywood remake, *Breathless* (Jim McBride, 1983).

This reading of the first few frames of *A bout de souffle* signals the destabilisation and the radical discontinuity which the French New Wave celebrates and for which it is celebrated. Although we have not yet seen them, the film’s jump cuts, long takes and other ruptures to the codes and conventions of classical Hollywood cinema will contribute to what for most audiences is an unsettling and unstable filmic experience.

The allusions contribute discontinuity, but they are also the traces of continuity between the original New Wave text, its classical Hollywood precursor, and its New Hollywood remake. We are but a few seconds into this film and already we have encountered direct quotations of four or five Hollywood genre films – many more when the entire output of Monogram Pictures, the Hollywood film noir genre (or sub-genre), and the films of Humphrey Bogart are included. We have also encountered a film, *Breathless*, which has yet to be made in a cinema, New Hollywood, which has yet to come into being. Cinema has recycled and assimilated past genres, images, ideas and styles throughout its history, but the sheer quantity and self-conscious delight in quotation, citation and allusion of the New Wave, and of Godard’s films especially, represents something quite different. It is more concentrated and energised than anything that had gone before. Although Noel Carroll applies the term ‘cinema of allusion’ to the New Hollywood cinema of the 1960s and 1970s, a period when the ‘movie-brats’ revealed their very thorough knowledge of film history, it is also an appropriate label for the French New Wave. Both used ‘a mixed lot of practices including quotations, the memorialisation of past genres, homages, and the recreation of classic scenes, shots, plot motifs, lines of dialogue, themes, gestures, and so forth from film history’.  

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appropriated cultural phenomena reconciling past, present and future which, as I show in the next close reading, makes it possible to locate Hollywood as it is dislocated and relocated.

Dislocation, Relocation and Reconciliation

In yet another paradox, Hollywood can be located in what *A bout de souffle* omits as well as in what it makes visible. The omission I refer to is the deliberate suppression of an opening credit sequence. In its absence, the traces of a network of intersecting transatlantic cultural flows can be detected. The lack of a pre-title credit sequence is unsettling in a film which has not just a star, but in Jean Seberg, a Hollywood star whose name one could expect to see up front. Stars, often thought of as an essentially Hollywood phenomenon, were no strangers to French cinema where their commercial power was first exploited in 1908, some years before Hollywood became the global centre of film production. It might be expected, therefore, that a low-budget French film by a first-time filmmaker, the first of the New Wave films to have any sort of star, let alone an international one, would publicise this fact. While the omission of a credit sequence is a trace of a disavowal of dominant cinema, it also draws attention to the casting of Seberg and thus the dislocation of an important aspect of Hollywood and its relocation in a new, French setting.

I shall trace the cultural flows represented by this casting/screen omission to show how Seberg – the actor and the star concept – participates in a complex web of intersecting globalising processes. Within the mediascape we meet the star system, which is widely regarded as substantial evidence of Hollywood’s status as the industrialised purveyor of commercial entertainment. In this system the major studios owned and controlled a stable of contracted actors who seldom had any say in what roles or films they appeared in and were shunted around and traded according to their perceived value. Successful and compliant actors were rewarded with pay rises, renewed contracts and potential Oscar-winning roles; failure and non-compliance were punished with obscure roles and by being hired out to other studios

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until the contract expired, never to be renewed. But in the 1950s the star system began to flicker out as the sun set on the studio system which was faltering in the wake of the anti-trust law decisions. Its demise was speeded up by increasing unionisation, aggressive agents, and the improved bargaining power of actors in an era of packages, deals and independent companies, which ultimately would pave the way for a New Hollywood in which the stars would be the new generation of auteur directors.

In 1956 Seberg became caught up in this twilight zone. In a blatant publicity campaign modelled on the casting of the Scarlett O’Hara role in *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939), producer-director Otto Preminger conducted a highly publicised nationwide search for a young and innocent woman to play the lead role in *Saint Joan* (1957). Every small town, it would seem, had its Esther Blodgett desperate to be burnt at the stake.26 Echoing this *Star Is Born* scenario, 17-year old Seberg was plucked from mid-western small town obscurity and catapulted to international stardom. And burnt by the experience she surely was. In the US and most other markets around the world *Saint Joan* was a commercial and critical failure, with Seberg’s performance singled out for particular criticism.27 She fared no better in Preminger’s follow-up film, *Bonjour Tristesse* (1957).28 At this point

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26 Esther Blodgett is the character played by Janet Gaynor in *A Star is Born* (William Wellman, 1937). Initially an innocent mid-west country girl, Esther goes to Hollywood, where she gains fame and fortune at the price of personal happiness and true love.

27 Seberg was badly burnt during the filming of the pyre scene. The studios milked all the publicity they could from the accident, but to no avail: sympathy was not forthcoming from reviewers or audiences. *The Time* critic wrote: ‘Actress Seberg, with the advantage of youth and the disadvantage of inexperience, is drastically miscast. Shaw’s Joan is a chunk of hard bread, dipped in the red wine of battle and devoured by the ravenous angels. Actress Seberg, by physique and disposition, is the sort of honey bun that drugstore desperadoes like to nibble with their milkshakes.’ Cited in David Richards, *Played Out: The Jean Seberg Story*. New York: Random House, 1981: 58.

28 That Preminger should have bought the film rights to this novel, written by 18-year-old French author Françoise Sagan, is evidence of another confluence of intersecting scapes. *Bonjour Tristesse* (the French translation of ‘Good Morning, Heartache’, a song by African-American jazz singer Billie Holiday) concerns the life of hedonisti, 17-year-old Cécile, in particular her relationship with her boyfriend and her adulterous playboy father. Preminger made it into a film at a time when Hollywood was looking beyond its usual pool of story sources in an attempt to target new overseas markets and to reinvigorate the home box office, which was suffering from a downturn.
Preminger cut his losses and sold his contract with his stillborn star to Columbia Pictures.29

Cast in two consecutive films as a French woman did Seberg no favours in her home country, where by 1959 her star was fast fading – or perhaps it never really lit up in the first place.30 But when her image crossed the Atlantic and appeared on French screens she was transformed. The Cahiers critics saw not the incompetence, inexperience and asexuality that US critics and audiences disparaged: they saw ‘the new Divinity of the cinema’.31 Truffaut eulogised both Seberg and Preminger:

when Jean Seberg is on the screen … you can’t look at anything else. Her every movement is graceful, each glance is precise. The shape of her head, her silhouette, her walk, everything is perfect: this kind of sex appeal hasn’t been seen on the screen. It is designed, controlled, directed to the n\textsuperscript{th} degree by her director ... 32

Seberg’s very lack of a ‘Hollywoodised’ acting technique was what the New Wave found so appealing. Her performance in Bonjour Tristesse became evidence of Preminger’s skill as an auteur in transcending the standardising effect of the Hollywood studio system. Relocated to France, she was transformed into an expression of high art.

These ideas and images are part of a larger confluence of flows. Inevitably, the financescape is very much implicated. Stars are budgetary items – they cost a lot of money and their purpose is to generate even more. Finance is also involved in the process of dislocation and relocation: had Seberg been a successful Hollywood star it is unlikely that Columbia would have allowed her to appear in a small French film by an unknown first-time director, and producer Georges Beauregard would not have been able to afford her in the first place.33 But eclipsed stars come cheap, and the

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29 Because it had never owned distribution or exhibition outlets, Columbia Pictures, one of the ‘Little Three’ studios, was not directly or immediately adversely affected by the 1948 anti-trust rulings.
30 British actor John Gielgud commented that Seberg became ‘a star before she became an actress’. Cited in Richards, Played Out: 83.
31 Ibid.: 72.
32 Ibid.
33 Although the fee for Seberg was a significant sum for Beauregard, amounting to approximately one quarter of the film’s total budget, for Columbia Pictures it was negligible and an indication of Seberg’s failure to live up to their expectations as a major international
offer from Paris came when Hollywood was experiencing a lull in production and a downturn in the domestic box office revenues. This was due to a significant change in the mediascape as it intersected with the technoscape in the form of the commercial expansion of television. Hollywood reacted to the downturn by looking for overseas markets and establishing a dialogue with foreign, especially European, national cinemas. Thus, while Seberg’s transition to Paris and appearance in *A bout de souffle* was in part an outcome of Hollywood’s financial crisis, as a trace of increased dialogue with foreign language films, it was also part of the solution. Her physical transition to French cinema is a trace of an accelerating two-way flow of people, ideas, images and finance in this period, and it would change the ways in which European cinema and Hollywood were imagined.34

As Hollywood production levels declined, the exhibition sector, now divorced from the studios, had to look elsewhere for films to screen, and it also looked overseas. Post-war trade agreements between Europe and the US facilitated the import of films from a number of foreign (that is, non-English language) cinemas, and the steadily growing number of US art house picture theatres attracted increasing audiences for foreign films.35 These European films were generally considered ‘high art’, innovative and radical; they were also more adult, realistic, violent and sexy than most of the films Hollywood was producing at the time. Foreign film distribution in the US was originally handled by dozens of small independent outfits. But once *Et Dieu... créa la femme* (*And God Created... Woman*) (Roger Vadim, 1956) confirmed Hollywood suspicions that the foreign art film could be profitable, the major studios established their own distribution offices in Paris and London.36

star. The production budget for *A Bout de souffle* was around 40 million francs – about half the average budget of a French studio film at the time.


36 This film created an international star of Brigitte Bardot and many see it as a close forerunner of the New Wave. It broke box office records in France and overseas, especially
This led to reconciliation rather than competition between Hollywood and European cinemas, in the form of the co-production. From the US point of view these enabled Hollywood to take advantage of the increased interest in foreign art house cinema and to reinvigorate its own product with new ideas and talent. Writing of Hollywood involvement in European co-productions in the period, Tino Balio explains this new link between commerce and art, in which the origins of what would become labelled New Hollywood can be traced:

In search of foreign pictures with commercial ingredients, the majors absorbed the most talented foreign film-makers with offers of total financing and promises of distribution in the lucrative Upmarket. With Hollywood’s help, the work of famous auteurs such as Fellini, Bergman, Kurosawa, Antonioni, Truffaut, Resnais, Bertolucci, and Tony Richardson enriched American film culture during the 1960s.37

But it takes two to tango. European cinema was still in some post-war disarray, so the prospect of finance was an attractive incentive for seeking a Hollywood partner. Suspicion of Hollywood and of American cultural imperialism was also strong, however, and but for the particular concatenation of globalising processes at the time, Hollywood might have found it difficult to attract the calibre of European partners it sought. Many foreign-language filmmakers and cinemas had distanced themselves from – indeed, had defined themselves in opposition to – Hollywood. Like the non-mainstream literary strand of the French national cinema already referred to, Hollywood was dismissed as an industrialised factory process inimical to high art aspirations. But as we have already seen, the French New Wave did not dismiss Hollywood. This group of critique-cinéastes (whom Bazin referred to as ‘Hitchcocko-Hawksiens’) were widely influential in making Hollywood a desirable partner for many European filmmakers for more than simply financial reasons.38

38 Godard himself became involved in the complex multi-directional intersecting transnational flows when he made Le mépris (1963), a French-Hollywood-Italian coproduction. In this he cast Fritz Lang, an émigré to Hollywood in the early 1930s, to play a
Within this web of ‘scapes in which Hollywood’s cultural boundaries were being redrawn, Preminger’s earlier decision to buy the film rights of Bonjour Tristesse, the novel by 18-year-old first-time French novelist Françoise Sagan, can be seen as an early trace of the two-way flows between Hollywood and European cinema. Seberg’s performance in this film, in which she plays a young French woman, may almost have ended her Hollywood career, but it flows almost seamlessly into her role as a young American woman in the New Wave film where her career and star status were remade. For Godard, the disruptive process of Seberg’s relocation was one of continuity rather than discontinuity:

the character played by Jean Seberg was a continuation of her role in Bonjour Tristesse. I could have taken the last shot of Preminger’s film and started after dissolving to a title, ‘Three Years Later’. 

This particular flow does not end here. As I discuss later, it re-emerges in the casting of French actor Valerie Kaprisky (this time a French woman from Paris playing a French woman in Los Angeles) in Jim McBride’s film, Breathless, the Hollywood film that relocated and remade the French New Wave as it helped to remake (yet again) Hollywood. But before discussing the point of remaking, I shall show how the notion of the precursor is addressed narratively and stylistically in A bout de souffle.

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39 The Variety review of Bonjour Tristesse on 1 January 1958 read: ‘it is not a Class A effort. Script deficiencies and awkward reading – some lines are spoken as though just that – have static results. Detracting from the make-believe also is Jean Seberg’s deportment. In her second cinematic try (her first was in Preminger’s unfortunate Saint Joan), Seberg’s Cecile is more suggestive of a high school senior back home than the frisky, knowing, close friend and daughter of a roué living it up in the sumptuous French setting.’

40 Interview with Jean-Luc Godard, Cahiers du cinéma, 138, December 1962, in Milne, Godard on Godard: 173.
Creating the Precursor

It is not enough to point out that an actor, image, idea, or any other aspect of cultural phenomena from classical Hollywood cinema is relocated when it appears in the context of the New Wave. As Jorge Borges explains in his essay ‘Kafka and his Precursor’, something more complex and creative occurs:

In the critic’s vocabulary, the word ‘precursor’ is indispensable, but it should be cleansed of all conceptions of polemic and rivalry. The fact is that every writer creates his own precursors. His work modifies our conception of the past, as it will modify the future.41

Borges outlines the concept of a cycle in which past, present and future are inextricably linked in a creative and transformative process in which every filmmaker creates their own precursor and shapes their successor. In this chapter I show how a film organises the process of circulation in which it participates, and how the traces of this process can be shown to exist in the films themselves. It is as if the New Wave holds up a double-sided mirror, enabling us to see both past and future images, and in these images Hollywood can be located in a setting that is fixed neither geographically nor temporally.

Godard acknowledged the value of creating a precursor to his critical practice, and also indicated that this process should be ‘cleansed’ of negative conceptions in the following comment he made about the early New Wave films:

One can make use of what one has already seen in the cinema to make deliberate references … This was true of me in particular … I thought in terms of purely cinematographic attitudes … For some shots [in A bout de souffle] I referred to scenes I remembered from Preminger, Cukor, etc … Why should we be reproached for [a taste for quotation]? People in life quote as they please, so we have the right to quote as we please. Therefore I show people quoting, merely making sure that they quote what pleases me. In the notes I make of anything that might be of use for a film, I will add a quote from

Dostoievsky if I like it. Why not? If you want to say something, there is only one solution: say it.\footnote{Interview with Jean-Luc Godard, Cahiers du Cinéma, 138, December 1962 in Milne, Godard on Godard: 173.}

My next close reading demonstrates how in \textit{A bout de souffle} Godard creates his own precursor. It provides evidence of how the French New Wave modifies our conception of the past, as it will also modify the future.

\textbf{A bout de souffle (In the Inter-American Travel Agency)}

When we first met Michel (Jean-Paul Belmondo) he was in Marseilles. We rejoin him in Paris. In the intervening scenes he has stolen a car, killed a police motorcyclist more or less by mistake, casually stolen some money from a former girlfriend, and met up again with a pretty young American student, Patricia Franchini (Jean Seberg), with whom he recently had a brief fling. By now we know Michel is a small-time crook with considerable charm who is out of his depth in more ways than one: he is probably in love with Patricia, who appears to be not particularly enamoured of him, and he is wanted by the police for murder but lacks the cash to make his getaway over the border to Italy. Michel has broken several moral and ethical ‘rules’ and the film has broken some of the basic ‘rules’ of Hollywood continuity editing style. We have been introduced to some of the film’s celebrated jump cuts, one of its very long takes, and what could well be called a ‘discontinuity’ style of editing. Michel now enters a large travel agency looking for his friend, Tolmatchoff (Richard Balducci), whom he hopes has a letter for him with some money he is owed.

\textbf{Large travel agency. Interior, day.}

In a medium long-shot Michel strolls into the travel agency looking very cool for someone who has learned only a few seconds earlier that the police now know his identity. The framing – from mid-thigh to the top of his head – continues the film’s dialogue with genre Hollywood: it is known as a ‘cowboy’ shot (in French, ‘plan américain’) because it appeared so often in 1930s and 1940s Hollywood films, especially westerns. Michel walks towards the camera which tracks backwards, keeping in step with him. When he reaches the reception desk, the camera moves slightly to his right to show him in profile as he leans on the counter and asks for Monsieur Tolmatchoff. As the receptionist points him towards another desk the camera does not stop but swings round behind Michel in a $180^\circ$ arc so that when he
walks away to his left, he is again walking directly towards the camera, which once more moves back keeping him in frame. The same happens again when Michel reaches his friend Tolmatchoff who is standing behind a counter on the other side of the agency. Michel pauses for a brief moment but the camera keeps moving and performs another 180° arc to swing round behind him so that when Michel moves away, this time to his right, the camera is in front of him yet again, and yet again moves back as Michel walks towards it.

Throughout this scene Michel barely pauses for breath and the camera pauses not at all, but I shall put the scene on pause at this point to analyse what is happening. Nothing very much of narrative significance has occurred, and nor will throughout the whole scene. Using contemporary criminal argot Michel and Tolmatchoff engage in some light banter; Michel is annoyed to find he’s been sent a non-negotiable cheque, which means he is still without cash; Michel exits frame left through the door he first came in. As he walks out of the agency his path crosses that of two detectives who are hot on his trail – they are as yet unknown to him and they fail to recognise him. At this point, for a few frames before it cuts, the camera abandons Michel and, having completed a 360° circle around the interior of the agency, starts to track back into the agency with the cops framed in plan américain.

What is of significance is that all this ‘nothing very much’ occurs in a single very long take of 2 minutes and 30 seconds in which Raoul Coutard’s cinematography draws attention to itself with breathtaking pyrotechnics. In all, the film has nine long takes lasting for more than a minute and several medium–long takes of just over 30 seconds.43 This scene/shot, the second longest take in the film, is the first of three to employ a 360° movement containing a series of 180° arcs. Dudley Andrew describes these as:

among the most beautiful and audacious in film history. They proclaim the tracking camera to be a moral as well as an aesthetic force, a way of seeing and representing life that was born with the camera and is reborn now.44

43 Three of the long takes are circular like this one, three are linear, and three are static, or semi-static, with only minimal reframing movements.
44 Andrew, Breathless: Jean-Luc Godard, director: 12. The other two are shot 285 (interior New York Herald Tribune Office) and shot 383 (interior Swedish model’s studio). The longest take is shot 76, near the start of the film, where Michel and Patricia meet up and walk up and down the champs d’Elysées.
When this take is conventionally analysed in terms of what we see in the frame and what the mise-en-scene contributes to the narrative, the constant camera movement could be said to reflect and contribute to Michel’s mood and feelings: he and the camera are both on the run.\textsuperscript{45} The long circular take leading nowhere could be said to be a function of Michel’s sense of pointlessness, perhaps his death wish – for he will, indeed, die at the end of the movie, largely due to his inaction.\textsuperscript{46} The problem with this sort of reading is that by looking only inside the frame it treats the film simply as an aesthetic text, and ignores or fails to note the traces of cultural phenomena travelling in and out of the frame. A multidimensional close reading within an analytical model which helps us to see a complex web of globalising processes converging on the film text shows allusion to a prior text in the process of being created. Tracing the cultural flows across time and space to the precursor text leads to Hollywood and to film noir.

\section*{Tracing Film Noir}

In 1946 critics Nino Frank and Jean-Pierre Chartier applied the designation film noir to a type of Hollywood B-movie thriller. They noted that its narratives were often set in the city, or on the road, and that it was populated by femme fatales and metaphorically impotent and easily corrupted males, often on the run from the law. With a chiaroscuro lighting style owing much to German expressionism, these gritty black and white stories of moral lawlessness were permeated by claustrophobic feelings of social malaise, pessimism and suspicion. Highly popular among the cinéphiles frequenting the ciné-clubs and repertory screenings in post-war Paris, film noir gained critical credibility in 1955 from Raymond Borde and Étienne Chaumeton’s influential study, \textit{Panorama du film noir américain}. They selected \textit{Gun Crazy} (Joseph E. Lewis, 1950) and \textit{Kiss Me Deadly} (Robert Aldrich, 1955) for particular attention: both deliver astonishingly gloomy endings to portray an America

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\textsuperscript{45} On the other hand, the edgy, staccato effect of jump cuts for which the film is, perhaps, best known might be more appropriate for someone who has only seconds earlier discovered that the police have identified him as a cop-killer.
\vspace{1em}
very unlike the image of the conquering hero who had recently liberated Europe. *A bout de souffle* has allusions to both.

Film noir is very much the product of the Blum-Byrnes trade agreements. As discussed above, the inundation of French screens by Hollywood movies allowed the *critique-cinéastes* to see Hollywood differently, and in their written and film criticism film noir received an auteurist twist, with *le politique des auteurs* providing a conduit for ideas to flow between commercial Hollywood and film art. James Naremore writes that ‘at this juncture, the terms *film noir* and *auteur* began to work in tandem, expressing the same values from different angles … it is no accident that the two terms would enter the English language at the same moment’.47 Film noir pervaded French film culture, as Godard reveals:

Even before *Cahiers*, Bazin, Doniol-Valcroise, and others created a ciné-club called Objective 49 which showed film noir, like *Gilda*, and *Fallen Angel*. I thought of [*Laura*] with Dana Andrews also in it while I was making *Breathless* … *Fallen Angel* and its type became a model for *Breathless*.48 By the time we reach the moment in the film that I have put on pause, we have seen many more references to film noir – there have been more allusions to Bogart as well as to the noir films of Preminger, Nicholas Ray, Robert Aldrich among others - and there will be many more before the film’s end. Allusion to film noir also exists in the film’s narrative, which can be summed up as ‘boy and girl on the run, girl betrays boy’ - classic film noir narrative never more clearly set up, perhaps, than in *Gun Crazy*, whose director, Joseph E. Lewis, and producers, the brothers Frank, Maurie and Hymie King, were all regulars on the Monogram payroll.

Coutard’s cinematography forms a bridge between the mise-en-scene and the larger picture in a complex web of globalising processes. To achieve the fluid and fast-moving style, as well as the grainy, black and white look, Coutard drew upon his experience as a photo-journalist and war photographer, for which speed and fast stock were essential and a high degree of contrast and shadow an inevitable outcome. He used a lightweight hand-held Éclair 35mm Camerette and experimented with

short lengths of Ilford high-speed black-and-white still film spliced together in order to shoot in available light. This technology meant Coutard could shoot with great speed, and it enabled Godard to use only a very small crew. With his portable mute camera Coutard could be pushed around in a mail trolley or wheelchair, as in this scene, to achieve a visual gliding fluidity. The small crew was also facilitated by an easing of union restrictions at a time when the labour movement was attempting to resist the tide of Hollywood imports and increase domestic production. The fact that Godard’s producer could raise the necessary finances for this first-time feature director is largely a result of this particular combination of cultural flows – he could, at this point of time, in this place, make it for a third of the normal cost. The technology, combined with Coutard’s skill and experience, also enabled Godard to put to the test Bazinian theory about the long take and its ability to capture reality, in a dialogue with Italian neo-realism which the critique-cinéastes revered highly. This documentary approach, especially the long takes, are also textual evidence of the flows leading to and from the post-war noir films and their auteur directors: films such as Panic in the Streets (Elia Kazan, 1950), The Asphalt Jungle (John Huston 1950), The Killers (Curt Siodmak, 1946) Preminger’s Fallen Angel, and Gun Crazy which has a spectacularly virtuoso long take.

A bout de souffle was part of a process on which Paul Vernet comments, appositely: ‘film noir was made by Hollywood but invented by the French’. The multiple references to noir that are such a distinguishing feature of New Wave films contributed to transformed perceptions of Hollywood. Traces of film noir exist in the film text, as we have seen, and film noir is also the conduit through which these ideas and images flowed between Europe and America and between mainstream entertainment and the art cinema. James Naremore comments that

the idea of film noir spread so widely that it helps to constitute what Arjun Appadurai calls our ‘mediascape’ which is made up of both the ‘capabilities to produce and disseminate information’ (newspapers, magazines, tele stations, film production studios, computers etc), and the images created through such media. We might even say that noir is itself a kind of mediascape – a loosely

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related collection of perversely mysterious motifs or scenarios that circulate through all the information technologies.\footnote{James Naremore, ‘Chapter 7: The Noir Mediascape’, in Naremore, More Than Night: 254–55.}

Godard did not simply allude to or imitate film noir: he called the process he used ‘critical transformation’.\footnote{Godard made a distinction between critical transformation and appropriation or homage: ‘When Allen, De Palma, Scorsese, and Tarantino echo shots or sequences from other filmmakers, the gesture is always one of postmodernist appropriation, not one of critical transformation, and the same thing can be said about the homages of (among others) Truffaut and Bertolucci. But when Rivette literally quotes the ‘Tower of Babel’ sequence from Metropolis in Paris Belongs To Us, thereby criticizing the metaphysical presuppositions of his characters, or when Resnais virtually duplicates a sequence of shots from Gilda inside Delphine Seyrig’s room in Last Year At Marienbad, thereby locating the romantic mystifications of Alain Robbe-Grillet within the even larger romantic mystifications of Hollywood, a certain kind of critical commentary is taking place. The same process is at work on a much more elaborate scale in Céline and Julie Go Boating, when Rivette applies the critical discoveries of doubling in Hitchcock to the ‘double’ structure of his own film, doubling shots as well as scenes. But the same thing obviously can’t be said for Woody Allen and De Palma appropriating the baby carriage from Potemkin in Bananas and The Untouchables or for Tarantino getting Uma Thurman in Pulp Fiction to imitate Anna Karina’s dance around a pool table in Vivre Sa Vie’ (Jonathan Rosenbaum, ‘Making History – Essay and Interview with Jean-Luc Godard’, at www.zakka.dk/euroscreenwriters/interviews/jean_luc_godard_05.htm).}

He maintained that his allusions to prior texts showed it was possible to ‘return to cinemas’ sources’ and that the recycling of well-known Hollywood techniques in a new context made them look original:

what I wanted was to take a conventional story and remake, but differently, everything the cinema had done. I also wanted to give the feeling that the techniques of filmmaking had just been discovered or experienced for the first time. The iris-in showed that one could return to the cinema’s sources: the dissolve appeared, just once, as tho it had just been invented.\footnote{Interview with Jean-Luc Godard, Cahiers du Cinéma, 138, December 1962, in Milne, Godard on Godard: 173. There are, in fact two dissolves and the iris-in is immediately preceded by an iris-out.}

By taking existing styles, ideas, and images from prior texts and relocating them in the new context of his own films, Godard created and recreated his precursor. It was also a process of invention and originality which I shall address next, to show that in the cycle of precursor-original-remake, the New Wave film is shaped by interactions between the reinvented and the invented.
The Original: Remaking but Differently

The co-existence of the original and its precursor creates what Julia Kristeva refers to as a ‘mosaic of citations’ in which the new text absorbs and remakes the prior text and in doing so shapes and reshapes its own meaning. This complicates the notion of ‘originality’ by showing a mutually transformative interaction between the newly invented and the previously invented, or the original and its precursor. It is indebted to Kristeva’s concept of ‘intertextuality’, the term by which she translates Bakhtin’s concept of the ‘dialogic’, that is, ‘the simultaneous presence of two or more intersecting texts which mutually relativise one another’. As we have seen, Godard was aware that *A bout de souffle* was simultaneously an ‘original’ and a ‘remake’; the following close reading reveals a mutually transformative and interactive process involving the reconciliation of two cinemas generally located at considerable distance from one another.

In this next scene from *A bout de souffle*, I show how the rapprochement between two texts can be read in the stylistic and thematic properties of the film. Whereas a conventional formalist textual analysis would focus on narrative or characterisation, in my approach I show that the film’s formal properties can reveal Godard’s critical commitment to creating a space for opposing cinemas and styles to come together and shape each other’s meaning. Godard’s style of radical discontinuity will lead to the re-establishment of cordial relations between two very different young lovers, one French the other American, as well as between two very different cinemas from either side of the Atlantic.

*A bout de souffle* (Scene of Rapprochement)

*Since we last saw Michel he has revealed his adoration of Humphrey Bogart by gazing at his face on a poster for the film noir *The Harder They Fall* (Mark Robson 1956) for a full 45 seconds, hotwired several cars, revealed his jealousy towards another of Patricia’s lovers and, in a re-enactment of a scene from the film noir* The

Enforcer (Bretaigne Windust, 1951), mugged a man in a café urinal.54 Patricia, meanwhile, has expressed annoyance at Michel’s possessiveness, opportunistically dated a journalist to get an interview assignment, and revealed that she may be pregnant. Michel is still trying to raise the money to make his getaway from the law, which is closing in on him. He does not want to go without Patricia, who remains uncommitted to him emotionally and very unconcerned to revive their sexual relationship.

Patricia’s Parisian hotel room. Interior, day.

At the start of this very long scene, which, at just over 20 minutes is roughly one-third of the total length of the film, Patricia returns to her cramped hotel room after spending the night, it is fair to assume, with the journalist she dated the previous evening. She is annoyed to find Michel, who, totally uninvited, is in her bed. The scene is liberally peppered with allusions to classical Hollywood cinema, noir and non-noir, and to numerous other texts, filmic and non-filmic. In places it uses conventional shot/reverse shot continuity editing, but in an explosion of short takes, very short takes and jump-cuts interspersed with some long takes in which the only camera movement is some slight reframing, it also challenges almost every ‘rule’ in the Hollywood style handbook.

In terms of the narrative, like the long take in the Inter-Americana travel agency analysed earlier, nothing very much happens for most of the time. They bicker, smoke, pull faces, play children’s games, listen to Chopin, clamber over the bed, reveal how many lovers they have each had and desultorily discuss literature (Patricia: ‘Do you know William Faulkner?’ Michel: ‘No, who is he? You’ve slept with him?’). He makes a few phone calls, asks to piss in the sink and gropes her. She brushes her hair, washes her feet in the bidet, pins up a poster and gives him a slap. She tells him she may be pregnant; he tells her she should have been more careful. At regular intervals Michel says he wants to make love to her: apart from getting the cash to run away with her to Italy, he does not seem to think about much else. Patricia is more distracted and talks about her career as a journalist, the novel she intends to write, her plans to enrol at the Sorbonne, French art and her possible

54 The Enforcer starred Humphrey Bogart. Although Windust is credited as the director, it was mostly directed by Raoul Walsh, who took over after Windust fell ill.
pregnancy. It could not be more unlike film noir – or any other Hollywood genre or film.

We join them some ten minutes into the scene in a medium long shot to find Michel sitting up in bed, apparently naked with the sheet pulled up to his waist. Wearing a dark stripy top and white underpants, Patricia is sitting on the bed to camera right. She turns to look at Michel and wordlessly they stare hard at each other for several seconds. Breaking the stillness she says: ‘We’re looking into each other’s eyes and it’s useless.’ Jazz piano music plays. In an intimate voice and an Italian accent, Michel says, slowly, ‘Patricia Franchini.’ Patricia looks downcast and says: ‘I hate that name. I’d like to be called Ingrid.’

Could this be a reference anyone other than the Swedish-born Hollywood star, Ingrid Bergman? The allusion is thick with multiple import that shapes the meaning of this film. Like Seberg, Bergman once starred as Joan of Arc – in the 1930 Victor Fleming film of that name. As Ilse Lund in *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942) she famously rejected her former lover, played by Humphrey Bogart (who else?), with whom she had once enjoyed time in Paris. Ilse Lund’s husband, Victor Lazslo, is the partial namesake of one of Michel’s aliases. Straddling fiction and reality, the interconnections become ever more layered. As will be clear by the end of this scene in *A bout de souffle*, cordial Franco-American relations are a significant issue – as they were for *Casablanca* which, set in Vichy-controlled Morocco in World War II, was made to encourage public support for an end to US neutrality. Unlike Bergman, who had made her getaway (from Hollywood in her case) across the border to Italy, where she married her European lover, Michel is destined not to reach the country or gain the girl of his dreams. Unravelling these cultural flows begins to make it clear that the apparently affectless and meaningless conversation in this scene, like the seemingly arbitrary radical discontinuity of the editing and cinematography style, is full of feeling, and that meaning is being shaped by the very coming together of texts, creating something that is original.

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55 Michel’s alias, ‘Laszlo Kovacs’, is the name of a young Hungarian cinematographer friend of Godard’s who fled to Paris in 1956 after filming the Hungarian revolution. He later went to the US, where he filmed *Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper, 1969), a film widely thought to herald New Hollywood.

56 Bergman’s lover was Roberto Rossellini, who was a close friend of the *Cahiers* group.
Rejoining the film, Michel tells Patricia to kneel on the bed. She obliges and they look at each other. Patricia asks ‘What’s the matter?’ Echoing Bogart’s famous ‘Here’s looking at you, kid’ line from *Casablanca*, Michel replies solemnly ‘I’m looking at you.’ He seems to be trying to reverse what Patricia said earlier about the uselessness of looking at each other. On the radio, the jazz music ends and announcer tells us it had been performed by Nadia Tagrine, a well-known French musician of the time. This allusion to a form of music closely associated with the US which, like Hollywood, had been banned during the war, is an early intimation of a Franco-American bipartisan approach to culture that will triumph by the end of this scene.

Michel pulls the sheet over his head and then it pokes back out again. The sound of a trumpet on the radio seems to announce that what Michel says next is of great import: ‘I want you to stay with me.’ Patricia stops still and, with a look that suggests she finally understands he wants more from her than just a quick fuck or a short affair, says, ‘Yes’. She joins him under the bedclothes. They look at each other with desire and tenderness for a moment before she covers her head with the sheet. Michel then joins her and they are both entirely hidden from view under the covers. We hear the radio announcer again: ‘We momentarily interrupt our broadcast in order to synchronise our transmitter.’ It seems that Patricia and Michel are also synchronising their wavelengths: we can just about hear Patricia’s muffled voice say, ‘It’s strange … I can see my reflection in your eyes.’ There is a jump cut to a slightly wider angle. We hear Michel chuckle, and from under the covers he says: ‘I’m laughing because this is truly a Franco-American rapprochement.’

A reconciliation between this Franco-American couple is indeed about to be established: after three more jump cuts and some inconsequential conversation they make love. This momentous event is filmed in a parody of Hollywood censorship constraints. Rather than draw a discreet veil over events, Godard cuts to a medium shot of the bedside radio playing a loud and improbably jolly marching tune. The camera pans across the bed, where Michel and Patricia are romping around under the sheets, and then pans back to the radio as Patricia’s arm snakes out to turn it off. There is a cut to a close up of a satisfied-looking Michel emerging from the sheet and we hear Patricia say, ‘Et voilá’. We have seen precisely nothing as they remain hidden beneath the sheets, disappointing, perhaps, US audience expectations created by the import of sexy French arthouse movies in the 1950s.
Tracing the flows of what we do and do not see in this scene takes us forwards and backwards in time and both ways across national and pelagic borders. In eight years the Hollywood self-censorship system of the Production Code would be abandoned, in part because of the sort of films made by Preminger, Kazan and other Hollywood auteurs admired by the *Cahiers* group, and in part because of the increasing competition coming from sexually explicit European art cinema. Godard plays with these differences and expectations. The Hays Code specified that ‘Scenes of Passion … should not be introduced when not essential to the plot’, that ‘excessive and lustful kissing, lustful embraces, suggestive postures and gestures’ were not to be shown’, and that ‘in general passion should be so treated that the scenes do not stimulate the lower and baser element’. Complete nudity was totally taboo. What we see in *A bout de souffle* is undoubtedly a ‘scene of passion’ that is essential to the plot – from here on Patricia and Michel are reconciled, which is what makes her eventual betrayal so affecting – but Godard shows us no ‘excessive and lustful kissing’ nor anything else that might ‘stimulate the lower and baser element’. And as for nudity, we see not even a finger tip. Should we be in any doubt as to whether they did actually make love, however, before the scene ends Michel asks Patricia, ‘Was it good?. To which she replies smartly in English, ‘Yes sir!’

The rapprochement between the two lovers will not last. Patricia will betray her French lover for no reason that is made very clear and Michel will be gunned down in the street. For now, however, as the Franco-Américain couple get dressed they can barely refrain from touching each other, and this long scene finally ends when they cement their rapprochement with a kiss in an extra large close-up shot. It is, perhaps, too big and too close up to be an entirely Hollywood-style kiss, but in containing the prior text it reshapes the meaning of Godard’s original text. Mediated by the French New Wave, it will appear again, reshaped, in the New Hollywood remake, which I address next.

**The Remake**

As is appropriate for a film that elevates allusion and thus repetition in the form of reiteration or ‘remaking’ to a fine art and, arguably, to high art, *A bout de souffle* may

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57 For details of the Production Code, see www.classicmovies.org/articles/blhayscode.htm.
well be, as Dudley Andrew insists, ‘one of the most talked-about films in the history of the medium’. This is itself a form of reiteration, with audiences, reviewers and film scholars ‘remaking’ the film text each time it is discussed. The film remake is another form of this transformative, reiterative process. Although there is relatively little agreement about what a film remake is, it is commonly denigrated, especially when it is Hollywood doing the remaking, in which case the practice is generally perceived as evidence of the dominant cinema’s lack of originality and of its commercial, and thus non-artistic, impulse. In addition to being imbedded with the polemic and rivalry of which Borges warned, discussion and analysis of the film remake are beset by a taxonomic and naming process which, as I discuss elsewhere, attempts to discover or impose permeable borders around cinemas and cinematic categories.

If, at their most precisely defined, remakes are films which ‘to one degree or another announce to us that they embrace one or more previous movies’, as Andrew Horton and Stuart Y. McDougal use the term, then there have been at least two remakes of A bout de souffle: the little-known independently made homage, Unmade Beds (Amos Poe, 1976) and Jim McBride’s Hollywood remake, Breathless.\(^\text{58}\) If, as David Wills suggests, the word is applied more generally and taken to denote ‘the possibility that exists for a film to be repeated in a different form’ then, as John Frow points out, it offers ‘a structure of repetition that is possible for any text’.\(^\text{59}\) Somewhere between these two extremes lies a film such as Against All Odds (Taylor Hackford, 1984), which although nominally a remake of the film noir Out of the Past...
(Jacques Tourneur, 1947) includes several, possibly unconscious, quotations from *A bout de souffle*. Like other films made in Hollywood in the 1980s ‘post noir’ was arguably ‘made possible’ by Godard’s treatment of Hollywood film noir in *A bout de souffle*.

To conclude this chapter I focus on Jim McBride’s remake, not because it announces its embrace of Godard’s film – which it most definitely does – but because it enables me to analyse the transformative process in which a Hollywood that has been remade in the French New Wave is again remade, this time in Hollywood itself. Because the original Godard film forefronts the issue of intertextuality, the relationship between *A bout de souffle* and *Breathless* has provided a particularly fertile locus for critical revisitation. The tone was set by a review and interview with McBride in *Cahiers du cinéma* which directly compared the American remake with the New Wave original and in which the remake was found lacking. The reviewers criticised McBride for his blatant commercialism and panned his film as a pernicious example of Hollywood homogenisation:

[It is] a rather sad story of vampirism between Hollywood and Europe (*A bout de souffle*, a film already bled to death), Hollywood coming full circle and reclaiming the substance – emptied, commercialized – that the New Wave folks cleverly pinched from America (out of love for American auteurs and for America herself) …

Elsewhere *Breathless* was derided for failing to be sufficiently *Nouvelle Vague* because it adopted too many characteristics of the classic Hollywood narrative style, or for failing to be sufficiently ‘Hollywood’ because it refused or erased too much of the classical Hollywood style. ‘*Breathless* met with lukewarm critical response on both sides of the Atlantic,’ writes Wills, ‘being dismissed as academic and certainly “not Godard”’. Not that it was McBride’s intention to ‘be’ Godard. Although *Breathless* is remarkably faithful to Godard’s original, as a remake it problematises the very notion of originality. In a negative comparison it is usually the differences that are remarked upon and disparaged. Many of the traces of the original and its

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61 Wills, ‘The French Remark’: 150.
precursor, or ‘levels of cinematic incest’ as US critic Roger Ebert described them, are clearly marked in McBride’s film, and to those who know the Godard film they will be immediately recognisable, and recognisably different. The similarities, however, can be just as remarkable, and they are of value in tracing the hybridising processes flowing between the original and its remake. Like Godard before him, McBride does more than simply quote from the original; he is also creating something new, contemporary and original.

Godard relocated the mean streets of film noir to late 1950s Paris, and McBride relocates Godard’s Paris to 1980s Los Angeles. In some scenes McBride’s characters, Jesse (Richard Gere) and Monica (Valérie Kaprisky), quote Michel and Patricia word for word, at other times their language indicates the differences in location and period. The fedora, the documentary-feel exterior city shots and the flashy automobiles of A bout de souffle are all in Breathless, but they now fit the contemporary US west coast cultural landscape. While less obvious, the noir look mediated through Coutard’s cinematography is discernible in Richard Kline’s highly mobile and sometimes hand-held camera work in the remake. Godard reinvents the cinema ‘as though for the first time’, remaking it but ‘but differently’ when, for example, he uses the remarkable iris-in and iris-out, a transition favoured by silent cinema filmmakers; McBride demonstrates his own (re)inventiveness by translating this into a long shot through the hole of a large doughnut sign outside a fast food store. McBride’s score also demonstrates his careful study and reinterpretation of the New Wave film: Godard’s original music is by modernist jazz pianist Martial Solal; McBride uses music by the modernist minimalist composer Philip Glass. Michel’s obsession with Humphrey Bogart is remade as Jesse’s (Richard Gere) obsession with Jerry Lee Lewis; A bout de souffle ends with Michel dead on the streets of Paris and Patricia with her back to the audience in a freeze frame while McBride opts for Lujack caught in a freeze frame with his back to the audience, still very much alive. Michel’s borrowed gestural tic of tracing his thumb round his lips is remade ‘but differently’ as Jesse’s sexy pose with one arm held up high and a finger pointing to the sky – a performance stance borrowed from his popular cultural hero (whose 1958

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63 The original ending was reportedly changed after negative audience preview responses to Lujack being killed by the LAPD. See http://www.fast-rewind.com.
hit was entitled ‘Breathless’). Godard restaged complete scenes and shots from a precursor film; McBride restages complete scenes and shots from his precursor.

On the basis of the samenesses an argument could be made that McBride at best domesticates or neutralises Godard’s film or, as is widely perceived, cannibalises and homogenises it. On the basis of the differences, it could be argued that Hollywood cannot do ‘art’ cinema. I argue that the issue is not about the fidelity or infidelity of one text to another – notions which only confirm cultural boundaries and notions of homogeneity and essence. Rather, it is about the tensions between the cultural flows in a constantly transforming screenscape. As mentioned earlier, A bout de souffle holds up a double-sided two-way mirror and reflected in it we can see not only what went before but also an image of Hollywood’s future. In remaking the Hollywood that preceded it, the New Wave contributed to the remaking of the Hollywood that followed, and these two-way flows across time and space exist as traces in the film text.

A bout de souffle is far from being the only source of allusion for Breathless – a film is a series of sites and the precursor text is never the single, pure originary moment. Breathless also forges a reconciliation between classical Hollywood and the New Hollywood of which it was a part. It should come as little surprise to learn that McBride screened the noirs Gun Crazy, High Sierra (Raoul Walsh, 1941) and Killer’s Kiss (Stanley Kubrick, 1955) during pre-production. For Gilbert Adair, Breathless was in ‘no significant sense’ a remake of Godard’s film but rather ‘a wet, pulpy, squelching kiss lovingly applied to Hollywood’s backside’.  

A Hybrid Kiss

To conclude this chapter I shall follow the traces of cultural flows between a text, its precursor and its remake, to show the multiple temporalities and mobile geographies in the film text. The ‘Franco-Américain rapprochement’ scene of A bout de souffle described above culminated in an almost Hollywood-style kiss scene – insufficiently sexually explicit to be a truly French kiss, but too big and too long to

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be a Hollywood kiss either. There is another extra big close-up kiss in *A Bout de souffle*, one with greater proximity to Hollywood.

To escape the detectives who are hot on their trail Patricia suggests: ‘Let’s go see a western at the Napoléon.’ Michel and Patricia dive into one of the Parisian cinemas of the time that could be guaranteed to be screening a Hollywood film. The film cuts to an interior shot. We hear guns blazing in a B-movie western shootout, but all we see is an extra large close-up shot of our Franco-Américain couple in profile, entirely filling the screen. With the light from the movie flickering on their faces, for just under 20 seconds they look at each other, they kiss, they look again, they rub noses, they smile. No words are necessary: they are entirely united and mutually implicated – with each other and with screen technologies.\footnote{The inventiveness and originality of this scene is reinforced by the voice-over of first a poem by Louis Aragon and then one by Guillaume Apollinaire.} There is an abrupt cut, and in long shot the camera pans down from a larger-than-life picture of Virginia Mayo on the marquee poster for Budd Boetticher’s *Westbound* (1959) to the couple walking out of the cinema. In this scene the New Wave can be seen to create its own precursor and at the same time let us see its own future image.

In *Breathless*, at the comparable moment in the plot the transatlantic lovers also dive into a cinema to throw the cops off their trail. In a scene that destabilises time and space, Jesse and Monica find themselves not in front of the screen, like their precursors, but behind it. *Gun Crazy* is playing. In a sexually explicit scene they make love and kiss in the foreground while behind them, in a mirror-reverse image, Peggy Cummins and John Dall seal their doomed destinies with a large Hollywood kiss that fills its screen: this is truly a classical Hollywood cinema - New Hollywood rapprochement.

In this chain of images from classical Hollywood, the French New Wave and the New Hollywood, each film is a series of sites in which we can trace the process by which a film creates its own precursor and in doing so shapes its own meaning and modifies the future. Cinema, as David E. James suggests, is never ‘just the occasion of an object or a text, never simply the location of a message or of an aesthetic event’, but ‘always the site of manifold relationships’, with each image
existing ‘only as a moment in larger circulations’.  

Breathless participates not simply in a process of remaking a New Wave film that remade Hollywood, but also in remaking and thus relocating Hollywood – a series of rapprochements is made possible by porous borders.

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Chapter Six
First Nation Cinema

Every voyage can be said to involve a re-siting of boundaries … an undetermined journeying practice, having constantly to negotiate between home and abroad, native culture and adopted culture, or more creatively speaking, between a here, a there, and an elsewhere.¹ Trinh T. Minh-ha.

Ever since the first three indigenously directed feature films debuted in the late 1980s – the Oscar-nominated *Ofelas/The Pathfinder* (1987) by Sami director Nils Gaup, *Ngati* (1987) by Maori director Barry Barclay, and *Mauri* (1988) by Maori filmmaker Merata Mita – an increasing number of indigenous filmmakers have contributed to the global screenscape. This is a cinema so new that it does not yet have a commonly accepted name among its filmmakers; equally, there is no established critical or analytical framework in which to theorise it. It is usually positioned within postcolonial discourse in opposition to Hollywood, as a minority cinema alongside other cinemas with which it is said to share a common experience of dominance and exclusion by the majority, or it is subsumed within national cinema studies.

On the complex issue of what to call these filmmakers and their films, as Faye Ginsburg, points out, the term ‘indigenous’ is not altogether appropriate because it can index a social formation ‘native’ to a particular area, as in ‘I Love Lucy is indigenous to America.’² While in one sense ‘indigenous’ is interchangeable with the neologisms ‘First People’ or ‘First Nation People’, like Ginsburg I prefer these newer terms because they indicate recognition of the original inhabitants of colonised

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territories. The First Nation filmmakers I discuss in this chapter belong to a people or nation who have inhabited these lands since before recorded history, and thus can claim ‘firstness’. They can be said to deeply ‘belong’ in a place because of their continuous occupancy over an extended period. This definition also recognises that they share common histories of colonial displacement and dispossession. I define a First Nation cinema as a number of films and other moving image formats made by a people which has historically experienced enforced de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation most commonly by white-settler colonisers, and who make their films with and without the collaboration of non-indigenous people. While this chapter mostly refers to films made by Aboriginal Australians, Maori in New Zealand/Aotearoa, Inuit in Canada, and Native Americans in the US and Canada, indigenous films are also produced in Central and South American countries such as Mexico, Brazil and Bolivia.3

Hollywood and First Nation cinemas are typically thought to occupy two very different and opposed spaces within the global screenscape. Viewed as part of a postcolonial minority culture, First Nation films are usually treated as part of a single category. Despite considerable ethnic, racial, language and other cultural differences, First Nation films have been ascribed a number of designations, which all tend to present a homogenous cinema in political and aesthetic opposition to the globally dominant cinema. These designations include ‘Third World’, ‘Third Cinema’, ‘marginal’, ‘anti-racist’, ‘multicultural’, ‘hybrid’, ‘mestizo’, ‘postcolonial’, ‘transnational’, ‘imperfect cinema’, ‘cinema of hunger’, ‘interstitial’, ‘minority’, ‘minor’, ‘accented’ and ‘intercultural’. Local names are also used: indigenous Australian films, for example, are often referred to as ‘Aboriginal’ or ‘Blackfella’.4

Most of these terms offer a model that, as Françoise Lionnet and Shu-Mei Shih argue, ‘presupposes minorities necessarily and continuously engage with and against

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3 The Canadian constitution identifies three groups of aboriginal peoples: Inuit, Indians (as designated in the Constitution) and Metis (or Métis), the last being the descendants of aboriginal and European settlers. In Bolivia indigenous people form 75 per cent of the population and speak 36 different language, making collaborative or cooperative cultural production rare. With a capital ‘A’, the term ‘Aboriginal’ refers to Australian First Nation people, their nations and languages.

majority cultures in a vertical relationship of assimilation and opposition.’ The terms position the dominant culture at the centre and minority culture cinemas on the margins, from which the next new term represents an attempt to retrieve them. As Laura Marks suggests, the number and variety of designations point to ‘the continuing urgency of issues that the coining of a new term seems to resolve’. This urgency – which never disappears, whatever the new term – relates to the tension between cultural homogenisation and cultural heterogenisation, and to fears, real and imagined, of a hegemonically powerful Hollywood whose threat of cannibalisation is widely perceived as a constant. The threat is seen to be both direct and indirect, and it has a bearing not only on where Hollywood is thought to situate First Nation cinema, but also on where Hollywood is itself imagined to be located. The location of First Nation cinema is complex: the films form a part of a national cinema, and because Hollywood is the dominant cinema in most of these nations, indigenous filmmakers can find themselves as Sally Riley, Director of the Australian Film Commission’s Indigenous Unit, said, ‘on the fringe of the fringe of the mainstream’.

In this chapter I analyse what I show to be a highly complex and nuanced relationship between Hollywood and its First Nation other. I first explore some of the boundaries that are seen to exist between Hollywood and First Nation cinema, and then, through the prism of some of the labels that are attached to First Nation cinema, I examine where Hollywood is imagined to be located in terms of its relationship to its indigenous other and where it is thought to situate First Nation cinemas in the global screenscape. I look at what is valuable about the categorising process and designations such as ‘minor’, ‘third world’, ‘accented’ and ‘intercultural’, and I examine their limitations. They each offer a variety of agendas and strategies proposed by political and intellectual movements, filmmakers, critics, scholars and audiences that reveal, and sometimes hide or ignore, ideas concerning homeland,

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7 Ibid.: 250.
exile, diaspora, travel, settlement, dispossession, displacement, deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. I show that the categories and labels which seek commonalities between films are fraught with ambiguity, political obfuscation and tensions, all of which can impact upon a film’s form, content and mode of production. I argue that this points to the need to examine cinematic and other cultural borders more closely: who crosses a border, where and in which direction they come from or go to, can reveal wide disparities in terms of identity and power.

This does not mean that First Nation cinema offers no critique or opposition. Nor that the relationship is one of equals: the hegemonic power of dominant cinema is by no means diminished or challenged in the creative tensions I show to exist. But nor is it a one-way process in which the indigenous cinema is crushed, contained or cannibalised by an undeniably hegemonically powerful Hollywood. I show the existence of porous borders and the productive outcomes of the tensions between the globalising processes; these suggest that Hollywood is not the threat it is commonly perceived to be and that much greater diversity exists than is commonly imagined.

**Smoke Signals (Chris Eyre, 1998)**

Locating Hollywood in *Smoke Signals* (Chris Eyre, 1998) proves to be a relatively easy task because the main characters, Victor Joseph (Adam Beach) and Thomas Builds-the-Fire (Evan Adams), two Native Americans from the Coeur D’Alene Reservation in Idaho, make constant references to it. On a long bus journey to retrieve the ashes of his recently deceased father, Victor is driven crazy by the cultural naivety of his ever-chattering, constantly smiling, story-telling companion, Thomas. Drawing upon his knowledge of the ‘Red Indian’ from countless Hollywood westerns, Victor advises: ‘Indians ain’t supposed to smile. Get stoic … White people will run all over you if you don’t look mean.’ He performs the stereotypical ‘injun warrior look’ and recommends: ‘Look like you’ve just come back from killing a buffalo.’ Thomas, however, insists upon a verisimilitude that Hollywood often ignored: ‘But we were never buffalo hunters. We’re a salmon-fishing tribe.’ An exasperated Victor, who has a better understanding of the power of
the screen image than his companion, responds: ‘You want to look like you just been fishing? It ain’t Dances With Salmon, you know?’

The reflexivity in Smoke Signals demonstrates the concern of director Chris Eyre and screenplay writer Sherman Alexie, of the Cheyenne-Arapaho and Spokane-Coeur d’Alene nations respectively, to explore what it means to be represented and misrepresented by Hollywood. The film’s characters are alert to the role Hollywood has played in contributing to popular perceptions of Native American stereotypes, and they also demonstrate how a more accurate representation might be made. When, for example, a white woman thanks them for rescuing her from a car crash, she says they arrived ‘like the Lone Ranger and Tonto’. Thomas corrects her with: ‘More like we’re Tonto and Tonto.’ Thomas has not noticed that they are in fact more like the Lone Ranger and the Lone Ranger for, as Alexie has pointed out, ‘They’re not just the sidekick, or the buddy, they’re the protagonists.’ But it is, perhaps, Alexie himself who has taken over the role of the white hero, for as he goes on to say: ‘Simply having Indians as the protagonists in a contemporary film, and placing them within this familiar literary and cinematic structure, is groundbreaking.’

It is hard not to share Victor’s suspicion that Thomas derives his monodimensional perception of Native American identity through a Hollywood lens. When Victor demands, ‘How many times have you seen Dances With Wolves?’ neither he, nor the audience, should be the least surprised when Thomas admits to having seen it at least two hundred times. But Thomas does have some understanding of Hollywood’s impact upon Native American subjectivity, commenting wryly upon his own viewing habits: ‘The only thing more pathetic than seeing Indians on TV is seeing Indians sitting around watching Indians on TV.’ Their extensive knowledge of Hollywood, however, enables these buddies to exact a moment of cinematic revenge on every screen western which ever so much as hinted that ‘the only good Indian is

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9 The reference is to Dances With Wolves (Kevin Costner, 1990).
one who’s dead’. When forced out of their bus seats by two racist cowboys, Victor and Thomas reluctantly sit elsewhere and despondently discuss what happened:

**THOMAS**

Man, the cowboys always win, enit?

**VICTOR**

The cowboys don’t always win.

**THOMAS**

Yeah, they do. The cowboys ***always win***. Look at Tom Mix. Look at Roy Rogers. Look at Clint Eastwood. And what about John Wayne? Man, he was about the toughest cowboy of them all, enit?

At which point, refusing to supply yet another screen image of the vanquished Indian, Victor bursts into a song possessing a hybridity typical of this film – English lyrics and Western musical rhythms combined with Indian vocables and Indian traditional ‘powwow’ drum rhythms. The lyrics rob white dominant culture of some of its power by casting doubt upon the authenticity of John Wayne’s teeth: ‘Are they false, are they real? Are they plastic, are they steel? Hey, hey, hey, yeeeee!’

This scene, with its dispute between contemporary cowboys and Indians about who sits where on the bus is an obvious allusion to the freedom bus rides of the 1960s to secure the democratic rights of African Americans. For Ginsburg it also symbolises the reversal that *Smoke Signals* represents of the historical failure of the US’s First Peoples to represent themselves. Describing the film as the ‘first ever all-Native American feature movie’, she cites it as evidence that:

Native Americans are now able to produce their own images and narratives which can effectively speak back to a U.S. cinema industry that has flourished

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12 The phrase ‘the only good Indian is one who is dead’, a sentiment widely thought to typify the classic Hollywood western’s approach to the Native American, is ascribed to (and denied by) General Philip H. Sheridan (1831–88). Sheridan played a decisive role in the US army’s long campaign against the native peoples of the plains, forcing them onto reservations with the tactics of total war.

on the marketing of stereotyped depictions of their lives, cultures, and histories.\textsuperscript{14}

In the Introduction to his published screenplay Alexie points out that \textit{Smoke Signals} is, in fact, ‘the first feature film written, directed, and co-produced by Indians to ever receive a major distribution deal.’\textsuperscript{15} The distinction is important because, as the end credits reveal, the film was distributed by Miramax films, one of Hollywood’s ‘Big Ten’ distribution and production studios, which has been totally owned by Disney since 1993. For those suspicious of Hollywood’s role as a cultural homogeniser and who like to construct rigid boundaries between Hollywood and its others, the Miramax investment suggests the film is tainted by Hollywoodisation and it thus cannot be considered either independent or authentically First Nation.\textsuperscript{16} My argument, however, is that the tensions between Miramax funding in the financescape and the flows of cultural material in the other ‘scapes are creative. The traces of what this tension produces can be seen in the film itself to demonstrate that globalising processes are hybridising processes.

Few could deny a buzz of pioneering excitement and creativity surrounding this film. It is summed up in an early scene in which a reservation radio station DJ yells to his American Indian listeners (and the movie’s audiences): ‘It’s a good day to be indigenous!’ \textit{Smoke Signals} feels as if it is celebrating the advent of a cinema which is emerging from the interstices of other cinemas – Hollywood, North American independent, and other indigenous cinemas – and which, as cultural phenomena flows in varying speeds and intensities across porous borders, contributes to and incorporates aspects of these other cinemas. The film’s triumph, however, is circumscribed by irony. When this scene cuts from the DJ in his studio to the traffic reporter on location we find him at a crossroads where the big news of the day is: ‘Ain’t no traffic, really.’ This suggests that Native American cinema is but a

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.: 77.

\textsuperscript{15} In the Introduction to his published screenplay Alexie writes: ‘There have been many other Indian filmmakers, our elders, who made wonderful films that have been wrongfully ignored to dismissed. Our film would not have been possible without the filmmaking efforts of previous generations of Indian writers, directors, producers and actors’ (Sherman Alexie, \textit{Smoke Signals}, New York: Hyperion, 1998: xi).

speck in the rear mirror of the Hollywood juggernaut. Or is it being edged off the cultural highway altogether?

**Colonial Boundaries**

Many of the boundaries, real and imagined, between Hollywood and First Nation cinemas today can be traced to earlier periods. In this analysis of the relationship between Hollywood and First Nation cinemas it is important to consider the extent to which the history of cinema is inextricably entangled in the history of colonial violence, and to explore what this reveals about the relationship between majority and minority film cultures. The origins of cinema, as Ella Shohat and Robert Stam point out:

> coincided with the giddy heights of the imperial project, with an epoch where Europe held sway over vast tracts of alien territory and hosts of subjugated peoples … The most prolific film-producing countries of the silent period – Britain, France, the U.S., Germany – also ‘happened’ to be among the leading imperialist countries, in whose clear interest it was to laud the colonial enterprise.¹⁷

In addition, as Daniel Bernardi explains, the invention and early development of cinema ‘coincided with the rise in power and prestige of biological determinism’, and this widespread belief in the superiority of white racial supremacy was accompanied by fear of miscegenation. The implications of this for cinema history have been considerable. Two films of the pioneer French filmmaker Georges Méliès, *Le voyage dans la lune (Journey to the Moon)* (1902) and *Voyage vers l’impossible (Journey to the Unknown)* (1904), for example, depict unmistakable images of imperial expansion and offer a metaphor for the colonisation of alien lands and peoples taking place at the turn of the 19th century. Subsequent popular cinema in the US and Europe perpetuated the genre, adapting the conquest and settler narratives of colonialist novelists such as Rudyard Kipling (India), Rider Haggard (Africa),

Edgar Wallace (Africa) and Edgar Rice Burroughs (Africa), from which the Hollywood adventure and Western genres developed.

The new moving image technology was also enthusiastically adopted by ethnographers, who documented, recorded, measured, named and, ultimately, perpetuated the western imperialist project of subjugation and control. At times the boundaries between documentary and drama, between ethnographic and feature films, were so blurred as to render them virtually indistinguishable: ‘The camera penetrated a foreign and unfamiliar zone like a predator, seizing its “loot” of images as raw material to be reworked in the “motherland” and sold to sensation-hungry spectators and consumers, a process later fictionalised in *King Kong* (1933).’

In Robert Flaherty’s classic documentaries about indigenous peoples, the ideas, images and techniques flowed the other way, from drama to documentary, with reconstructed scenes of ‘traditional’ cultural customs. In *Nanook of the North* (1922), a film about the viability of the survival of the Inuit people in the 20th century, Flaherty cast his friend and guide, Allakariallak, in the role of an unsophisticated ‘native’ whom he renamed ‘Nanook, Chief of the Ikivimuts’ because he thought his friend’s real name was too difficult or ‘foreign’ for his intended audiences to pronounce. Flaherty and his film gained enduring international fame, but this was of little significance to the film’s ‘star’, who was to die of starvation in his Arctic lands. What is of significance to present-day First Nation cinema, and therefore to this chapter, is that although Allakariallak ‘never passed on his knowledge of the camera and filmmaking directly to other Inuit, the unacknowledged help he gave Flaherty haunts Inuit producers today as a paradigmatic moment in a history of unequal-looking relations’. Thus ideas flowing across cinematic borders today can take the form of memories of disjunctures from past epochs:

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18 Shohat Robert Stam *Unthinking Eurocentrism*: 107. *King Kong* co-directors and writers Merian C. Cooper and Ernest Schoedsack began their film careers making the ‘nature drama’ films *Grass* (1925) and *Chang* (1927), combining wild animals and native peoples filmed in their habitats with staged footage. Cooper became Vice-President and Head of Production at RKO in the 1930s known for his love of technical innovation.


20 The ‘Ikivimut’ referred to in this intertitle is an invented name.

21 Ginsburg, ‘Screen Memories and Entangled Technologies’: 81.
Allakariallak’s silenced voice is represented nearly 80 years later by Zacharias Kunuk’s insistence upon making *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* in the Inuktitut language.

The exoticisation and negative or partial representation of colonised peoples is by no means confined to Hollywood; nor is it a thing of the past. In their introduction to the catalogue for the Indigenous Touring Film Festival celebrating the centenary of the birth of cinema, Aboriginal archivist and curator Walter Saunders and his non-Indigenous colleague, Michael Leigh, explain:

The exotic other has been the focus of countless lenses since Flaherty’s *Moana* (1926) tried to capture ‘the essence’ of the Pacific. From the Inuit of North America to the Maori of Aotearoa, from the Tua Mutos to Kanaky, cinema has either appropriated these peoples lives for fictions ranging from *The Mutiny on the Bounty* to *South Pacific* … [From 1913] onwards Aborigines were generally cast in the role of ‘Indians’ in outback westerns. If a role called for a more central character this was generally played by a white actor in ‘blackface’ makeup. This unfortunate practice continues up to the present.22

That Aboriginal extras should have been stand-ins for the ‘Red Indians’ of the Western is not surprising. Richard Dyer describes how the Hollywood western expresses a desire – signalling ‘a border between established and unestablished order, a border that is not crossed but pushed endlessly back’ – that is not unique to the US.23 In Australia, as in the US, it offered an imaginary space for filmmakers and

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23 Richard Dyer writes about the red/white boundary as follows: ‘The border is also of course between white and red peoples, which in turn specifies the nature of this border, namely that it established a border where there was none before, This is so not because there was no confrontation between white and red before this, but because the reds were borderless people, who had no concept of boundaries and of the order and civilization that this bespeaks in the white imagination. From the first, the properness of the white occupation of the North American continent (and indeed of other territories to be colonised) was argued in terms of the fact that the indigenous people did not cultivate the land, did not order it and therefore did not realise the true human (but we will now say white) purpose toward creation. White cultivation brings partition, geometry, boundedness to the land; it displays on the land the fact of human intervention, of enterprise. The frontier, and all the drama and excitement its establishment and maintenance entail, is about the act of bringing order in the form of
audiences to pursue an imperialist design involving ‘a people massively destroyed by white imperialism, guilt for which only developed as the genre itself declined’. Underwriting colonial boundaries, of course, is the issue of racial and racist boundaries, and I shall examine next how these have impacted upon the notion of location.

**Racist Boundaries**

Racism creates exclusionary boundaries protecting essence and rejecting difference. As an aspect of the ideoscape it has impacted upon the global screenscape in multiple ways. Intersecting and overlapping with the flows of other cultural material, racist ideas exist as traces in the film texts and they enable us to trace them to all stages of the production, distribution, exhibition and reception. The creative tensions between these flows and the varying speeds and intensities at which they have flowed means that although racial and ethnic interests and concerns of Hollywood and First Nation cinemas are usually read as signs of complete otherness, at times they have overlapped.

That Hollywood has a long history of racism and of representing racism is a commonplace. Films cited in evidence invariably include D.W. Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation* (1915), *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939) and most westerns. And as the comment ‘Ain’t no traffic, really’ from the traffic reporter in *Smoke Signals* suggests, at the other end of the spectrum lies invisibility – what E. Ann Kaplan describes as ‘the easiest and most “natural” form of racism in representation’. Invisibility comes in several forms. As discussed in the chapter on national cinema, Hollywood is a part of the national cinema in the US, but both in North America and elsewhere, the term ‘national’ is particularly complex in the context of this chapter, because while indigenous peoples struggled to be treated as citizens of the white borders to a land and people without them.’ Richard Dyer, *White*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997: 33.

24 *Ibid.*: 35.
25 The DVD of *Birth of a Nation* is marketed with an initial caption card expressly referring to the film’s racism.
colonising nation (or nation-state), their own tribes, or nations, were usually ignored, or destroyed.

Dominant cinema has undoubtedly played a role in blurring and merging the cultural specificities of indigenous peoples. The marginalisation of a local indigenous cinema by the dominant national cinema has contributed to a situation in Australia, for example, where most people know the names of more Native American nations than they do of Aboriginal nations. Millions of people throughout the world know the names of the Apache, Comanche, Cherokee and several other Native American tribes and this might, perhaps, be regarded as a Hollywood success story. But Hollywood wins few points for ethnic accuracy or authenticity in the western, which is well known for depicting the stereotypical ‘Red Indian’ tribe with language, clothing and ceremonies in an unhappy mix and (mis)match – innumerable entirely fictional Native American tribes have been created courtesy of the combined efforts of script, production design and costume departments. Hollywood’s (mis)representation and (mal)treatment of North America’s First People on both sides of the camera is undeniable. It is succinctly summed up by Shohat and Stam:

the Hollywood western turned history on its head by making Native Americans appear intruders on their own land, and thus provided a paradigmatic perspective … through which to view the whole of the non-white world. Rarely do westerns show Native Americans as simply inhabiting the domestic space of their unthreatening daily lives, although it was their lives and habits that were brutally disrupted by western expansion.27

The perception of Hollywood as inevitably and irrevocably racist is consistent with a view of a homogenous Hollywood with rigidly patrolled borders, impervious to racial and ethnic difference or to anything but a single, racist representation. It is also consistent with the widespread dismissive view of popular culture as being dominated by the contingencies of commercial enterprise at the expense of artistic and other cultural and political considerations. An analysis of cinema which looks for and sees only what exists inside the frame is likely to reinforce this perception. As is an analytical framework which regards Hollywood only in institutional terms.

27 Shohat and Stam, Unthinking Eurocentrism: 119.
While he confines his discussion on racial boundaries to those between Hollywood and Europe, Thomas Elsaesser offers a corrective to the widespread perception of a Hollywood powered by a completely exclusionary racist ideology, arguing that from the beginning, ‘Hollywood was simultaneously immigrant, transnational and American.’

Exploring the transatlantic ethnic flows between Hollywood and German cinema in the 1920s and 1930s, he argues that while Hollywood cinema is ‘undoubtedly the American art par excellence’, migration, exile, and immigration are also constitutive of the American film industry. He discusses several German immigrants who became early studio moguls, and a significant number of established European directors, actors, cameramen and set designers who helped create classical Hollywood. He furthermore demonstrates that this was a continuous ‘two-way traffic’.

Racist ideas, images and employment policies are certainly a part of Hollywood’s cultural history, but, paradoxically, Hollywood has also responded to its own racism with deliberately anti-racist ideas, images and employment policies. There is a history of ‘pro-Indian’ westerns that challenge the perception of a single white colonial narrative. Broken Arrow (Dave Delmer, 1950) is usually cited as the ‘break-through’ pro-Indian movie, a film that laid the path for an increasing number of Hollywood films with a similar agenda, culminating in Victor’s pet hate, Kevin Costner’s well-meaning Dances With Wolves. But years earlier, silent cinema ‘reforms’ resulting from objections from First Nation, African-American and other anti-racist activists resulted in what would now be dubbed as ‘politically correct’ ideas involving the casting of Native Americans to play themselves, their employment behind the camera, and the commissioning of narratives with positive roles and storylines. Angela Aleiss’s research shows that even D.W. Griffith was capable of making the sympathetic and non-racist The Redman and the Child

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30 Dances with Wolves is not universally seen to be devoid of racism, and its revisionism is often questioned. Richard Dyer notes that although it self-consciously ‘seeks to right the wrongful imagery of Native Americans in the Western … the bad Pawnee people are none the less of distinctly darker complexion that the good Sioux’ (Dyer, White: 60).
(1908). There were so many ‘pro-Indian’ films made in the late 1900s and the 1910s that some film historians see them as a separate sub-genre.

The (mis)perception of Hollywood as unremittingly racist is consistent with a narrow approach to film analysis in which issues of ethnic and racial representation tend to be regarded as being relevant to only a specific, and limited, body of films. The assumption that only certain films are relevant for discussion of ethnicity is based on a superficially thematic examination of the film text: that is, whether or not the film explicitly foregrounds ethnic conflicts or complementarities. Such an analysis of a film’s narrative surface fails to note that cinematic space is never neutral, and that ‘Filmic images and sounds come inevitably “saturated” with ethnic and racial resonances.’ At the same time, it also ignores diverse reception practices which can indigenise a film, its ideas and images or, equally, can fail to see any space occupied by First Nation ideas and images. Aboriginal filmmaker Frances Peters-Little addresses this issue of reception and interpretation as follows:

My experience as the maker of Tent Embassy was that some viewers interpreted the film to be taking a purely sympathetic view of the demise of the Aboriginal tent embassy, while others saw the film as an attack on the bureaucratisation of Aboriginal affairs. In my view, the film is about both and many other things, and the film reflects many opinions which are not

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31 Aleiss writes: ‘The controversial D.W. Griffith has been rightly criticized for his savage Sioux warriors in The Battle at Elderbush Gulch (1914) and the intoxicated Mohawk Indians in America (1924). Less known, however, is Griffith’s The Redman and the Child (1908), his first Western and arguably his best. A white boy and his Indian companion form an enduring friendship when the warrior saves the child from marauding outlaws and avenges the murder of the boy’s grandfather. The Indian hero proudly paddles his canoe back to the campsite with the exhausted child asleep by his side. In a similar manner, Griffith’s The Broken Doll (1910) features the sacrifice of an Indian girl, but Was He a Coward? (1911) deals with a white man who cares for an Indian stricken with smallpox. The man nurses the sick Indian back to health, and the final scene shows the white man’s face bearing the fatal pock marks’ (Angela Aleiss, ‘Native Americans: The Surprising Silents (Race in Contemporary American Cinema: Part 4)’, Cineaste, vol. 21, no. 3, 1995: 34.


necessarily my own. It is surprisingly common to hear comments from [audiences] who strongly believe a film to have a single interpretation and meaning, when in fact it is their interpretation and meaning that they have read into it. Audiences, including Aboriginal audiences, who yearn to have their values reflected in films, have had to face the fact that the reason they may like a particular film [is] exactly the same reason someone else dislikes it.34

An approach in Film Studies that goes no further than the ‘epidermic’ surface of the film text is of limited value. This standard approach to the study of ethnic representation, one that Ana M. López calls ‘The “Hollywood’s image of -----” school of Film Studies’, merely states the obvious: that ‘classic Hollywood cinema was never kind to ethnic or minority groups’.35 López argues that it is necessary to ‘challenge the commonplace assumption that classic Hollywood cinema either stereotypes minorities or simply ignores them’.36 Hollywood’s relationship to each ethnic and minority group is more nuanced than such a simple analysis allows. To understand the nuances, Shohat offers this solution: ‘The view of ethnicity as culturally ubiquitous and textually submerged can hopefully lead to a reconceptualisation of the analysis of ethnicity in the cinema, opening its present boundaries.’37 To this end, López recommends we (re)conceptualise Hollywood as an ‘ethnographer’ of American culture and think of Hollywood ‘not as a simple reproducer of fixed and homogenous cultures or ideologies, but as a producer of some of the multiple discourses that intervene in, affirm, and contest the socio-ideological struggles of a given moment’.38

So far in this chapter I have explored some of the boundaries and markers of difference said to oppositionally separate Hollywood from its First Nation other. I shall now explore more fully what First Nation cinema has contributed to the global

36 Ibid.: 404.
38 López, ‘Are All Latins from Manhattan?’: 404.
screenscape and our understanding of where it and Hollywood are located in relation to each other. I shall use the prism of some of the main categories that have been constructed in contemporary postcolonial Film Studies in an attempt to retrieve First Nation cinema from the margins.

**A Minority Cinema in a Majority Language**

If movies are the vehicles on the global cultural highway, manoeuvring and sometimes out-manoeuvring each other according to their relative speed and power, then most First Nation films are the vehicles with very low-powered engine capacity in the slow lane. In other words, they are a ‘minor cinema’ in the sense that their narrative style tends to be driven by their own limitations – by smallness, imperfection, low budgets, small crews and casts. This notion derives from Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of ‘minor literature’, to which they ascribe three main characteristics: ‘the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation’. A minor literature is not ‘marginal’, but it is the literature of a minority or marginalised group, written not in a minor language but in a major one. In *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, Deleuze applies this concept to postcolonial cinema to offer a model of action from a colonised, suppressed, or displaced position within a given society: all minor cinema for Deleuze is highly deterritorialised, since to make minor use of a major language is to articulate living displacement. Referring to films that draw upon and represent the experience of colonised peoples, Deleuze states that the task of the filmmaker in a minor cinema is to call a people into becoming. In this sense, minor art arises in conditions where a population has ‘not yet’ become a people, or is no longer one. A minor cinema, the ‘not yet’ existence of thought, thus summons the ‘not yet existence’ of a people.

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When applied to First Nation cinema, the minor cinema model focuses on thematic issues of deterritorialisation and thus usefully links First Nation people and their film culture to land, clearly an issue of major concern to the dispossessed. It allows one to identify the strategies of appropriation and rewriting used by First Nation filmmakers to challenge the conventions and premises of mainstream cinema. D.N. Rodowick feels strongly that if defined properly, the term ‘minor cinema’ is perfectly appropriate for films otherwise described as ‘hybrid’, ‘multicultural’, ‘exilic, ‘postcolonial’ or ‘third cinema’.41 For Meaghan Morris its value as an analytical framework extends beyond postcolonial film discourse: she identifies the model of a minor cinema in the concerns of some second wave feminist critics of the late 1960s and 1970s who, taking their cue from Cahiers du cinéma critics Jean-Luc Comolli and Jean Narboni, focused on ‘women’s films made within the system’: those, that is, which made use of Hollywood’s social and cinematic codes.42 In many ways this is an apt description of how many of First Nation films cited and analysed in this chapter articulate issues of dispossession and ‘living displacement’ – by reconciling the ‘language’ and culture of traditional and contemporary indigenous peoples with that of mainstream culture.

As an analytical model for First Nation cinema this has limitations. For Laura Marks these limitations reside in its proposal of a unitary voice for a cinema positioned in binary opposition to the dominant cinema.43 It posits not a decentred model that rescues a cinema from the margins but a recentred model in which, as already mentioned, the minor’s cultural and political significance rests on its critical function within and against the major in a binary and vertical relationship. It offers a generalised and aestheticised theory of colonial oppression which privileges displacement over location, and deterritorialisation is made the key factor in films that are always and necessarily collective, political, and oppositional. It fails to account for the complexity of intercinematic relationships, the many centres and

41 D.N. Rodowick, ‘Fabulation: Towards a Minor Cinema’, abridged from Chapter 6 of Gilles Deleuze’s Time Machine.
overlaps in the ideas, images and other cultural flows between mainstream and First Nation cinemas. It offers a universal minority position in opposition to a universal majority: it is another version of the ‘face-off’ between Hollywood and its others in which Hollywood is yet again positioned as the big bad other.

Marcia Langton outlines the limitations of a minority discourse that assumes a binary relationship between power and opposition, hegemony and resistance, home and exile, placement and displacement. She argues that '[t]raditional representations of Aboriginality are not … generated solely from within the Aboriginal community’, and that the media and non-Indigenous people working within the media play a key role in creating intercultural experience and in shaping the public definition of Aboriginality. The construct ‘Aboriginality’, she writes:

arises from the subjective experience of both Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people who engage in any intercultural dialogue, whether in actual lived experience or through a mediated experience such as a white person watching a program about Aboriginal people on television or reading a book … Moreover, the creation of ‘Aboriginality’ is not a fixed thing. It is created from our histories. It arises from the intersubjectivity of black and white in a dialogue.44

Thus it is not geographical or cultural displacement that leads to Aboriginality; it is instead the creative interaction between the hegemonically powerful ‘majority’ cinema and the minority cinema. Several First Nation films explore the implications of Langton’s argument with ideas about race and representation existing as traces within the film text and in the interactions between mainstream and First Nation film cultures. Tracey Moffatt’s independent and experimental film, Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy (1990), for example, invites audiences to question their assumptions about

44 Marcia Langton, ‘Well, I heard it on the radio and I saw it on the television …’ Sydney: Australian Film Commission, 1993: 31. Aboriginal activist Mick Dodson, on the other hand, makes the following observation about filmic and theatrical representations: ‘It’s as if we’ve been ushered onto a stage to play in a drama where the parts have already been written … [W]e have never totally lost ourselves within the other’s reality … We have never fallen into the hypnosis of believing that those representations were our essence. Alongside the colonial discourses we have always had our own Aboriginal discourses in which we have continued to create our own representations and to recreate identities which escaped the policing of authorised versions’ (Mick Dodson, ‘Indigenous Australians’, in Robert Manne, ed., The Howard Years. Melbourne: Black Inc. 1994: 119–43).
the meaning of ‘Aboriginality’ and suggests the possibility of a dialogue between majority and minority by inverting colonial history. Her film can be seen as an explicit critique of the classic Australian mainstream film *Jedda* (Charles Chauvel, 1955), but it refuses to conform to a generalised notion of opposition and it shows location to be more important than displacement. The first Australian feature film with Aboriginal characters at the narrative centre, *Jedda* both comments on and is a part of black and white colonial history. If Aboriginality is largely a fixed *thing* in *Jedda*, it is not in *Night Cries*. In Moffatt’s film there is no scripted dialogue between black and white characters, thus commenting on the lack of meaningful dialogue between the two races in *Jedda*, a film that rehearsed arguments for and against Aboriginal assimilation.

In the Chauvel film, although the term ‘stolen generations’ had not yet been invented and the concept was alien to most Australians at this time, baby Jedda is portrayed as such when, upon the death of her mother, she is taken away from her Aboriginal family and community. Jedda is brought up by white adoptive parents, only to be seduced 15 years later by the evil Aboriginal Marbuck (Robert Tudawali), who lures her to her death. In Moffatt’s film, the un-named Jedda character (Marcia Langton) has not died, but survives as a middle-aged woman who is looking after her aged white adoptive mother (Agnes Hardwick), the character who in the Chauvel film articulated the pro-assimilationist position. Mother and adopted daughter now live without verbal communication, isolated from society. They live together but each is alone, one in her own closed world of dementia and the other wrapped in her angry-sad memories of what her life might have been. Set designer Stephen Curtis gives the film a stylised depiction of the outback homestead of the Chauvel film. It is a setting that evokes not displacement, but an enduring image of location, and of the

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45 The characters in *Night Cries* are all un-named, which suggests that they do not represent Jedda and her adoptive mother exclusively. Moffatt has said it was also about herself and her foster mother. See Scott Murray, ‘Tracey Moffatt, *Night Cries – A Rural Tragedy*. Report by Scott Murray’, *Cinema Papers*, 79, 1990: 18–22.

46 Baby Jedda’s father (un-named) is portrayed willingly handing her over to his white boss, thus making an unspoken comment about masculinity in addition to racist ideas about Aboriginal submissiveness.

47 The older Jedda is played by Ngarla Kunoth.

48 In the Chauvel film, Jedda’s white adoptive mother is played by Betty Suttor.
poverty experienced by black and white Australians who cannot together create a home and a future. *Night Cries* refuses a reductive and homogenous classification as a minor film within postcolonial discourse just as Moffatt herself refuses a racially bounded identity. She has said of her own Aboriginality: ‘I want to be known as Tracey Moffatt interesting film-maker … yes I am Aboriginal, but I have the right to be avant garde like any white artist.’\(^{49}\) *Night Cries* is a First Nation film that will not limited to a narrative of opposition to the majority or dominant mainstream.

Ivan Sen is another Aboriginal filmmaker who explores black and white intersubjectivity and whose films reject easy identification as minor cinema. In his first short, *Warm Strangers* (1997), Jess (Brad Byquar) is an Aboriginal man dying from what may be a stab wound who tries to make contact with someone he has not seen for years, initially on the phone and then in person. Just before he dies in the arms of this person, who is revealed to be a much older white man (Arthur Dignam), we hear him utter the single word of the film: ‘Dad.’ If the crossroads that Jess reaches turns out to be a literal dead end, the same is not necessarily true for the film’s audiences. It is due to Sen’s consummate skill that audiences can look differently at the codes and conventions of mainstream cinema he uses in his film. For Jess it is too late for dialogue, but the boundaries between black and white have proved porous and the tensions creative. To see the black Jess embraced in the white arms of a man we have just learned is his father brings not closure but the possibility of future reconciliation when identity of neither black nor white is a ‘fixed thing’. What is important to Jess is not dislocation but location: home is in the arms of his white father, and this is where he ‘belongs’.

In these and other First Nation films, many of the narrative, visual and aural codes and conventions of Hollywood cinema have been absorbed or appropriated; they are not regurgitated undigested. The films do not simply replicate the ideas, images and techniques of a majority cinema, but nor do they inevitably oppose them. Their stories and images participate in a transformative process and they contribute to a cinema in the global cinemascape which is greatly indebted to the

multidirectional hybridising processes and cultural phenomena flowing between First Nation and Hollywood or mainstream cinemas.

In proposing a unitary voice for a cinema positioned in binary opposition to the dominant cinema, the minor cinema model has too many limitations to be of value to the analysis of First Nation cinema. It obscures the location of a cinema that can - and does - exist alongside the dominant cinema of a nation or in closer rapport with the globally dominant cinema than the more proximate national cinema – which has its own relationship to the globally dominant cinema and which may also be perceived to be marginal or minor. Suggesting that these films are not ‘at home’, but instead exist within a ‘host’ cinema, tends to deny or minimise the very links being consolidated and extended by autochthonous filmmakers between their land(s) and their culture(s). While issues related to displacement are a concern of some, even many, First Nation films, equally many others demonstrate that ‘home’ is the national cinema and the nation-state where their filmmakers live and their films are shown. These filmmakers play an important role in contributing to the evolving identity of their nation. Many of them, moreover, would query the suggestion that they have ‘not yet’ become a people, or are no longer one. Rather than privileging peripherality, a minor cinema ends up being contained by the centre.  

Accented Cinema

Hamid Naficy’s concept of accented cinema is another attempt to theorise what has become known as ‘cinema at the periphery’ and as such addresses some of the problems that the notion of minor cinema fails to resolve. Defining this concept, Naficy states that unlike the dominant cinema which is considered universal and without accent, films made by exilic, diasporic and postcolonial ethnic and identity filmmakers are accented, and that the ‘accent emanates not so much from the accented speech of the diegetic characters as from the displacement of the filmmakers and their artisanal production modes’.  

50 See Lionnet and Shih, ‘Introduction: Thinking though the Minor, Transnationally’: 1–23.
Naficy’s concern with accent needs some elaboration, for no voice is entirely accent-free. An accent, in this context, refers to a different pronunciation, one that qualifies the user as a foreigner or someone from a different social or educational background. The accent becomes a mark of personality and identity. Accents are often a sign of deterritorialisation – they are generally only noticed when a new, different or foreign group of people inhabit the home of another. In which case, of course, it could be argued that by rights the term should apply to the dominant cinema in colonised nations such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the US. Naficy employs this trope, however, to distinguish a cinema from the dominant stylistic norm: Hollywood cinema is imagined to be without accent in much the same way that Dyer shows it to be imagined as colourless: it is the norm by which all others are defined. This points to the issue of location and invites closer investigation of who calls where ‘home’. First Nation films are often intensely location-bound and their narratives are frequently driven by a desire either to return to a homeland or to forge one by combining elements of past and present, here and there, the minority us and the dominant them. Of the many characteristics that First Nation cinema has in common with accented cinema, it is its propensity for crossing borders and for hybridising processes that is of central interest in this chapter.

Naficy makes an original contribution to Film Studies in rejecting the dominant approach of scholarship on postcolonial cinema which has tended to treat deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation as themes within films rather than as factors shaping film style. His concept focuses on the artisanal mode of production: a small budget, low-level technology, a small cast and crew, and much overlapping of roles in front of and behind the camera. He describes the effect of this mode of production as a film style that is imperfect and amateur. Accented films are ‘interstitial’ because ‘they are created astride and in the interstices of social formations and cinematic practices’, and in consequence, they are simultaneously local and global, resonating against the prevailing cinematic production practices, at the same time as they benefit from them. Unlike the concept of a minor cinema, accented films are not necessarily oppositional; they exhibit diverse narrative strategies, and while their style signifies ‘the endemic dislocation of our times in
general and of these filmmakers in particular’, it also ‘serves to locate the filmmakers as authors of their films and to some extent their own destiny’.  

While he does not specifically mention First Nation films and filmmakers, Naficy’s theory can be usefully applied to them. This may be because, unlike the concept of minor cinema, which has such a precise and strictly bounded scope, his notion of accented cinema describes fluid and hybridising processes: a cinema in which exile, diaspora and ethnicity ‘under certain circumstances may transform into one another and beyond’. Naficy traces the genealogy of the accented style back to the emergence and postcolonial theorisation in the late 1950s of a Latin American cinema of Liberation which became known as ‘Third Cinema’ in distinction from Hollywood (‘First Cinema’) and European art cinema (‘Second Cinema’). But as a cinema of displacement, accented cinema is much more situated than Third Cinema, for it is necessarily made by (and often for) specific displaced subjects and diasporised communities. Although First Nation films, filmmakers and audiences are not necessarily displaced, they are certainly often situated in a space that is ‘home’. First Nation cinema is most like Naficy’s postcolonial ethnic and identity cinema, which he describes as being dominated by the ‘exigencies of life here and now in the country where the filmmakers reside’.

**First Nation Cinema: On The Road**

The crossroads and intersections in the films of First Nation people – such as the literal and metaphoric one where we see the traffic reporter in *Smoke Signals* – are highly significant. So too is the journey and the road movie genre, with its potential for allegories of travel, exile, diaspora, borders, border crossing, homeland and (dis)location. This is a preferred genre of First Nation filmmakers as well as for accented filmmakers, for whom ‘home, travel, placement and displacement are

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54 *Ibid.*: 15.
always … intertwined’. Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark explain that the road movie genre creates an alternative space where isolation from the mainstream permits various transformative experiences. The low-budget, artisanal mode of production of accented cinema which is a feature of so much First Nation cinema is also typical of the road movie. Alexie explains that when writing *Smoke Signals* the choice of genre was not accidental: ‘I knew the road movie was a very time-honored structure, and also very cheap to do. Put two guys in a car or a bus, get a camera rig, and you’re fine, it’s easy to film.’

Naficy describes how accented films ‘cross many borders and engage in many deterritorializing and reterritorializing journeys, which take several forms, including home-seeking journeys, journeys of homelessness, and homecoming journeys’. In terms of their mise-en-scène, they tend to share a common interest in images of ‘the important transitional and transnational places and spaces, such as borders, tunnels, seaports, airports, and hotels and vehicles of mobility, such as trains, buses, and suitcases, that are frequently inscribed in the accented film’. Some of the films discussed in this chapter are not traditional or classical road movies. But this is precisely the point: positioned at the interstices of cinemas, nations and cultures, they demonstrate the dynamic relationship between small, local cinemas and the mainstream. The films indigenise aspects of the mainstream cinemas, which can be Hollywood and/or the national cinema of the country in which the First Nation people live (and once ‘owned’). These are all road movies, but with a difference – an ‘accented’ difference, as Naficy would argue.

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55 *Ibid.: 229*. Because roads do not always exist in territories inhabited by many First Nation people, the term ‘journey movie’ may be more appropriate for some of the films discussed here. I shall, however, retain the better known term, ‘road film’ for the genre.


The road film is a genre well-known for its hybridity and for its frequent forays across the borders of classical Hollywood cinema, where it first began its generic life. Movies such as *It Happened One Night* (Frank Capra, 1934) and *Grapes of Wrath* (John Ford, 1940) evolved into hybridised genre- and gender-bending movies like *Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper, 1969) and *Thelma and Louise* (Ridley Scott, 1991). Of the handful of feature films made by First Nation filmmakers in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the US since the mid-1990s, a significant proportion – *Smoke Signals, Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner), Beneath Clouds*, and *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* (co-directed by Zacharias Kunuk and Norman Cohn) – are all versions of the road movie.

Australian Indigenous movies could be said to have found a natural ‘home’ in the road movie, since both the genre and hybridity have a long history in mainstream Australian national cinema. Of Ivan Sen’s entire dramatic work to date (five shorts and one feature), only his first short film, *Warm Strangers*, is not a road film. Of the five shorts selected by the Australian Film Commission to represent Aboriginal filmmaking overseas in 2001, *One Night the Moon* (Rachel Perkins, 2001), *Confessions of A Headhunter* (Sally Riley, 2000), *Road* (Catriona McKenzie, 2000), *Wind* (Ivan Sen, 1999), and *Two Bob Mermaid* (Darlene Johnson, 1996) only the first and last are not road movies – and the first is structured around an important, if short, journey. Also in 2001, the Aboriginal Unit of the Australian Film Commission marketed a video containing a number of short films – all of which were road (or journey) films – under the collective title ‘On Wheels’. These films were *Dust* (Ivan Sen, 1999), *Road* (Catriona McKenzie, 2000) and *Confessions of a Head Hunter* (Sally Riley, 2000).


61 Sen has also made documentaries in the road movie genre. For a detailed analysis of Ivan Sen see Adam Gall and Fiona Probyn-Rapsey, ‘Ivan Sen and the art of the road’, *Screen*, 47(4), 2006: 425–39.

62 These films were *Dust* (Ivan Sen, 1999), *Road* (Catriona McKenzie, 2000) and *Confessions of a Head Hunter* (Sally Riley, 2000).
unprecedented outburst of creative cinematic miscegenation in recent years, eight are journey movies, six of which are road movies and all directly depict issues of displacement and reterritorialisation: Radiance (Rachel Perkins, 1998), The Missing (Manuela Alberti, 1999), One Night the Moon (Rachel Perkins, 2000), Yolngu Boy (Stephen Johnson, 2001), Serenades (Mojgan Khadem, 2001), The Tracker (Rolf de Heer, 2002), Rabbit-Proof Fence (Phillip Noyce, 2002), Australian Rules (Paul Goldman, 2002), Beneath Clouds (Ivan Sen, 2002) and Ten Canoes (Rolf de Heer, Peter Djigirr, 2006).63

In First Nation cinema the road appears in various guises. In One Night the Moon, a film that syncretises the cinematic codes of the Australian Blacktracker movie with those of the musical, the camera follows a white woman who, in defiance of her white racist husband, walks through the Australian bush with a Black tracker to look for her dead child. The ‘road’ they walk along is a track discernible only to the tracker. Atanarjuat, based on a traditional Inuit story of love, patricide, intrigue, betrayal and family honour, follows two nomadic brothers as they journey across the snowy flats to their hunting grounds. Particularly memorably, it follows the footsteps of its naked eponymous hero running across the icy terrain in his quest to restore his family to its homeland. His ‘road’ is one that internalised shamans point the way along. Across the Tasman, the journey home in Once Were Warriors comes as a surprise to audiences as well as to its characters: the city-dwelling father of a suicided teenage girl is baffled when his ex-wife, also apparently entirely urban in location and mind-set, suddenly insists that she is going to take their daughter’s body ‘home’. For her, this journey means the return to the spiritual homeland of her Maori family, who had been uprooted by the white colonisers. Rabbit-Proof Fence tells the real-life story of three Aboriginal children who walked more than 1500 kilometres along a fenceline that was often buried beneath the sand. This is a ‘road’ in the form of a homing instinct. Roads in First Nation cinema do not necessarily look like those in a Hollywood film – the First Nation filmmaker can seldom afford to tarmac the

63 Of these ten films, four are directed by Aboriginal filmmakers: Radiance (Rachel Perkins, 1998), Beneath Clouds (Ivan Sen, 2002), One Night the Moon (Rachel Perkins, 2000), Ten Canoes (Rolf de Heer, Peter Djigirr, 2006) (co-directed by an Aboriginal and a non-Aboriginal director).
tracks their characters tread, often they cannot afford a vehicle, and when they can afford a vehicle there is no guarantee of the direction it will go in.

This inequality is humorously allegorised in a scene in *Smoke Signals* in which Thelma and Lucy, two Native American women, drive a clapped-out car in the direction that they want to go – but only in reverse gear. The borders are multiple and the possibilities for appropriating Hollywood are endless, but for Alexie it is never the non-Indian car that lacks power:

It was an in-joke for me, playing around with the idea of a road movie. I love [Ridley Scott’s *Thelma and Louise*] as an anti-road movie which deconstructs the whole macho road/buddy movie, so I wanted to put them in there as an homage to [it]. It also has to do with the sense of time in the movie, when the past, present, and future are all the same, that circular sense of time which plays itself out in the seamless transitions from past to present. Within that circular sense of time, I also wanted to have this car driving in reverse. The phrase I always use is, ‘Sometimes to go forward you have to drive in reverse.’ So it’s a visual metaphor for what we were doing. It’s also an Indian metaphor because our cars are always screwed up.64

It is also a border-crossing metaphor of transnational dimension. The ‘screwed-up’ car is familiar to Australian television audiences from the popular *Bush Mechanics* series. Directed by David Batty, who is non-Indigenous, and co-directed by Francis Jupurrula Kelly, a Warlpiri man from the central desert town of Yuendumu, it is financed by a mixture of Indigenous and non-Indigenous organisations: the national documentary funding organisation, Film Australia, in association with the Aboriginal Warlpiri Media Association, and with the assistance of the ABC, Australia’s state-owned national television company. The series features the hilarious efforts of a group of Aboriginal men to keep their cars on the road – or out of the sand, as is usually the case. The inventiveness of Jupurrula, played by Francis Kelly, the magic

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64 Alexie continues: ‘It’s one of those moments that I think everybody can find amusing, but non-Indian audiences are going to say, “OK, this is funny, but what the hell’s going on?” because there is no explanation for it. Indian audiences are really going to laugh, however, because they’re going to completely understand it. I call those kinds of things Indian trapdoors, because an Indian will walk over them and fall in, but a non-Indian will keep on walking’ (West and West, ‘Sending Cinematic *Smoke Signals*’).
mechanic who comes to their aid, is matched by the imaginative hybridity of the series which blends documentary with drama, contemporary Aboriginal culture with traditional culture, and Indigenous with non-Indigenous cultures.

There is an identical reverse-only car – again driven by a woman – in Erica Glynn’s short film, *My Bed, Your Bed* (1998), which wittily critiques traditional Aboriginal culture as well as the conventions of dominant cinema. This is a characteristic of accented films, which Naficy says are ‘often ironically and parodically critical of both host and home societies’.\(^{65}\) In Glynn’s film, after a traditional arranged marriage, a reluctant young Aboriginal bride travels across her small desert community – literally little more than spitting distance but emotionally many kilometres away – transferring her worldly goods (a bundle and a mattress) to her new home and husband in a clapped-out old ute that will only go in reverse. It is an inspired moment that the director revealed was not scripted but resulted from the exigencies of an extremely low budget.\(^{66}\)

This distinction between ‘host’ and ‘home’, however, raises a problem in applying accented cinema as an analytical framework to First Nation cinemas. First Nation films and filmmakers may both feel and be marginalised by the dominant screen culture but this does not make them ‘visitors’ in the country in which they reside whatever the past colonial history of deterritorialisation. Once again, a focus on displacement tends to ignore location.

**Limitations of Accented Cinema**

Naficy’s concept of accented cinema is not without its contradictions and unresolved tensions. The same can be said of the notion of Third Cinema, written about by Teshome H. Gabriel and others who analysed the political Latin American film movement of the 1960s.\(^{67}\) According to Naficy, ‘accented cinema is one of the

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\(^{66}\) Telephone conversation with Erica Glynn, November 2004.

offshoots of the Third Cinema, with which it shares certain attributes’. He is anxious to pay attention to the specificity and situatedness of each displaced filmmaker, community, or formation, which he sees as an important safeguard against the positing of a homogeneous accented cinema, but as Fran Martin points out:

On the one hand, Naficy concedes that the filmmakers are all differently situated, and are located in varying social formations at different points on the globe – which in the light of his generally historical-materialist framework would imply differences that should matter for the films they produce. While on the other hand, he seeks a style that will encompass common characteristics, cut through differences, and be explicable in terms of what now appears as a generalized fact of ‘shared’ displacement and deterritorialization.

Paul Willemen notes a similar contradiction in Gabriel’s conceptualisation of Third Cinema. Gabriel maintains that while Third Cinema includes an infinity of subjects and styles, at the same time there is also a unifying aesthetic. This prompts Willemen to ask if it is theoretically possible to find a unifying aesthetic for non-Euro-American cinemas. If it is, ‘then Third Cinema is undoubtedly not nearly as varied as the lives of the people it portrays’. Nor is it as heterogenous as Gabriel maintains. Another unresolved tension in both Gabriel’s and Naficy’s analyses is that, as Willemen writes of Gabriel, his concept is ‘more defined in terms of its difference from Euro-American cinema, thus implicitly using Hollywood and its national-industrial rivals as the yardstick against which to measure the other’s otherness’. Neither Gabriel nor Naficy escapes from the trap that Naficy himself comments on: the tendency of both the film production and the film theory industries to place films in specific categories surrounded by impermeable borders:

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71 Ibid.
While these classificatory categories are important methods for framing and positioning films to target markets, distributors, exhibitors, reviewers, and academic studies, they also serve to overdetermine and delimit the film’s potential meanings.\(^72\)

Accented cinema provides an analytical framework for First Nation cinemas which, as Naficy says, permits one to ‘track the evolution of the work of not only a single filmmaker but also a group of filmmakers’.\(^73\) It proposes the centrality of a mode of production common to many First Nation filmmakers, which emphasises territoriality by depicting journeys of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. This focus suggests further limitations to the framework. By emphasising the relationship between the First Nation film and its own territorial history, it ignores First Nation cinema’s location within the global screenscape. It offers a way of seeing what is common between First Nation cinemas but does not help theorise their differences.

The very journeys that in accented cinema seem to indicate local deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation – with the former seen as enforced and the latter as a form of protest against the dominant ideology – place First Nation cinema as an oppositional practice permanently positioned at the interstices of dominant cinematic and cultural formations. It is a model that demonstrates little concern for the task of noting and tracing the transnational transformative processes affecting First Nation cinema, in which audiences are given something that is simultaneously global and local. Alexie is very aware of the hybridity of this ‘glocal’ process in Smoke Signals, which, as he points out, is also a traditional Western European story of the search for the lost father: ‘I’m working with two very classical, mythic structures. You can find them in everything from The Bible to The Iliad and The Odyssey.’\(^74\)

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\(^{73}\) Naficy, An Accented Cinema: 39.

\(^{74}\) West and West, ‘Sending Cinematic Smoke Signals’.
**Intercultural Cinema**

*Smoke Signals* and several other First Nation films discussed in this chapter are examples of metacinema – a kind of filmmaking that self-consciously addresses and theorises the devices of film and the production process. This does not fit Naficy’s concept of accented cinema particularly well, for although he has a tendency to keep his options open, he maintains that only occasionally in accented films is the theory of their filmmakers’ liminality and interstitiality explicitly embedded in the films themselves: ‘More often … the theory must be discovered and defined as the film moves towards reception, by marketers, reviewers, critics and viewers.’ This points to a problem embedded in Naficy’s taxonomy and revives the concern of Marks relating to ‘the continuing urgency of issues that the coining of a new term seems to resolve’.

The analysis of First Nation cinemas may be better served by Marks’ conceptualisation of intercultural cinema. At first sight this may seem a curious category to explore in relation to First Nation cinema, because Marks offers a theory of ‘haptic visuality’ to discuss ways in which the films otherwise known as third world, diasporic, exilic and indigenous engage the audience bodily. It is nevertheless valuable because it confronts the dichotomy of dislocation/location. It also addresses the issue of taxonomy in which Naficy and others get entangled and about which Marks cautions: ‘while many terms are strategically useful, none should be able to contain this work and thus to dictate what it ought to be’. For her, intercultural cinema operates ‘at the intersection of two or more cultural regimes of knowledge’ to deal with the awareness that meaningful knowledge ‘can be located between cultures, and so can never be fully verified in the terms of one regime or the other’. That knowledge cannot be confined suggests movement between one culture and another, thus implying diachrony and the possibility of transformation. It means that a work is not the property of any single culture, but mediates in at least two directions. It accounts for the

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76 Marks, *The Skin of the Film*: 6.
77 Ibid.: 6.
78 Ibid.: 24.
encounter between different cultural organizations of knowledge, which is one of the sources of intercultural cinema’s synthesis of new forms of expression and new kinds of knowledge.  

While there can never be a politically neutral exchange between cultures, the term ‘intercultural’ avoids ‘the problem of positing dominant culture as the invisible ground against which cultural minorities appear in relief’. Rather, the term implies a dynamic relationship between the dominant culture and a minority culture, and recognises that:

the dominant … is … always the hegemonic, white, Euro-American culture. But the site of power is always sliding and its agents regrouping, and to discuss cinema as a relation between cultures makes room for a variety of ‘hosts’, destinations, and sites of power. Also, the term ‘intercultural’ can describe exchanges between non-dominant cultures.

Marks acknowledges that Naficy’s concept usefully reclaims various filmmakers from the marginal genres of ‘ethnic’ and ‘avant garde’. And, by acknowledging the transnational position of exile, émigré, and refugee filmmakers, his concept allows films to be read both as authorial texts and as ‘sites for intertextual, cross-cultural, and translational struggles over meanings and identities’. The difference for many First Nation filmmakers, however, is that although they identify with more than one cultural background, they live in the country in which they were born. Marks further argues that postcolonial discourse (of which Naficy’s accented cinema is the acknowledged offspring)

ignores political relationships other than, and sometimes predating, colonial ones and maintains the binary relation between former colonizer and colonized … [t]he case of aboriginal or First nations people cannot be subsumed under the term ‘colonisation’; ‘apartheid’ is more appropriate to describe the appropriation of land, confinement to reservations and forced education.

79 Ibid.: 7.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
82 Naficy, ‘Phobic Spaces and Liminal Panics’: 121.
83 Marks, ‘The Skin of the Film’: 7.
Ideologies of cultural domination conflate the dominant, usually white, culture with a national culture, both of which intercultural cinema works to denaturalise. Intercultural cinema tends neither to seek inclusion for another cultural group in the national mosaic (multiculturalism) nor to posit an alternative nationalism (separatism). Hence part of the slipperiness of the term ‘intercultural’: often the relationship is not between two cultures but between a racial minority group (Black, Asian, Latino, First Nations, etc) and a Eurocentric nationalist discourse. Cultural hybridity lies at the heart of intercultural cinema, which is ‘necessarily unpredictable and un categorizable’. For Marks, ‘hybridity does not simply turn the tables on the colonizing culture: it also puts into question the norms and knowledges of any culture presented as discrete, whole, and separate’. Intercultural cinema offers a valuable non-homogenised view of the films and cinemas discussed in this chapter because it more readily embraces the hybridising processes that so many of them exhibit. This blurring of filmic boundaries is an expression of intercultural cinema’s interest in questioning the political and cultural limits of what can be represented, obviating the distinction between ‘Western’ and ‘non-Western’ practices.

‘The mixing of cultures’

*Rabbit-Proof Fence* offers a powerful example of intercultural cinema: it is a film that cannot be confined to a single culture, which demonstrates movement between one culture and another, and nor can it be considered the property of any single culture. Directed by a non-Indigenous Australian filmmaker, Phillip Noyce, who has a long list of Hollywood movies to his name, and with a screenplay by non-Indigenous writer Christine Olsen, it is a road movie of sorts. Based on the biographical novel *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence*, by Indigenous author Doris Pilkington-Garimara, the film follows the journey of Doris’s mother Molly Craig, her aunt Daisy Craig Kadibil, and their cousin, Gracie Fields, who were forcibly removed from their mothers in 1931 as part of official policy to breed out the

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blackness from light-skinned Aboriginal children, and taken to a Native Settlement near Perth. The girls ran away, and Molly and Daisy walked the 1500 kilometres back home across some of the harshest terrain in the world.\footnote{Gracie was re-captured along the way.} While the book is a personal, family biography, the film is also part of circulation of flows involving national cultural and political events, as Felicity Collins and Therese Davis point out:

[It] was prompted by and responds to \textit{Bringing them Home} (1997), the controversial national inquiry into the thousands of Aboriginal children forcibly taken from their families by Australian state authorities from 1900 to 1970, an inquiry that changed the face of Australia’s self-understanding.\footnote{Felicity Collins and Therese Davis, \textit{Australian Cinema after Mabo}. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004: 133.}

Hybridity in \textit{Rabbit-Proof Fence} extends to the mix of Indigenous and non-Indigenous cast and crew, which includes the internationally renowned British actor Kenneth Branagh as the white coloniser who enforced the girls’ abduction to an orphanage, the celebrated non-Indigenous Australian cinematographer Chris Doyle, best known for his experimental and art-house films with award-winning Hong Kong director Wong Kar-wai, British world music celebrity Peter Gabriel, who composed the music, and David Gulpilil, Australia’s pre-eminent Aboriginal actor, playing a tracker. An all-Australian production, with Noyce’s lowest budget for many years, the film is simultaneously local (Indigenous), national (Australian), and global (Hollywood).\footnote{\textit{Rabbit-Proof Fence} cost approximately AUD$10 million (US$3.6 million). Noyce’s previous Hollywood film, \textit{The Bone Collector}, made for Columbia/Universal, had a budget of US$65 million.} This mixing of cultures delivers a story of Indigenous Australian experience which, according to Collins and Davis, ‘until recently non-Indigenous Australia largely refused to recognise’, partly by ‘drawing on narrative techniques and visual devices from Hollywood genres’.\footnote{Collins and Davis, \textit{Australian Cinema after Mabo}: 133.}

They also point out that the film draws upon and inverts the ‘lost child in the bush’ myth that informs so much mainstream dominant national Australian culture, including films such as John Heyer’s classic documentary \textit{The Back of Beyond} (1954), Nic Roeg’s \textit{Walkabout} (1971) and Peter Weir’s \textit{Picnic at Hanging Rock}.
(1975). In his book on the subject, Peter Pierce refers to this myth as an ‘Australian Anxiety’, but it is very much a white Australian myth and anxiety: it is always a Black tracker who finds the lost white child – as in Walkabout (Nicolas Roeg, 1971) and in One Night the Moon (Rachel Perkins, 2001), for example. The casting of David Gulpilil as the tracker in Rabbit-Proof Fence makes ironic intertextual reference to his role as the saviour of the two white children he finds in the bush in Walkabout. In Noyce’s film, however, although he successfully tracks them down, a subtle smile that only the audience can see indicates that this time he is not prepared to turn the children over to white ‘civilization’.

The film’s promotional material stressed the intercultural flows by calling attention to its Australianess (‘Arguably the most important Australian film in 20 years’), its Indigenous specificity (large images on the posters of the two main Aboriginal girls, played by Everlyn Sampi and Tianna Sansbury, looking overwhelmed by the vast desert terrain), its Hollywood connections (‘From the director of Dead Calm, Patriot Games, Clear and Present Danger and The Bone Collector’), and its universalism (‘An extraordinary story of human spirit overcoming all odds’). During the film’s publicity campaign, Noyce openly discussed the role Hollywood had played in the making of this film:

Hollywood knows how to reach audiences. I’ve learned the lessons in marketing and casting that Hollywood teaches. Now I have to use these skills to sell an Indigenous story to the mainstream. It’s not overtly political but covertly. Hollywood can do this, and do[es] this well. He was also very aware of the intercultural flows between black and white Australia. Asked if he had given thought as to whether the film should have had an Indigenous director, he replied:

Yes and no. It’s about commonality and not differences … [about] allowing a white audience into the hearts of black Australia. A black director would have made a different film … Yes, in an ideal world, it would have been made by an

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Indigenous director. It is half the director’s film and half the medium of the Indigenous people.  

As I have already noted, Marks’s main concern is to explore how the meeting of cultures is generating new forms of sensory and embodied experience; this is not my concern. Nevertheless, her interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of films elsewhere designated third world, indigenous, postcolonial, minor and accented offers a valuable perspective on what other approaches ignore. The notion of interculturalism retrieves First Nation cinema from the margins in part by its emphasis on location rather than dislocation and deterritorialisation. It allows us to see that as hybrids, these films challenge the separateness of cultures and make visible the colonial and racist power relations that seek to maintain this separation. It will be noted, however, that Marks retains a dichotomous approach to a dominant ‘host’ culture and a minority culture; this remains problematic for First Nation filmmakers who are not guests or strangers but who live and make films in a space that is their home.

Transcultural Cinema

In proposing the designation ‘transcultural’, I offer a critical framework for First Nation cinemas which, like Mark’s concept of ‘intercultural’, is not a genre, a style or a category containing essence within impermeable borders. As in Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih’s notion of ‘minor transnationalism’ this recognises the globalising processes within a transnational imaginary. These processes transcend the borders around discrete cultures implicit in the term of ‘intercultural’ in the same way that, I argue, the ‘transnational’ usefully replaces the ‘international’ in an analysis of national cinema. Like intercultural cinema, transcultural cinema rejects an emphasis upon, or celebration and aestheticisation of, deterritorialisation at the expense of location. As Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan explain, celebratory theories of diaspora fail to acknowledge that ‘location is still an important category.

that influences the specific manifestations of transnational formations’. The notion of the transcultural also rejects the old imperial centre–periphery model of coloniser versus colonised which is implicit in the notion of the dominant national cinema as the ‘host’ culture. A framework of the transcultural denies a universal minority position and creates a bridge between dominant and minority films and filmmakers, recognising that they have ‘overlapping interests and porous borders’, though those borders ‘are often under institutional constraints to defend established territories’. The transcultural allows one to see not only what is happening inside the borders of the film or cinema, but also what is happening beyond these borders, and this inside/outside approach can be applied to the close reading of the film text.

**Beneath Clouds (Ivan Sen, 2002)**

Sen wrote the screenplay for this, his first feature, because he was ‘always interested in people searching for something that makes them believe they belong somewhere’. It is a road movie in which two young Aboriginal teenagers, Lena (Dannielle Hall) and Vaughn (Damian Pitt), meet by chance and over a couple of days hitchhike from a small town in north-west rural NSW towards Sydney. Passing for white, Lena is running away from her mother and her Aboriginality in search of an Irish father whom she never knew. Vaughn has escaped juvenile detention to see his dying mother who, when he was very young, abandoned him to be brought up by his now dead father. The film approaches the ambivalences and ambiguities about who these two people are and to whom and where they belong in many ways – in the sparse dialogue, with a look that one character gives another, in various aspects of the mise-en-scene such as set design, costume, camera shot, in an edit, and in the film’s overall style and the choice of genre.

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95 Lionnet and Shih, ‘Introduction: Thinking Through the Minor, Transnationalism’: 5.

Early in the film we see Lena’s bedroom, a small haven she has created with pictures of the lush, misty green Irish countryside on the walls, a copy of *The Tempest* on the bookshelf and, most precious, her album, which contains fetishised photos of her father and a postcard of the Sydney Opera House with the words ‘Hope you can visit soon’ and signed ‘love Dad’. Never without her Celtic pendant and ring, Lena has created an identity based on an imaginary ‘homeland’ far removed from that of her abusive alcoholic mother and stepfather, her delinquent brother and friends, the inevitable pregnancies of young teenage girls and their careless, often uncaring, young boyfriends. A romanticised Ireland and an idealised father, address unknown: this is where Lena desperately wants to be, this is where she claims she ‘belongs’:

**VAUGHN**
When was the last time you saw your dad?

**LENA**
A while ago.

**VAUGHN**
A long while I bet.

*(Cut to photo of Ireland in Lena’s album.)*

**VAUGHN**
You’re not really from there, are you?

**LENA**
But that’s where I belong.

**VAUGHN**
How do you know?

**LENA**
I just know.

Vaughn, on the other hand, has no reservations about his Aboriginality. Even if he wanted to forget, which he does not, the white guards and fellow prisoners, black and white, constantly remind him. As does the racial prejudice he meets, almost without exception, whenever he encounters a white person. He is less certain about belonging to his family. Although he feels abandoned and claims he wants nothing to do with them, especially his mother, Lena sees through his bravado and asks an astutely pertinent question:

**VAUGHN**
... I was locked up for 2 fuckin’ years. How many visits did I get? Fuck all. She didn’t give a rat’s arse.

LENA

Why d’you break out of jail?

But for the film’s lightness of touch – owing much to Sen’s screenplay and direction as well as to his cinematographer (Allan Collins), editor (Karen Johnson) and the performances of the two main actors – the conceit of Lena passing for white might seem all too obvious a symbol of racial border-crossing. But she successfully convinces, prompting Vaughn to say of his new friend with an air of wonder: ‘Never knew any whitefella before. Not like you, anyway.’ Lena does not enlighten him.

Ultimately, Lena can run away from her mother, and she may even be able to join her father (we never learn if she does, although it seems unlikely), but she cannot actually fool herself. Nor, she discovers, can she fool the elderly Aboriginal woman whom she and Vaughn encounter on the road. Sensing the woman staring, Lena turns to look at her. The woman’s question, ‘Where are your people from, girl?’, gets to the very issue that Lena has been evading. She turns to look at Vaughn, who looks away. Whether he feels betrayed, disappointed or ashamed of her is left to the audience to decide, for he says nothing. Perhaps he feels a mixture of all these things. Nor does Lena reply to the question; again, the audience has to decide what she is thinking. She is going to have to face up to being not black or white but black and white.

Lena’s pale skin speaks of her mixed-race identity and this hybridity is something she shares with the film itself. Just as she finds herself on the edges of blackness and whiteness, hoping to create an identity resulting from the interplay of two different races and cultures, Sen negotiates the interplay of dominant and First Nation screen cultures to create a film that demonstrates a transcultural dynamic. Beneath Clouds draws upon a range of cinematic influences that are global, national, local and transnational: the Hollywood road movie, for instance, and the ‘localised’ version of it created by Australian national cinema; the long, slow, carefully controlled shots of rural Australia and a fast, jump-cutting technique which Sen says he borrowed from the Hollywood movie, Natural Born Killers (Oliver Stone, 1994);
Indigenous lifestyles, hopes and fears and also white Australian perceptions. Sen sees his film as a ‘culmination and a conclusion to his long held concern with his mixed heritage and notions of cultural identity’. As Jan Nederveen Pierterse says of hybridising processes, in First Nation cinema, ‘it is the mixing of cultures and not their separateness that is emphasized’.

This transcultural reading of Beneath Clouds reveals nuanced hybridising processes at work. Awareness of these processes can contribute to an awareness that dominant cinema can be located in First Nation cinema and that it plays a role in the interconnected issues of nation, identity and belonging. As we have seen, these are issues of central importance to First Nation filmmakers and to the idea of a continually developing Indigenous subjectivity.

Conclusion

The proliferation of designations, concepts and categories that have been invented to describe and define the films of First Nation and other ethnic and postcolonial filmmakers point to the emergence of a non-mainstream and relatively new voice in cinema, one with a specific kind of cultural production and sociopolitical context. The categorising process, involving constant naming and renaming, suggests a taxonomic approach to film analysis which raises more problems than it solves. By emphasising difference and cultural specificity, it conceals the transnational flows between cinemas; while seeking to dismantle the inequalities between dominant and non-dominant cinemas, it fails to address the hybridising processes at work which challenge traditional centre–periphery notions. Using the concept of transcultural cinema does not ignore the inequality between Hollywood and minor cinemas, but it does make it possible to see the flows between them more clearly. It further reveals

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98 Naglazas, ‘Great Black Hope’.

how transcultural films ‘retrace the paths of global capital, as well as the more idiosyncratic flows of people and things, rematerializing and re-embodying the global movements that transnational capital seeks to render virtual’.  

Hollywood is not always as obviously located in First Nation cinema as it is in *Smoke Signals*, with its constant references to the western genre of classical Hollywood cinema, or in *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, with its international ‘star’ crew and cast and its glossy Hollywood look and structure. Sen’s *Beneath Clouds*, for instance, more obviously owes more to Australian cinema than to Hollywood although, like most national cinemas, Australian cinema is itself is in dialogue with Hollywood.  

Films such as *Smoke Signals*, *Once Were Warriors*, *Atanarjuat/The Fast Runner*, and *Beneath Clouds* all demonstrate that First Nation cinema is in constant negotiation with contemporary and historical national mainstream screen culture, its institutions and aesthetics, as well as with Hollywood, although not always directly. They show themselves to be part of a cinema characterised by hybridity and involved in hybridising processes resulting from border-crossing relationships with dominant cinema. In cinematic terms, this translates into the transnational cultural flows of narratives and narrative structures, cinematic styles and techniques, and genres, as well as of filmmakers and the funding processes between First Nation, national and Hollywood cinemas. Asked if mainstream US popular culture had influenced him, Sherman Alexie was not afraid to locate Hollywood in his work:  

I always tell people that the five primary influences in my life are my father, for his non-traditional Indian stories, my grandmother for her traditional Indian

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100 Marks, *The Skin of the Film*: 19–20.  
101 Discussing the production and reception of Aboriginal screen culture in Australia, Tom O’Regan suggests that the relationship is necessarily problematic but that Hollywood may present a lesser problem than Australian cinema. Citing anthropologist Eric Michaels on the impact of non-Indigenous films and programs on Central Australian Aboriginal communities he writes that on a smaller scale ‘Hollywood does not constitute as great a threat as the more proximate Australian product with an Aboriginal focus. Whether the group is a small Aboriginal community or the larger unit of the nation, Hollywood output can be embraced as a form of cultural maintenance to ward off potentially more damaging forms of proximate programming. This assumes, of course, that Hollywood is a definite and inevitable threat. (Tom O’Regan, ‘Too Popular By Far: Accounting for Hollywood’s Popularity’, *Continuum* 5:2, 1992: 344. Eric Michaels, ‘Hollywood Iconography: A Warlpiri Reading’ and ‘Hundreds Shot at Aboriginal Community: ABC Makes TV Documentary at Yuendumu’ in *Bad Aboriginal Art, and other essays*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.)  
102 See en Pierterse, ‘Globalisation as Hybridisation’: 45–68.
stories, Stephen King, John Steinbeck, and *The Brady Bunch*. That’s who I am. I think a lot of Indian artists like to pretend that they’re not influenced by pop culture or Western culture, but I am, and I’m happy to admit it. A lot of independent filmmakers would look down their nose at their own pop influences, or at my pop influences. It’s a cultural currency. That’s something that Tarantino has certainly benefited and learned from. In the best moments of his movies, he’s talking about a common cultural currency, and the ways in which his characters talk about it really bring out their personalities.103

Responding to the question of whether he saw US popular culture as a *lingua franca*, he replied:

Exactly, and, in the same way, I use that as a way to bridge the cultural distance between the characters in my movie and the non-Indian audience. It’s a way for me, as the writer, to speak to the audience through my characters in a way that will give them something to hold onto as they’re hearing and seeing something brand new.104

The notion of a cinematic *lingua franca* points to a more fluid relationship between dominant and local cinemas than is widely conceived. In looking for and locating Hollywood in its First Nation other it is necessary to look beneath the epidermic surface of the film text and find the role cinema plays in the creation of transcultural experience. This is a process in which audiences play an important role, as they recognise how dominant cinema persists in, and is reshaped by, these hybridising processes Hollywood informs and transforms, and in so doing is itself transformed.

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103 West and West, ‘Sending Cinematic Smoke Signals’.
104 Ibid.
Chapter Seven

Women’s Cinema

Women, whose image has continually been stolen and used...cannot view the decline of the traditional film form with anything much more than sentimental regret.¹

We should seek to operate at all levels: within male-dominated cinema and outside of it.²

Women's cinema, Hollywood’s gendered other, has had a long, complex and often ambivalent relationship to Hollywood. It has been observed that the origins of cinema coincided with ‘the giddy heights of the imperial project’, and that its beginnings twinned with those of psychoanalysis, nationalism and consumerism, but the twin beginnings of cinema and the woman’s movement has seldom been commented on.³ The colonialist implications of patriarchy as they played out in Hollywood, however, has been a major motivating force within the diverse and multiple strands of a women's cinema. But there has never been a single or consistent viewpoint about how to respond to mainstream patriarchal cinema from women filmmakers. There have been times when women worked closely with Hollywood making their films alongside it, times when women shunned Hollywood to make their own films outside it, and times when women made women’s films inside Hollywood. In this chapter I explore the various moments of avoidance and clash, intersection and connection, through the prism of close readings of four films which foreground these moments in ways that represent some of the key themes of the relationship.

¹ Laura Mulvey, ‘Film, Feminism and the Avant-garde’ in Laura Mulvey, Visual and Other Pleasures. Basingstoke, Hants: MacMillan, 1989: 111-126. This was originally a lecture delivered in 1978.


By adding patriarchy to the definition of Hollywood, women’s cinema effectively reimagined and relocated Hollywood. Women’s cinema also adopted some of the conventional definitions and borders by persisting in conceptualising its relationship to Hollywood in terms of a centre-periphery model underwritten by binary oppositions. The most obvious of these being that of feminism in opposition to patriarchy – not that feminism was always an acceptable designation for all women filmmakers. The various strategies of opposition to Hollywood that have been proposed and practiced within women's cinema raise issues of inclusivity and exclusivity as well as the perennial antagonism between cultural homogenisation and cultural heterogenisation. In this lies a paradox. Women’s cinema has accused Hollywood of homogeneity, of destroying diversity, and of excluding women - keeping them in their place outside the production process. At times, however, women's cinema has responded with its own brand of homogeneity and gender exclusivity. If Hollywood was imagined as a no-woman’s land located at the centre of the screenscape, a woman-centred cinema was proposed as a no-man’s land at the periphery. Thus while the impact of women’s cinema upon the screenscape attempted to dismantle some of the existing barriers it also added greater fixity and impermeability to the borders separating Hollywood from its female other.

Despite this apparent immobility and fixity, women’s cinema offers the opportunity to relate notions of location and mobility to an understanding of the screenscape as a series of sites in constant flux. This raises an interesting paradox of a cinema that challenges the longstanding patriarchal conceptualisation of the feminine as fickle, capricious and changeable being analysed within a framework which shows cultural borders to be permeable, mutable and unstable. I shall argue that in a screenscape of flux, Hollywood can be shown to exist within a cinema

4 The women’s movement employed the rhetoric of a global ‘sisterhood’, for example, but their vision was initially largely confined to western Europe, north America and other industrialised and Anglophone nations. In addition to this Eurocentricity the movement and its cultural practices tended to exclude or marginalize lesbians and women of colour. The term ‘politics of location’ was coined by Adrienne Rich in the 1980s as a corrective to the universality of white and Western presumptions of mainstream US feminism. Adrienne Rich, “Notes towards a Politics of Location”, Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose, 1979-1985. New York: Norton, 1986. 210-231.
widely conceptualised as its other and that Hollywood can also be said to possess otherness in itself.

As this discussion indicates, cinematic borders are not the only ones troubled by globalising processes: gender is no less inflected by the global movements of capital and other cultural flows. To help explain the processes of mutual impact and change between Hollywood and women’s cinema, I have added the notion of a ‘genderscape’ to Appadurai’s five imagined ‘scapes. As an imagined construct, gender exists in and exceeds the boundaries of all his five ‘scapes: the flows of people, technology, images, media, ideology and finance are all gendered. The flows within each ‘scape are constructed by how gender is imagined which, in turn, constructs and reconstructs our understanding of gender. Notions of ‘woman’ and ‘femininity’ have not remained fixed and, like the screenscape, the constantly transforming genderscape is an outcome of multidirectional and multilayered globalising processes. The tensions between the disjunctures in the screenscape as they intersect with the genderscape create the wide range of ideas, images and films of a women’s cinema located in spaces which feminist geographer Gillian Rose describes as ‘multidimensional, shifting and contingent.’\(^5\) These spaces, furthermore, are paradoxical, by which Rose introduces the notion of ‘dual space’ to refer to ‘spaces that would be mutually exclusive if charted on a two-dimensional map – centre and margin, inside and outside – are occupied simultaneously.’\(^6\)

**Defining and Redefining**

Before proceeding with this analysis, a brief discussion is necessary to explain some of the terms and ideas that an engagement with women’s cinema encounters because, as Alison Butler notes, it has been subject to ‘a baffling variety of definitions.’\(^7\) For many audiences, filmmakers and scholars, there is a crucial distinction between ‘women’s cinema’ and ‘feminist cinema’.

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6 Ibid.

In the late 1970s B. Ruby Rich identified a broad range of feminist filmmaking practices which she considered were ‘dangerously unnamed’:

‘films by women’, ‘feminist film’, ‘images of women in film’, ‘women's films’. All are vague and problematic. ‘Feminist’ is a name which may have only a marginal relation to the film text, describing more persuasively the context of social and political activity from which the work sprang …its link to an evolving political movement gave feminist cinema a power and direction entirely unprecedented in independent filmmaking, bringing issues of theory/practice, aesthetics/meaning, process/representation into sharp focus.\(^8\)

These issues were unresolved some twenty years later for Anneke Smelik who commented:

By ‘feminist’ film I mean a film which represents sexual difference from a woman’s point of view, displaying a critical awareness of the asymmetrical power relations between the sexes. [It] implies not every film made by a woman can be called feminist, [and] it allows for certain films by men to fall into this category. I have avoided the term ‘woman’s film’ because by now it contains two related risks: firstly of assuming an essentialist understanding of gendered identity; secondly, of suggesting an unwarranted continuity with the genre of the ‘Woman’s film’ in Classical Hollywood Cinema.

Summarising these taxonomic and ideological confusions and claims, Butler writes that women’s cinema is

neither a genre nor a movement in film history, it has no single lineage of its own, no national boundaries, no filmic or aesthetic specificity, but traverses and negotiates cinematic and cultural traditions and critical and political debates.\(^9\)

My response to this critical conundrum is to show that Hollywood’s gendered other is not, and has never been, set in a permanent relationship of opposition and


assimilation. Rather, that the relationship has been fluid and overlapping. I use the term ‘women’s cinema’ to refer to films that have variously been made for, by, and about women or women’s issues, sometimes with men and at others without them and also on occasion about men. While this might appear so inclusive as to make the category ‘women’s cinema’ seem pointless, I argue that to show the existence of leaky borders in an unstable screenscape does not negate the existence of a women’s cinema. As women filmmakers, theorists, critics and audiences added to the perceptions of what Hollywood was and where it stood in relation to a woman-centred cinema, the latter’s own self-definition necessarily changed. Women’s cinema has also been subject to schisms within the women’s movement as both cinema and movement embraced or resisted change and redefinition. There is, however, a unifying thread that makes sense of discussing women’s cinema as a single category. Like most non-Hollywood cinemas, women’s cinema has opposed some or all of Hollywood’s stylistic codes and conventions and its industrial practices. While the precise form this opposition should take has often been disputed, women’s cinema was an outcome of the burgeoning women’s movement (or movements) which, despite its fissures, was united in an opposition to patriarchal ideology and political economy. The point to grasp that patriarchy is no more fixed and bounded than the cinemas either sustaining orcountering it.

Location, Space, Mobility

As I have maintained throughout this dissertation, the issue of location is of central importance to my argument concerning how Hollywood might be reconceptualised. It is equally important to ideas about gender. Gillian Rose’s insights concerning how gender is typically perceived have close parallels in cinema and her argument for conceptualising gender differently sheds light on how these issues relate to the interconnected notions of location, space and mobility within the screenscape. Gender, she explains, is commonly defined within a binary framework which is relational and evaluative: thus ‘man’ is the dominant norm while ‘woman’ is defined as less than the norm and is located where he is not (or would rather not be). In a genderscape women, if they are seen at all, are marginalised and pushed to the background and to the outer limits of
space while men inhabit the centre and are foregrounded. A paradigm shift is required to acknowledge paradoxical space, an ‘elsewhere’ in which margin and centre can co-exist and globalising processes produce new hybridities.

The same pattern of foregrounding, or centralising, men and marginalising women exists within mainstream cinema. Applying the notion of dual location to the film image, Teresa de Lauretis argues this means that the other in its resistance to the dominant discourse can exist in two places at once and needs to be perceived as mobile:

It is a movement between the (represented) and what the representation leaves out or, more pointedly, makes unrepresentable. It is a movement between the (represented) discursive space of the positions made available by hegemonic discourses and the space-off, the elsewhere, of these discourses… These two kinds of spaces are neither in opposition to one another nor strung along a chain of signification, but they coexist concurrently and in contradiction. The movement between them, therefore, is not that of dialectic, of integration, of a combinatory, or of différence, but is the tension of contradiction, multiplicity and heteronomy.  

When notions of flux and of dual space are mapped on to the screenscape the unstable geographies of cinema’s gendered spaces and places are revealed. In the following close readings I show how ideas about location and mobility play an important role within different strategies of resistance to Hollywood from women’s cinema.

Patricia White points out that while many of the ‘terms of once-heated arguments’ concerning the ‘the privileged status of Hollywood [and] the primacy of sexual difference… appear to have been superseded, contemporary debates are clearly founded on them’. With this in mind, I have selected four films that span almost a hundred years from the days of silent cinema and the first wave of the women’s movement and to the present day, described by some as post-Hollywood

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and post-feminist. I start with a short silent film, *How Men Propose* (Louis Weber 1913), made when the codes and conventions of classical Hollywood cinema were emerging and the first wave of the women’s movement was about to achieve some of its goals. The next film, *Diary of a Mad Housewife* (Frank Perry, 1971) is a New Hollywood film made when Hollywood was shedding some of its classical conventions and the second wave of the women’s movement was making its presence felt in numerous ways including new approaches to film production. The third, *A Question of Silence* (Marleen Gorris, 1982), is widely described as a radical feminist film endorsing social and cultural gender separatism. The final close reading is of *Just Another Girl on the IRT* (Lesley Harris, 1992) which allows me to explore the conjunction of the two ‘posts’ of Hollywood and feminism.

*How Men Propose* (Lois Weber, 1913)

When Lois Weber made this film – one of an estimated two hundred in all - Hollywood was already the main location of US film production and within less than five years Hollywood cinema would gain global pre-eminence. By this time Female suffrage would be a reality in the UK and only two years away from ratification in the US. Screenscape and genderscape intersect in the ideas her film explores concerning women’s place in the public sphere. This was a crucial issue for the first wave of the women’s movement which challenged patriarchal attitudes towards femininity and a woman’s place in society. Cinema had become an ideal cultural practice for women determined to claim a place outside the domestic sphere and to become both seen and heard in the public sphere. But cinema is a paradoxical space in more ways than one: it is simultaneously a public and a private sphere. For audiences sitting in a large dark space alongside friends as well as strangers it can feel personal and private and at the same time communal and public.

Traces of these contradictions exist in the film text as absence as well as presence. The lack of any cast and crew credits at the start of the film, for

12 ‘First wave’ feminism refers to a period of feminist activity during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century in the United Kingdom and the United States that primarily focused on women’s suffrage. The term, ‘first wave’ was coined retroactively after the term ‘second-wave’ was used to describe the woman’s movement of the late 1960s – 1980s.
example, is not particularly unusual in a film of this period – the division of labour differentiating the role of the director and other crew roles was not yet firmly established and nor was the star system. But as I have argued in the earlier chapter on the French New Wave, it repays to attend to the fissures and faultlines and, as Brian Jarvis comments,

any analysis of spatial representations must seek to address the caesurae from which all cartographies are composed. Marginalised spaces are always implied and central to any map’s significance, they are a clue to the ideology through which space is seen and felt.\textsuperscript{13}

In this instance, the absence of a credit caption invites closer examination of women’s’ place both on and off the screen. The film comments on, and is the product of, a period when patriarchal order was confronted by a very public, often violent, demand for political change from the women’s suffrage movement. One of the outcomes of this first wave of the women’s movement was that rigid attitudes about how women were expected to behave and, importantly for this chapter, where it was permissible for them to be, began to dissolve.

*How Men Propose* questions the patriarchal maxim that a woman’s place was in the home not only in its narrative but also in the on and off screen presence of Lois Weber who wrote, directed and co-produced it, and possibly plays the part of the maid. Her Hollywood career from actor to high profile and highly paid film-director and producer exemplifies the feminist ideal of the ‘New Woman’ which emerged towards the end of the 19th century. Opposed to the ‘cult of domesticity’, the New Woman - who will appear in this film - was the financially independent, career-minded and almost exclusively middle-class female who would not be confined to the domestic sphere. Weber herself was such a woman: by the end of the war she was allegedly the highest paid director in the world successfully making films that exploited perceptions about a woman’s place.\textsuperscript{14} While Hollywood certainly played a role in regulating women it


\textsuperscript{14} Social conscience was a speciality of Webers’ as Kevin Brownlow has noted: ‘Only one film-maker in America devoted an entire career to making what were known as “thought films”’. (Cited in Lizzie Francke, *Script Girls Script Girls: Women Screenwriters in Hollywood*. London: BFI. 1994:26.) In the same year she made *How
also made space for films for and about women including feminist issues such as birth control, abortion and female suffrage.\textsuperscript{15} Less overtly feminist than a film such as \textit{Eighty Million Women Want...?} (Will Louis, 1913), a feminist polemic thinly disguised as fiction starring leading suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst, \textit{How Men Propose}, nevertheless problematises patriarchal and bourgeois notions of femininity which, resistant to the notion of the ‘New Woman’, continued to insist upon the home as a woman’s ‘natural’ location.\textsuperscript{16}

Traces of this can be seen in its mise-en-scene. In the first live action shot, for example, we are introduced to three men in a room which to judge from the relatively sombre set and props, is a communal or semi-public, space such as a gentleman’s club or lodging rooms. From their heavy sighs and heaving of manly breasts, we can deduce that each man is ardently in love and about to propose to his sweetheart.\textsuperscript{17} While not uncommon in early silent cinema, the convention of an opening shot that establishes the principal narrator would become an established convention of classical narrative cinema.\textsuperscript{18} He, and it was seldom a she, propels the narrative to the final shot in which he would deliver closure. In such a narrative scheme, characters introduced subsequently tend to be peripheral to the narrative and, as feminist film theorists have argued, when a woman appears on the scene she tends to present an enigma for the main male character to solve or tame. Thus the dominant story line is owned by the male and the woman remains the marginalised object of the active male gaze. \textit{How Men Propose} initially appears to adopt this convention by foregrounding the male characters in the opening shot and by returning to them in the final shot. But, as we shall see, the narrative will be wrested from them by the next character we meet, Grace Darling, who will play a far from peripheral role in the narrative.

\textit{Men Propose} Weber delivered a lecture to the Women’s City Club of Los Angeles with the suitably dutiful and educational title befitting a patriarchal concept of womanliness: ‘The making of Picture Plays that will have influence for the good on the public mind’.\textsuperscript{15} On cinema’s role in regulating women’s behaviour see Janet Staiger \textit{Bad Women: Regulation, Sexuality in Early American Cinema}. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota. 1995.

\textsuperscript{16} Intriguingly, the scenario for \textit{Eighty Million Women Want...?} was written by future Head of Paramount Studios, B.P. Schulberg.

\textsuperscript{17} There are no intertitles in the film on the Library of Congress tape.

\textsuperscript{18} See Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, \textit{The Classical Hollywood Cinema}: 24-41.
This static first shot is disrupted by the first of several lively crosscutting sequences in which male space is contrasted with female space.\textsuperscript{19} Crosscutting between the two different locations to convey simultaneity of action was an editing technique commonly used in chase sequences to narrativise action in two locations and two lines of action that eventually intersect, as in a chase between hunter and hunted, victim and saviour. But this film troubles perceptions of hunter and hunted. Questioning who is the victim and who is the saviour, is part of this film’s feminist joke involving the audience for, as I shall show, \textit{How Men Propose} challenges the way in which audiences were expected to read it. It is a joke that revolves around the assumptions of the male characters that also implicates the film’s audiences by questioning their assumptions about gender roles in US society at the time and about how women were generally represented.

As one of the men departs to meet the object of his affections, the film cuts to his true love, Grace, sitting at home demurely reading a book. The costume, set dressing, props and the actor’s demeanour all tell us this is a middle-class ‘lady’ passively waiting for her suitor to arrive. The crosscutting throws the mise-en-scene of the two rooms into sharply gendered contrast. The men’s room is relatively austere while the woman’s room is decorated with objects signifying the domestic and the feminine - photos and pictures on the walls, and knick knacks around the fireplace. Unlike the communal space of the men’s room, this woman sits on her own.

We next see a maid lead the first suitor in to her room. He sits down beside Grace who begins to read to him aloud from her book. Unable to control his passion for long, he effectively silences her by proposing marriage. After an initial coy demurral – it would be unfeminine for her to accept too readily - she accepts. In return for his ring she presents him with a photo of herself which she plucks from its frame. They seal their commitment with a kiss. So far, so Hollywood.

\textsuperscript{19} Crosscutting involves action in two or more different spaces taking place at the same time usually with only a minimal amount of ellipsis. While crosscutting is often associated with the classical aesthetic and with the films of D.W. Griffith, this editing technique had its origins in nineteenth century literary and theatrical sources and was used in silent cinema at least as early as Edwin S. Porter’s \textit{The Great Train Robbery} (1903).
A small discordant note, however, is instantly struck. Despite the suggestions that this will be a male-led narrative, when the suitor takes his leave the camera does not accompany him back to the men’s room. Rather, we stay with Grace who turns to address the camera with a decidedly unladylike grin and mouths what, in the absence of intertitles, one can only guess is ‘He’s the first.’ The first of what exactly is not yet clear, but her lack of feminine passivity is very obvious. The direct address in this scene is of particular significance for this chapter as it occurs in all four of the films I analyse, and I will explore it more fully later on.

The film cuts the second suitor preening himself before he sets off on his romantic errand. Another crosscutting sequence delivers a surprise when the film cuts to Grace again. No longer coy and demure, Grace hurriedly puts another photo in the frame and frantically removes the ring from her finger and hides it in her bosom just before the maid ushers him in. An identical exchange of ring, photo and kiss takes place. This time when he takes his leave she brazenly invites the audience to collude in her duplicity by signalling with her fingers to the camera that this is ‘Number Two’ in another direct address to camera. In this example of monstration in which the barrier between the screen and the audience is crossed, Grace claims the narrative as she claims another victim and is almost overcome with hilarity. What is the audience to think? This is no lady after all, but a ‘social butterfly’, or ‘vamp’, to use two common terms of the period to describe female sexual incontinence and predation. Two other trivialising - or abusive - terms that might also have occurred to some audiences of the time, both equally incompatible with the concept of passive femininity, are ‘suffragette’ or ‘feminist’. To many at the time (and since), these terms were synonymous with ‘man-hater’.

The exact same sequence of events occurs with the third suitor: Grace’s appetite for fiancées appears to know no bounds.

The film cuts back to the men’s club room where we see the three men meeting up, each kissing their photo in anticipation of possessing the actual woman of their dreams and not just her image. Their world view – of womanhood and of the position that they as men occupy in relation to women - collapses when they compare photos. The discovery so saps the strength of Suitor Number Three
that, Samson-like, his legs buckle beneath him. She is clearly not the innocent, pliant maiden of his romantic dreams but the castrating Delilah of his nightmares.

In some further crosscutting we see the three dupes decide to confront this Jezebel while a chuckling Grace, dressed in her outdoor clothes and carrying a small suitcase, gives her grinning maid three identical envelopes and confidently sweeps out into the world. The audience is given no clue about her destination. The film’s problematisation of gendered space extends to the world outside the home. A woman in the masculinised public sphere was generally regarded as ‘unruly’ in the sense of being beyond the boundaries of patriarchal authority and thus in need of regulation. While many working class women had no option but to work in the industrialised labour force outside the domestic sphere, the popularised feminine ideal was the ‘angel in the house’, a virgin or mother whose place was confined to the home. From the perspective of the male-led narrative, one might suppose Grace to be a criminal making her getaway. Perhaps she is going to sell the rings and take a holiday (to explain the suitcase) on the profits until it all blows over, thus confirming a patriarchal stereotype of the deceptive, flighty female.

The maid ushers all three men in to Grace’s room and bids them sit and gives each their letter which we see in the film’s only closeup:

20 Bourgeois historical discourse assigned gender to the notions of public and private and the binary terms public/private sphere were aligned with masculine/feminine sphere in the dominant discourse. The masculinisation of public life involved a restriction of women’s activities to the domestic space, and the concomitant alignment of the familial sphere with a new discourse of an idealised femininity. See Miriam Hansen, Babel and Babylon: 114-119. For further discussion of Hansen’s argument, see Janet Staiger, Bad Girls: 184. Gillian Rose writes: ‘Within patriarchy, the construction of public space was an arena in which neither women’s bodies were legitimate nor women’s voices were heard.’ (Gillian Rose, Feminism & Geography: 143.)

21 The phrase ‘Angel in the House’ is the title of what was at the time a highly popular poem by English poet Coventry Patmore, originally published in 1854. Patmore described an image of the ideal woman/wife as passive, powerless and pure. She was the polar opposite of the ‘unruly’ woman who inhabited the public domain such as streetwalkers (prostitutes), lesbians, women in the paid labour force, the criminal and the insane. This ideology continued to be influential in the twentieth century. In 1931, the repressive ideal of women represented by the Angel in the House was still so potent for Virginia Woolf that she wrote, ‘Killing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of a woman writer.’ (Virginia Woolf, ‘Professions for Women’ read to the Women’s Service League in 1931. Published in Michele Barrett, ed, Virginia Woolf: Women and Writing. London: The Women’s Press, 1979.)
Dear Friend, I am returning your ring. I was only playing. I am writing an article on How Men Propose and wanted some actual experience. You may keep my photo. Sincerely, Grace Darling.  

The final image is a mid-shot of the three men. Words failing them, their jaws drooping, they look at each other aghast. They have been fooled. So, too, has the audience. By keeping viewers unaware of the heroine’s motives until the end, the film challenges audience expectations about conventional male and female behavior. Although the film itself is playful, Grace Darling is not ‘playing’, as she claims in her letter, but is engaged in what appears to be paid employment: Grace is a journalist who has been doing her research. Like her three suitors, the audience has also been fooled - failing to see that a woman’s domestic space can also be her workplace and that a woman can have legitimate business reasons for entering the public sphere. The film thus questions the binarism underpinning patriarchal ideology that was, and remains, so often represented in Hollywood cinema in which the feminised domestic or private sphere is the polar opposite of the masculinised public sphere. It suggests a spatial connectivity between the two spaces.

The film brings closure by ending with an image of the men who are frozen. But this is closure of the male narrative. Grace Darling has had her own narrative throughout and its ending is more open. Even after the final caption tells us this is ‘The End’, she seems to be in motion. Perhaps her story ends in an unseen image of her striding into her newspaper office bringing closure to the film’s woman-led narrative. This puts her in a different space altogether from the one in which we originally saw her. When we can see that she is in control of her own image and her own words, she occupies a space emerging from between the screenscape as it intersects with the genderscape. In the male led-narrative there is only silence: the men are left speechless. In the female-led narrative Grace Darling and her creator, Lois Weber, get the last laugh.

Judith Mayne renders the content of this letter as: ‘I’m returning your ring. I’m writing an article on how men propose. You can keep the ring.’ (Judith Mayne, *The Woman at the Keyhole: Feminism and Women’s Cinema*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990:174.) An anonymous reviewer at www.IMDb.com maintains the note says ‘she was doing an article on “How Men Propose” for a magazine, and that they’re welcome to keep her photo (it seems she will keep the rings?).’ This could be due to different intertitles.
In Hollywood the sound of the women’s laughter would not reverberate for long. Paradoxically, as acceptance of women in the public sphere increased throughout the US and in many of Hollywood’s western European markets, and as Hollywood exerted its cultural and economic magnetism on the industry nationally and extended its hegemonic power globally, women began to disappear from Hollywood. According to Marjorie Rosen by 1920 Hollywood motion pictures were the fourth largest industry in the US and when sound arrived in 1928, capital investment in Hollywood was $500,000,000. But by this time the number of women in the industry had already begun to decline:

Already women were on their way out; it was an excision which would occur with startling rapidity. Whereas in 1928, out of 239 scenarists, 52 were female, by 1935 the total number had risen to 583; only 88 women, however, were working. In 1940 out of 608 screenplay writers, a mere 64 were women. As for directors, only one female managed to secure a steady position once the golden years of the thirties had arrived: Dorothy Arzner.23

There was, in fact, one other woman director, Ida Lupino, whose career as writer, actor, director and producer uniquely, for a woman, traversed classical Hollywood cinema and New Hollywood, cinema and television. But after Lupino’s last feature film, The Trouble With Angels (1966) only one woman, Elaine May, got to direct a studio film for the next 13 years. For some feminist film theorists in the 1960s and 1970s, these statistics meant that the smile was wiped off the face of Lois Weber whose career went into eclipse in the 1920s and who died in obscurity and poverty in 1939.

The so-called golden years of classical Hollywood cinema did not, however, mean a complete silencing of the female voice. In the long term, the flows that can be traced in the ideas and their representations in this pre-classical Hollywood film were to influence the second wave of the women’s movement some fifty years later when films such How Men Propose would be rediscovered and the career of early women filmmakers would be recuperated. The process of

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recuperation is itself an aspect of flux involving, as Charlotte Brunsden points out, ‘conceptualising continual and flexible cultural processes’.

As already noted, not all feminist film theorists fixed the notion of a bounded Hollywood in a relationship of polarised opposition to an equally bounded women’s cinema. For Claire Johnston, Annett Kuhn and E. Ann Kaplan, for example, conventional texts could make feminist statements. Recuperation meant that ideas about gendered location and the place of women in the production and reception of Hollywood family melodramas were re-examined and re-assessed. This does not mean Hollywood was not patriarchal but it does mean it was less homogenous and possessed borders more porous than was widely perceived. For Lucy Fischer, the concept of ‘women’s art in dialogue with male culture’ meant that ‘...women have been in the habit of talking about ‘patriarchy’, they have also been known to “talk back”.’ To look more closely at this notion of ‘talking back’ – the aural equivalent of ‘returning the gaze’ - the next close reading jumps forward to the early days of the second wave of the women’s movement to show how Hollywood offered space for women to talk back.

**Diary of a Mad Housewife (Frank Perry, 1970)**

Based on the novel by Sue Kaufman, with a screenplay by Eleanor Perry, and directed by Frank Perry, *Diary of A Mad Housewife* has been described as ‘an early feminist film’. It is one of a handful of films made by New Hollywood that have been described as ‘new women’s cinema’. A close reading of *Diary of a

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27 The ‘new women’s cinema’ of this period films most often mentioned are Paul Mazursky’s *An Unmarried Woman* (1975) and Martin Scorsese’s *Alice Doesn’t Live Here Anymore* (1977). While each has a female main protagonist and explores issues of importance to the second wave of the women’s movement such as female sexual, economic and emotional independence, Robin Wood (*Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*., New York: Columbia University Press, 1986: 202-221) suggests they are not feminist films because of their conventional classical narrative structure. He argues that the realism defining these films’ visual and narrative style effectively masks their conventional patriarchal ideology and that their narratives focus on individual crises, not group issues or action, which he maintains works to de-politicise feminism, paying only
Mad Housewife demonstrates that cinematic borders - around Hollywood, around independent cinema and around woman’s cinema - were more porous than were widely imagined. The film reveals the creative tensions emerging from the intersecting flows between Hollywood and a women’s cinema and between patriarchal ideology and the re-emerging women’s movement. Once again, the notions of place, space, and mobility prove invaluable as a means of exploring the overlapping cultural flows. This close reading is of the final scene so to orientate readers I shall summarise the narrative.

The marriage of wealthy New Yorkers Tina (Carrie Snodgrass) and Jonathan Balser (Richard Benjamin) is disintegrating. She is a depressed, masochistic and entirely subservient housewife. Jonathan is a patronising, egotistical bully who treats his wife and children as a part of his personal fiefdom. He believes it is his right to decide how the family income will be spent, what Tina will wear, what housework she will do, when she will do it and how it should be done. Marriage is the price Tina has paid for social and economic security and it is not easy to distinguish her from a doormat. Neither domestic nor public sphere is safe for Tina: Jonathan sides with their children against her in the home and publicly humiliates her when she is out. In short, her home is his castle and his castle is her prison. Without the words to say it, Tina is effectively silenced. Tina’s eventual rebellion takes the form of an affair with George (Frank Langella) a vain, solipsistic writer. Although good in bed, George has no other redeeming features. Sexual liberation does not bring with it personal liberation or independence for Tina. In quick succession George dumps her for another woman and Jonathan reveals he has lost all their money and had an affair. Imploring her to stay and begging her forgiveness, he promises to make the marriage better.

We join the film in the last shot of the penultimate scene. In a rare (for this film) closeup, the expression on Tina’s face is more blank than despairing. Sitting across the table from her sobbing husband, Tina appears trapped by the frame as she is trapped by her predicament. Her attempt to escape has been foiled. There is lip-service to the issues the women’s movement raised. Wood, however, perceives feminism and woman’s cinema as bounded concepts.

Tina’s predicament perfectly illustrates ideas that had been outlined by US feminist Betty Friedan in her 1965 classic feminist text, The Feminine Mystique, as the problem that patriarchal society refused to name. (Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books. 1965.)
nowhere for her to run: patriarchal law in the home extends to the domain of her lover. After enquiring if all their money has gone (it has) she says nothing. It seems she will remain silenced, ensnared in an act of narrative closure endorsing patriarchal ideology.

The narrative so far has offered a version of a well-established code of dominant cinema: a woman is trapped; the main aggressions have taken place in the domestic and private, or personal, spheres of home and relationships in which she, as a woman, is ‘naturally’ confined. Through the image of her passive face she becomes the object both of desire and of the gaze — a situation, as Christa Blümlinger points out, ‘that runs through the history of cinema from the first D.W. Griffith Biograph films to the present.’  

The final scene, however, ruptures the conventions of classical Hollywood narrative and style by playing with the spatial coordinates of characters and audiences. These ruptures are the traces of cultural flows between Hollywood and an emerging women’s cinema, between classical Hollywood cinema and New Hollywood, and between Hollywood perceived as ideologically patriarchal and a burgeoning women’s movement.

We see Tina in a head and shoulders shot filling most of the screen. With her back to a window tightly framing her face, her blank look reinforces a sense that she is empty of all desire. Her baby blue jacket, perfectly made up face and carefully groomed hair all suggest she has reverted to a passive acceptance of her patriarchally ordained place. Her eyes slide from right to left as if looking for a way out. If at the start of the film she seemed powerless to escape a suffocating marriage, now she seems powerless to break out of this prison-like frame. Tina stares bleakly at the camera but this is no returned gaze: her disembodied face bears the marks of the psychological aggression to which she has been subjected. She then says direct to camera: ‘Well that’s it. That’s where it’s at.’ Tina will not speak another word for the rest of the film.

This shot is a startling rupture not only because of the relative rarity of the closeup. Until now the film has given audiences a clear sense of time and place with the conventional classical Hollywood narrative style of wide establishing shots at the start of each scene and continuity editing throughout. This hitherto

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unused device of direct address is also startling. It is a technique that crosses the fourth wall, blurring the boundary between film and audience that the realism of classical Hollywood cinema aims to construct. It is a device of which the French New Wave was particularly enamoured and was among the ideas and images flowing between European art cinema and New Hollywood in the 1960s and 1970s. In addition to these transnational flows, it also an example of the temporal flows within women’s cinema which recognised in direct address a means of subjective expression unmediated by the realist devices supporting Hollywood patriarchal ideology.

Tina’s words are also disruptive because they are puzzling: until now there has been no suggestion that the film has been anything other than a conventional third-person narrative. But without warning, just as we might have thought she had no option but to concur with a heterosexual happy ending, she has finally found her voice. What she says, however, makes no sense. She tells us ‘That’s where it’s at’ but there is no clue as to where this might be.

The next shot further adds to the dislocation by giving a sense of an entirely different film from the one we thought we were watching. In another closeup we see a middle aged man whom we have never seen before. It is highly unconventional for a film to introduce new characters at what is clearly very close to the end and he also speaks direct to camera: ‘That’s pretty dirty from you. Your old man comes clean and you don’t open your mouth about your boyfriend. You leave the poor slob dragging his tail…’ The film’s suddenly volatile geography is heightened by a fast pan to the right – a camera movement that has appeared nowhere else in the film - which comes to rest on yet another new character, a woman who says heatedly: ‘What obligation did she have to make that silly bastard feel any better?’

We now have just enough information to hazard a guess as to Tina’s whereabouts: she is in group therapy. This is confirmed by another whip pan past several faces to a woman who whines: ‘I joined group with the understanding that I would get help for my problems which are very real life problems. She has a husband…’ Tina may be confused by the conflicting advice but the audience, at
least, has been given its bearings. The film title assumes a potentially literal meaning: has Tina been reduced to certifiable madness? 30

To a mounting cacophony on the soundscape in which the men are unanimous in their condemnation of Tina and the women are divided, a flurry of whip pans and single and two-shots of other members of the group are intercut with solo shots of the silent Tina. In each of these, Tina is framed a little closer to the camera until in closeup her face offers a meeting place between the private and the public. She is well-groomed as if to confront the world but, at the same time, the image of her face seems to hold out the possibility of a crossing point into the personal, private space of her body and mind through her eyes. Tina remains perfectly silent and, apart from a few glances left and right, perfectly still. These are frozen moments: Tina is apparently taking nothing in but nor is she giving anything away any more.

The voices reach a crescendo at the start of the final shot of the film. At a total of one minute and seven seconds duration this long take is another rupture with convention. The only movement is a barely perceptible long, slow zoom in to Tina’s face that lasts for forty seconds while credits either side of her face scroll up the screen. During this zoom we hear the banal yet plaintive story of a woman in the group in voice-over:

I want to build a kiln... I want to have clay out there and a potter’s wheel out there and make pots. ‘Oh no’, my husband says, ‘No wife of mine...is going to make pots.’ ‘But what’s wrong with pots?’ I ask him.

The zoom stops and Tina’s face is by now in large closeup, tightly framed by her hair on three sides and cutting off her chin. Her eyes stare out unwaveringly. The other woman’s voice, mimicking her husband, continues:

‘If you want pots go out and buy pots.’ Well I don’t want to buy pots, I want to make pots. My husband is a cannibal. He is devouring my life juices just like your husband is devouring your life juices. Leave him!

30 This resonates to Mary McCarthy’s influential feminist novel, The Group, which had been published 6 years earlier. In this fictionalised account of McCarthy’s Vassar classmates, one of the women is committed to mental hospital by her husband who wants to replace her with another woman as his wife. (Mary McCarthy, The Group, New York: Harcourt, 1963.)
The voice of another woman who is crying breaks in: ‘Stay with him and count your blessings’.

A sudden, unexpected small smile flickers on Tina’s lips. It is not the broad grin we saw on the face of Grace Darling who was in possession of the knowledge and the words that the men lacked. Nonetheless, from the instability and uncertainty of not knowing where she was – or wanted to be – Tina’s smile hints at an internal knowledge: the reality of patriarchal society is in need of adjustment, not her own psyche. Perhaps it is the absurdity of hearing a woman advising another woman to stay in the cannibal’s cooking pot that makes her smile. We’ll never know. It is left to the audiences to make their own decision, just as Tina is going to have to make her own decision. But from being stuck in one place, Tina now has options. This tiny smile represents the point at which gender and image meet and dual space appears to be a possibility for Tina to move into. The final words are those of a woman who advises: ‘Get a good lawyer.’ The picture fades to black and the film ends.

This final long take with Tina’s direct address does not provide the sort of closure we have come to expect from the classical Hollywood narrative style. The shot is destabilising due to its remarkable duration, its long, slow zoom, and its innovative soundtrack consisting of a montage of voices and eventual predominance afforded to the voice of a woman who not seen. This rupture is compounded by the unsettling nature of Tina’s direct address throughout the shot. In the avant-garde, experimental or European art films exhibited in the increasingly popular arthouse cinemas of the period, it would probably not have had such a vertiginous effect. But these techniques in a film produced and distributed by Universal, one of the major Hollywood studios, deliver a further sense of dislocation, of being ‘out of place’.

Tina’s silence offers a space for audiences to decide where her place is – in or outside her marriage, in or outside madness.31 The silencing of a women’s voice in Hollywood was something the women’s movement would become increasingly concerned to challenge and in this screenwriter Eleanor Perry,

31 Eleanor Perry revealed the film was a fictionalised account of her own disintegrating marriage, thus a means for her to give voice to her own experience. (Francke, Script Girls: 88.)
working within Hollywood, was at the forefront: in 1974 she addressed a crowd of three hundred women in the Donnell Library Center auditorium in Manhattan with the words:

Women have been silent about their recent mistreatment in films because women are programmed to be silent – it isn’t nice for a woman to scream.\(^{32}\)

It may not be ‘nice’ for women to laugh either. If in the ghost of a smile on Tina’s face at the end of *Diary of A Mad Housewife*, we can see a faint palimpsest of Grace Darling’s grin and silent chuckle, in the next close reading the disjunctures in the intersecting cultural flows produce the sound of very loud laughter that does disrupt the silence.

**A Question of Silence (Marleen Gorris, 1982)**

Marleen Gorris’s first feature, *A Question of Silence*, is a much-analysed example of women’s cinema, and for good reason.\(^{33}\) At surface level, it could not be more other than Hollywood. It is the product of the highly state-subsidised film industry in the Netherlands which, like many national cinemas in Europe, aimed to maintain a local film culture capable of challenging Hollywood domination. Its alterity to Hollywood is reinforced by its low-level of production values and by Gorris’s declared aim to produce art and feminist politics rather than commercial entertainment. It thus satisfies many of the criteria that a diverse range of feminist critics, filmmakers and audiences argued for in a women’s counter cinema: although it has a mixed gendered crew, it is written and directed by a woman and


has a woman-centred narrative concerned with many issues of central importance to the women’s movement at this time – women’s experiences of sexual exploitation, violence, motherhood, the sexual division of labour, everyday abuses of heterosexuality, female friendship and psychic liberation. Location and dislocation lie at the heart of its narrative in which men are structured out of the logic of the film. In *A Question of Silence* it is the men who are constructed as other and who are ‘out of place’ - also, some felt, out of place in the audience. Its uncompromising critique of patriarchy dramatically divided audiences, often along gender lines, as Jane Root describes:

Some women stood up and cheered, while other (often male) viewers left enraged. Female viewers frequently described it as a celebration of gut-level female solidarity and an allegorical tragi-comedy about male society; men, meanwhile, tended to see it as a serious ‘social problem’ picture or a shocking and disturbing attack on them as individuals.³⁴

But it also engages with issues that feminist film theorists at the time were debating: whether a women’s cinema meant working outside or inside Hollywood. The former viewpoint was expressed by Laura Mulvey who, rejecting the possibilities for feminist filmmaking within mainstream cinema, advocated and adopted in her own filmmaking practice (with Peter Wollen) avant-garde strategies of defamiliarisation, rupture, reflexivity and Brechtian distanciation to refuse the visual pleasure structured by the patriarchal order of classical narrative cinema.³⁵ If this resulted in the demise of Hollywood, it was no great loss for Mulvey who famously declared ‘Women, whose image has continually been stolen and used…cannot view the decline of the traditional film form with anything much more than sentimental regret’.³⁶

An alternative viewpoint was articulated by fellow British feminist film theorist Claire Johnston, who suggested a strategy more accommodating of classical Hollywood narrative cinema. While sharing many of Mulvey’s

psychoanalytic insights, Johnston proposed another strategy: ‘we should seek to operate at all levels: within male-dominated cinema and outside of it.’\(^37\)

In this close reading I focus on the final scene in which men are displaced by the sound of women’s laughter. This scene (and its coda on the court steps outside in the street) is often read as an argument for radical, or separatist, feminism and for women’s cinema as a totally separate, oppositional counter-cinema. Gorris’s treatment of this location, however, repays close analysis for what it reveals about the cultural flows between this film and mainstream Hollywood cinema. Far from endorsing cinematic separatism uncomplicatedly, \textit{A Question of Silence} both avows and disavows Hollywood. Gorris plays form off against content using ideas of location and dislocation as the means of telling her story and making her feminist point to invite audiences to question patriarchal norms but not necessarily to disavow Hollywood altogether. To enable readers to get their bearings, I shall first briefly outline the story.

\textit{Forensic psychotherapist Dr. Janine Van Den Bos} (Cox Habbema) is employed to assess the mental capacity of three women accused of brutally castrating and murdering the male proprietor of a women’s clothing boutique. Voice, or sound, is important to all three women: Christine (Edda Barends), a mother and housewife in her late twenties is perpetually silent; Andrea (Henriette Toll), a single, well-educated secretary in her early thirties is quietly-spoken; and Annie (Nelly Frijda) a large, divorced woman in her mid-forties who works in a greasy spoon café who is garrulous and forever laughing compulsively and often inappropriately.\(^38\) Interviewing each woman separately in prison while they are awaiting trial, Janine discovers that they had never met before the murder and nor did they know their victim. She correctly suspects they are lying when they claim there were no witnesses. Via a series of flashbacks she comes to realise that all three have been effectively silenced by the men in their lives who are not consciously mean or violent but simply living according to the rules of conventional (patriarchal) society. Janine begins to realise that her own husband

\(^{38}\) Annie is sometimes referred to as the café manager although the end credits which refer only to the women’s jobs give ‘koffeijungfrouwe’ (literally ‘coffeeyoungwoman’) meaning ‘waitress’. We see Annie on her own in the café which suggests she has greater responsibility than a waitress would normally have.
is no different when, against his advice, she concludes the accused women are rational and sane. The final scene is set in the court room where she will argue her case.

The scene starts with an establishing shot which is typical of many a mainstream courtroom drama in which audiences are accustomed to receiving temporal and spatial co-ordinates. But this establishing shot, a slow 160° pan round the court from Janine’s point of view as she sits, as if arraigned herself, in front of the judges’ bench on which the prosecutor also sits, is used to critique the legal system and, by implication, patriarchal law. The three judges, the prosecutor, and the defence team are all male, making the point that patriarchal law, Netherlands state law and mainstream cinema are all at one with each other. On the other side of the bench sit the three accused who are, of course, all women. In the public gallery there is a roughly equal mix of women and men. If this is read to indicate that the film was intended for a non-gender specific general audience, Gorris slyly undermines this reading by placing the four female witnesses to the crime – the only people other than the accused who really know what happened - in the public gallery.

The courtroom is the place to which the narrative has been leading all along in a time-honoured Hollywood generic tradition of the courtroom or trial drama. It is also the site where the state-sanctioned legal system must make sense of the crime and where the film’s audiences must make sense of how patriarchal law is represented cinematically. The two logic systems are inextricably linked. The only sense that the lawyers can resort to is based on an interrelated system of patriarchal, moral and legal logic which tells them that the women must be technically and legally insane. Janine who speaks as both scientist and woman (the prosecutor constantly suggests the former is undermined by the latter) therefore astounds the court by declaring that in her professional judgment the accused women are sane. The gender difference in viewpoint and logic are worlds apart.

For Janine it has become clear that the women were motivated by the crimes that patriarchal law has perpetuated against them but which society does not recognise as crimes. For the prosecutor, patriarchal law operates like the realism of Hollywood cinema in which the construction of illusion is carefully concealed:
he simply cannot see it. Eventually, exasperated by Janine’s insistence that gender is the explanation for the murder, he argues that the respective genders of the accused and their victim is irrelevant: ‘I see no difference between this case and let’s say, if they had killed a female shop owner or, yes, the other way around if three MEN had killed the FEMALE owner of a shop’. At this, Annie bursts into laughter. The laughter is selectively infectious: first Andrea, then Christine, next the four witnesses and, finally, Janine are doubled up with helpless laughter.

The public are mystified. The lawyers are first baffled and then angry as they realise they are being ridiculed. The judge bangs impotently on his gavel and eventually effectively silences the women by ordering them to be removed from court and for the trial to proceed in their absence. This makes the women laugh even harder. The courtroom is transformed from the place where justice is supposedly delivered to a crime scene where women are the victims. That the women don’t appear as victims is due to Gorris’ determination not to represent them as such. Their laughter has effectively silenced the men: ridicule is an effective weapon.

Outside in the street on the steps of the courtroom, Janine ignores her husband who angrily blasts the horn of his car to get her to join him. She turns instead towards the four witnesses who silently file out of the court door. No words are spoken for no words are necessary: the women can communicate to each other in their own language – whether this is body language or the aphasic language of laughter.

B. Ruby Rich notes that some audiences inferred from this ending that the film ‘presents separatism as feminism taken to its logical and inevitable conclusion.’ 39 For US film reviewer Janet Maslin ‘it gave feminism a bad name’. 40 For UK reviewer Philip French it presented ‘the unacceptable face of feminism’. 41 Film writer Jeanette Murphy, on the other hand, writes that as a feminist text, the film ‘succeeds in presenting a coherent and integrated challenge to a certain set of patriarchal assumptions and taken-for-granted notions of how the world operates.

41 Cited in Jeanette Murphy, ”A Question of Silence”, in Brunsden, Films for Women: 99-108
and has to be.\textsuperscript{42} That the film could deliver such diametrically opposed readings inspired the film’s British distributors to devise a strategy which showed the film combined art and commerce, women’s and mainstream Hollywood cinemas.\textsuperscript{43}

This close reading reveals that in \textit{A Question of Silence} there are the traces of ideas, images and other cultural phenomena flowing between women’s cinema and dominant cinema which challenge widespread assumptions about the rigid borders supposedly separating them. In the relocations that the editing style delivered in earlier scenes – in the murder scene, for example where we never see a single frame of a violated body - and in the disruptive laughter in the court scene, Gorris breaks with the Hollywood conventions which lead audiences to expect a film to deliver what it appears to promise. She nevertheless, uses realist conventions of continuity editing to deliver these expectations in the first place. One of the reasons we are primed for a visualisation of the murder scene is that this film, apparently so opposed to all that Hollywood is and stands for, uses many Hollywood stylistic and narrative techniques. The realist mainstream storyline and mise-en-scene and its more or less conventional filming and editing techniques, in addition to a sparing use of modernist or experimental techniques, show the film to be more complex than the model of binary opposition between dominant cinema and its gendered other would allow. As Sheila Johnston pointed out, \textit{A Question of Silence} moves its audience ‘with the methods – allusion, association - of the most classical narratives.’\textsuperscript{44} Anneke Smelik argues that Gorris’s political fiction film appeals to a conventional filmic form, that is to classical narrative and cinematic codes found in traditional genres such as the murder mystery, the thriller and the epic.\textsuperscript{45}

What Gorris does with the courtroom location is what she does with the other locations in her film – the home, the office, the local café, the shopping mall and the woman’s boutique – she transforms sites that are a familiar part of our everyday lives into spaces that are no longer familiar. Borrowing ideas about location from Michel de Certeau, Tom Conley points out that this transforms

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Ibid}: 99.
\textsuperscript{44} Sheila Johnston’s review in \textit{Monthly Film Bulletin}, no 589, February 1983.
\textsuperscript{45} See Smelik, \textit{And the Mirror Cracked}. 1998: 93.
‘place’ into ‘space’. According to Certeau: ‘A place is...an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability.’ In this stable regime, Conley writes, ‘two elements cannot occupy the same area at once. A place would be very much like a two-dimensional plan on which the given elements are distributed.’ A space, on the other hand, is the experience of place or, as Certeau puts it, ‘space is a practice of place’. Place implies stability and stability is not an option at sites where two or more elements intersect. In the relationship between Hollywood and women’s cinema, the unstable geographies and globalising processes of the genderscape and screenscape impact and effect hybridities.

To emphasise the value of this insight to the analysis of cinema, Conley cites Christian Jacob who

likens a place to a map and a production of space to an itinerary and compares it to any number of virtual, viable, and real routes a pedestrian, reader, or a spectator might choose to lead through and about the world in their midst. The itinerary becomes a ‘spatial story’, a narrative that a speaker, a reader, a walker and... a viewer of cinema can make with places, languages, and images. Certeau’s concept of the spatial story has been crucial for a sense of agency in the politics of everyday life. What happens, we can now ask, when it is applied to the viewing of a film? Can the spectator chart multifarious itineraries through a film, irrespective of the way that its rhetoric or even its map-like form (in French un plan is at once a “shot” and a “map”) imposes upon its spectators? For enthusiasts of cinema who use Certeau’s idiolect it can be asked, too, how the places that we perceive in a film can be turned into critical spaces.

This notion of space as the ‘practice of place’ with an itinerary or ‘spatial story’ for the audience to navigate has informed the above close reading of this chapter.

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46 Conley maintains that the ability to turn ‘place’ into ‘space’ is a mark of a ‘good film’. This is not a view that I share. Tom Conley, ‘A Motel and a Map Room: A stopover in Thelma and Louise’ in the Harvard online journal at: www.thecinematic.com/issue04_files/historical.pdf.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
In *How Men Propose* I have shown how film can transform a home into a woman’s workplace, thus blurring the gendered boundaries in patriarchal society between private and public spheres. In *Diary of A Mad Housewife* I have demonstrated how a woman’s face can be transformed into a space where ideas and images from the genderscape and screenscape commingle to create something very different from the passive object of male desire. In *A Question of Silence* everyday, familiar sites become crime scenes and identifiable and apparently predictable, known places becomes spaces where borders prove porous and border-crossings take place. Gorris does not deny Hollywood is a space where patriarchal power dominates but nor does her film argue reductively that Hollywood is a stable place in which nothing other than patriarchy can exist. Nor does her film repel women’s cinema to the margins as uncomplicatedly other. What it does is complicate the picture to reveal that the borders between Hollywood and women’s cinema are not as impermeable or as rigidly fixed as widely thought.

In the final close reading, I analyse a film made when the conglomeration of media corporations based in Hollywood was so fractured, and the aesthetic style of films being made was so varied, that Hollywood was widely referred to as ‘post-Hollywood’. This coincided with a period in which the women’s movement, or feminism, was assessed by many to have been replaced by ‘post-feminism’.

**Just Another Girl on the IRT (Leslie Harris, 1992)**

*Just Another Girl*, written, directed and co-produced by and about an African-American woman is one of a loose category of films with a ghetto aesthetic which are often situated outside and marginalised by Hollywood, African-American, and women’s cinema. Harris made it at a time when, as Rachel Abramowitz writes, women directors in Hollywood had made small but distinct inroads in Hollywood:

In the decade between 1983 and 1992, they had directed 81 of the 1,794 features released by the studios. The percentage of days worked by women Directors Guild members had grown from 2% in 1983 to 7.8% in 1990. By 1994 it grew to 9.6% but fell to 5% in 1997. Only two women had ever been nominated for best Director Oscars. Women writers fared better: in 1997 they constituted 17% of working feature writers. 14 women had won best
screenplay Oscars. A study commissioned by Women in Film showed that when a woman served as Executive Producer, the average number of woman working behind the scenes doubled.50

In challenging racism and sexism – Harris makes it clear that the two are inseparable – the film contributes not only to a critique of Hollywood but also to a critique of feminist film theory and practice which in its early days failed to include race as a part of its challenge to patriarchy. In this close reading a feminist understanding of a politics of location helps situate the traces of cultural flows and their vectors. As Alison Butler writes:

In women’s cinema, a feminist politics of location is articulated by those films which situate female identity in dynamic historical situations, to reveal the imbrication of technologies of gender with those of local, national and international power.51

That location and movement are important in this film is made clear by the film’s title: ‘IRT’ stands for ‘Interborough Rapid Transit’, the subway system linking Brooklyn City Hall with downtown New York City. If the title suggests we are to meet a girl on the move (we are) it also suggests that where she comes from is important to her sociocultural identity (it is). On a metanarrative level, the title also reveals the value of placing an analysis of the film’s stylistic properties within the context of the globalising processes that produced them. In other words, global cultural flows ensure that a film never stands still: we need to trace these flows to discover where it is coming from and for whom and to whom it speaks. A politics of location, as Caren Kaplan observes, depends on ‘where we speak from and whose voices are sanctioned’.52 Not all others have equal voices, however, nor are they equally represented. Within cinema, the politics of representation is closely linked to that of the politics of location: like representation, location ‘is ‘never merely descriptive, it serves a regulatory and constitutive function’.53 As I shall show, from the very first scene the power, or

50 Abramowitz, Is That A Gun In Your Pocket?: 507.
51 Butler, Women’s Cinema: 91.
53 C. Kitzinger and S. Wilkinson, ‘Theorizing Representing the Other’ in C. Kitzinger and S. Wilkinson, eds, Representing the Other: A Feminism and Psychology Reader.
politics, of location to control is of as much importance to Leslie Harris as it is to the film’s narrative and main character.

The film wastes no time in introducing us to Chantel (Ariyan A. Johnson). Framed within a fluid, handheld opening shot she advances towards a retreating camera along a busy up-town New York street. Everything about her – cool clothes, hip braids and a ‘sassy’ way of walking - tells us she does not consider herself to be marginalised in any way. She might live in the projects with parents who struggle along ‘from paycheck to paycheck’ but Chantel has set her sights high and intends to be a doctor. She passes in front of the camera which arcs round 180º to follow after her. In perfect synchrony, the camera comes to rest as Chantel stops, turns round and, directly addresses the camera. The first thing she tells us is where she comes from: ‘Lots of folk think Brooklyn girls are real tough. I guess that’s true. I let nobody mess with me and I do what I want, when I want.’

This first shot reveals the traces of the flows in and between screenscape and genderscape - between Hollywood and women’s cinema, and between women’s cinema and other non-Hollywood cinemas such as the French New Wave and contemporary Black independent cinema. The film, as a series of sites or located sequences, will lead us through a narrative aesthetic both typical and atypical of Hollywood, through an espousal of Hollywood and it will end in an outright denial of Hollywood.

While it fixes the location of the film’s main character, the opening shot also has the power to dislocate. It has a disquieting affect on audiences for a number of reasons. Not least is the rarity of hearing the voice of a working-class, young Black woman, let alone one with such confidence. Not since stars

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54 Hal Hinson in the Washington Post (April 02, 1993) could only compare Johnson’s performance to that of a white male: ‘In “Just Another Girl on the I.R.T.” Ariyan Johnson seizes the camera’s attention like no other performer since John Travolta strutted into ‘Saturday Night Fever’. Like Travolta’s sidewalk prince, Johnson’s Chantel is Brooklyn royalty.’
Tamara Dobson and Pam Grier in the early 1970s Hollywood Blaxploitation films had quite such a self-confident female African-American character expressed herself so forcefully in popular cinema. Unlike the majority of women in Black ghetto aesthetic films of the 1980s and early ‘90s Chantel is neither ‘bitch’ nor ‘ho’.\textsuperscript{55} Chantel’s confidence is matched by first time actor Johnson’s style of performance, the cinematography, and by Harris’s writing and directing skills. It is a shot with the power to mock audience preconceptions and prejudices about young women who look and talk like Chantel. It helps audiences locate the film as non-Hollywood – for many it is non-Hollywood because feminist and African-American.

As I have shown in the above close readings, direct address is another form of dislocation. It disrupts the classical Hollywood convention of narrative seamlessness and is a device widely used in experimental and modernist films to deliver Brechtian distanciation. For many modernist and counter-cinema filmmakers such as Godard it was used as a conscious, radical impulse to counter the realism of mainstream cinema and to encourage an active rather than a presumed passive relationship between audience and film text. Harris acknowledges her indebtedness to Godard but breaking cinema’s fourth wall has a much older history than the French New Wave and is closely implicated in the history of women’s cinema. Its origins lie in the exhibitionist pre-classical style of the ‘cinema of attractions’, evidence for which exists in Grace Darling’s address to audiences.\textsuperscript{56}

Chantel’s direct address also has a celebrated precedent in Classical Hollywood Cinema. It occurs in Dorothy Arzner’s \textit{Dance, Girl Dance} (1940), one of the early films recuperated by feminist film theorists, most notably in a booklet of essays edited by Claire Johnston in 1975.\textsuperscript{57} In this film, would-be ballet dancer Judy (Maureen O’Hara), is forced to act as an on-stage stooge to the vaudeville act of Bubbles (Lucille Ball). In a celebrated scene Judy suddenly snaps and,


refusing to perform the striptease that she’s paid to do, defiantly speaks directly to both the diegetic vaudeville audience and the film’s audience:

Go ahead and stare. I’m not ashamed. Go on. Laugh! Get your money’s worth. Nobody’s going to hurt you. I know you want to tear my clothes off so’s you can look your fifty cents worth. …We’d laugh right back at the lot of you, only we’re paid to let you sit there. 58

It is a scene of relevance to the central issue of this chapter concerning a woman’s place within patriarchal society and because, as Pam Cook notes, it ‘focuses our attention on the problematic position they occupy in their world. 59 Harris’s strategy of negotiating with Hollywood, rather than ‘facing off’ as a separate, oppositional or counter cinema, follows in the tradition of Arzner whose films are significant not just because they happened to be directed by a woman, but also as Edward Buscombe notes,

because their structures raise critical questions for feminist film makers and critics. These films, though produced wholly within the ‘patriarchal ideology’ which dominated the Hollywood of the time, employ certain devices of narrative organisation and mise-en-scene which throw that ideology into sharp relief and to an extent disrupt it… This is not to suggest that Arzner personally would necessarily support the objectives of a feminist cinema. The value of her work, rather, lies in the possibilities it offers feminist criticism of coming to terms with Hollywood cinema and in the strategies it might suggest to feminist film makers today. 60

Like Judy, the hitherto silent striptease artist in the Arzner film, Chantel’s direct address draws attention to her voice. The same device was used, if somewhat more tentatively, in the final shot Diary of A Mad Housewife. It also appears in one shot in A Question of Silence when Janine in her home/office turns to the camera and says ‘I don’t think these women are insane’. Chantel differs from the women in these other films because not only is she allowed to speak, she seldom stops speaking, usually very loudly, throughout the whole film. Direct address


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from Chantel is full frontal: this is a young woman who is determined to let her audience know not only does she know where she’s coming from she is going to decide for herself where she’s going.

Chantel, however is not aware of the paradoxical and multiple locations she inhabits. In an unexpected narrative shift, she is revealed to be all too easily seduced by materials goods - no poor girl from the Projects who fails to pay attention in her biology class on contraception is going to get the fast train out of Brooklyn quite as effortlessly as she might hope. This is unexpected in part because it challenges the narrative conventions of the quasi-autobiographical Hollywood biopic in which poor girl (or boy) makes good. An emphasis on ‘positive images’ among many minority filmmakers also adds to audience expectations that the film will deliver a different ending from the one it does. But Harris’s refusal to be drawn into arguments about ‘positive images’ gives us a more complex character and no simplistic closure for her working class African-American heroine: Chantel ends as a school drop out and single mother back at the start of the IRT line in Brooklyn, a district well known to have one of the highest percentages of African-Americans living under the poverty line in New York State.

For all Harris’s awareness of Chantel’s multiple origins and locations, she appears curiously reluctant to admit to the full multiplicity of her own space. This prevents her from acknowledging the full extent of the permeability of the borders between women’s cinema and Hollywood. While acknowledging her film to be the hybridised outcome of interactions between women’s cinema, classical Hollywood, the French New Wave, and the contemporary male-dominated ‘ghetto realist’ cinema, she appears to be in denial about any such flows to or from contemporary Hollywood. At the very end of the film, after the final crew credits, Harris makes a defiant gesture to mainstream cinema with a caption telling us that hers was a film ‘Hollywood dared not make’.

The film’s narrative themes and style position it as a film that challenges the ideological assumptions which feminist film theorists identified in a Hollywood defined in terms of patriarchal hegemony. This was remarked upon by film critic Marjorie Baumgarten who commented that Chantel had ‘the kind of face and
individual that Hollywood customarily has never given a second look.61 And in several publicity interviews Harris recounts the sexist opposition she encountered from corporate Hollywood when trying to raise the funding for her woman-centred film:

People weren’t really receptive to the idea of doing a film about a woman...They said to make it male – I heard this!...I knew I always wanted to do a feature-length film – that seems kind of obvious – but for a woman… I really wasn’t encouraged. People feel that a woman can’t handle a feature-length. I was told, ‘Hey, why don’t you make it into a documentary?’ Except for Julie Dash, we haven’t really had an African-American woman who has done a feature-length, black-woman film.62

Like Julie Dash whose lyrical period drama, Daughters of the Dust (1991), had attracted no production funding up front from Hollywood, Harris made her film on a $130,000 shoestring budget and had to rely upon private and charitable funding. But, unlike Dash, Harris got Hollywood distribution funding.63 After spending months trying to edit it herself she raised money for a professional editor. This enabled her to show it to Miramax chief, Harvey Weinstein, who bought it. At the time Miramax was a relatively small but nevertheless highly significant player in the Hollywood landscape. The film’s narrative offers a metaphor for Harris’s contention that women filmmakers’ aspirations of making it in Hollywood are thwarted by the sexism they encounter in the industry. Ultimately, however, Harris was not thwarted and that her film was distributed widely by the leading Hollywood mini-major of the time is evidence of her success.

Early ‘90s Hollywood was far more structurally diverse than it had ever been. As noted in several chapters, Miramax played an important role in blurring the boundaries between Hollywood and the independent sector, and between

63 Julie Dash was the first African-American woman to direct a full-length feature film. Leslie Harris was the first to make a film that was distributed by Hollywood.
commercial entertainment cinema and art house cinema.\textsuperscript{64} In 1993, a year before it was bought by Disney (a minor relocation that for many merely confirmed where they thought Miramax had been had been all along) Miramax was content to distance itself from mainstream Hollywood and, at the same time, take advantage of its cult proximity. It marketed \textit{Just Another Girl} as being less than completely Hollywood’s other, publicising it as ‘the first major commercial feature to be released by an African-American woman filmmaker.’\textsuperscript{65}

Rather then convince us, Harris’s disavowal of Hollywood alerts us to the fact that this was not a film that Hollywood dared not make but one in which it played a large part in its making. A film is always more than the narrative, aesthetic and cost of its production process; what it is and how it is perceived extends to the distribution, exhibition and reception processes. That general audiences were able to see this African-American woman-centred film in their local cinema rather than at a specialist women’s film festival or in an arthouse cinema is because Hollywood in the 1990s was restructured in response to the disjunctive globalising processes.

\section*{Conclusion}

Stuart C. Aitken and Leo E. Zonn point out that place is an integral part of any narrative – it is the spectacle.\textsuperscript{66} And spectacle in a film is provided by the mise-en-scene, which is a large part of the raw material of all textual analysis. The idea of ‘location’ as a series or sequence of locations as James Clifford and others describe meshes with Elspeth Probyn’s discovery that one of the definitions of the verb ‘to locate’ is ‘to find or fix the place of especially in a sequence.’\textsuperscript{67} This

\textsuperscript{64} Evidence of this is the heated debate about whether Tarantino’s early films which were produced by Miramax can be considered independent or mainstream. The possibility that they can be both simultaneously is not generally considered but offers a more productive critical path to follow.

\textsuperscript{65} Miramax publicity material.

\textsuperscript{66} Stuart C. Aitken and Leo E. Zonn, ‘\textit{Re-Presenting the Place Pastiche}’ in \textit{Place, Power, Situation and Spectacle: A Geography of Film"}, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc. 1994: 14.

makes perfect sense when applied to film, which is, after all, a series of sequences made up of series of celluloid frames in a time-based medium.

Hollywood remains the most hegemonically powerful cinema in the global screenscape and this power is undeniably linked to patriarchy. My argument is that there has been a long history of hybridisation between Hollywood and women’s cinema. My focus on theories concerning location and related ideas concerning place, space and mobility in this chapter has helped me demonstrate the highly volatile geographies within both the screenscape and genderscape. When the boundaries between Hollywood and women’s cinema are understood to be to be permeable, and border-crossing interactions involving impact and change between Hollywood and its others are neither ignored nor remain unobserved, cinema’s unstable geographies emerge. These challenge the typical conceptualisation of what Hollywood is and where it exists. This new paradigm requires an acknowledgment of paradoxical space, an ‘elsewhere’ in which margin and centre can co-exist and globalising processes cross borders to produce new hybridities. In this concluding case-study chapter of my dissertation, I have argued that to analyse cinema within the framework of global cultural flows demonstrates that Hollywood and its others possess greater heterogeneity and are more itinerant than is commonly supposed: Hollywood can be located in women’s cinema and, similarly, women’s cinema can be located within Hollywood.
Conclusion

Films, along with other forms of representation, play an important role in forming ideas about, and attitudes to, the world, in setting agendas, in enabling (or not) other ways of envisaging the world, in alleviating anxiety and even in defusing conflict – in short... they do political work.¹ Tessa Perkins.

This thesis concludes that a fuller understanding of cinema can be achieved by taking into account the creative and productive nature of globalising processes upon intercinematic relationships. It furthermore concludes that this knowledge can be applied to the analysis of cinema since the inception of film. These are topics which have been largely neglected in Film Studies. This thesis links that lacuna in the understanding of intercinematic relations to the disproportionate attention paid to the role of Hollywood in the global screenscape.

The question of how Hollywood is imagined and located in scholarly accounts of film culture lies at the heart of this study. The idea of Hollywood as the apex of cinema has held sway over the conceptualisation and discussion of all types of cinema. Hollywood has been treated as a powerful, hegemonic cultural monolith, a movie machine that both produces an homogenous product and homogenises all other cinemas. Stability has been seen as the hallmark of a global cinematic landscape dominated by Hollywood, a stability expressed in the repeated use of established cinematic, national and other cultural conventions that has left little room for diversity. I argue that this narrow view has not only limited the scholarly understanding of film culture, but also reverberated in how, and sometimes whether, films were made, written about, viewed and enjoyed. My critical analysis of conventional approaches to studying Hollywood demonstrates the historical failure to engage with the more dynamic and unstable terrain of global cultural flows.

My approach in developing this analysis, and addressing the gap in the literature, has been intertextual and interdisciplinary. I have demonstrated in this

¹ Tessa Perkins, ‘Who (and what) is it for?’ in Gledhill and Williams, Reinventing Film Studies, 2000: 76. Emphasis in original text.
dissertation that Arjun Appadurai’s framework of disjunctive global cultural flows which extended globalisation theories to include culture, provides an analytical model that can itself be extended and usefully applied to film analysis. Appadurai’s account of cultural flows is a deft, heuristic intellectual resource because it enables us to observe and investigate what is often ignored or goes unnoticed. It brings into focus the multidirectional and overlapping cultural flows between cinemas and filmic categories in a volatile screenscape. It thus permits the reconceptualisation of Hollywood’s significance in the transnational imaginary and a new understanding of global cinema.

A crucial aspect of this analysis has been to disrupt and challenge some of the binarisms that are widely used in the literature to distinguish and analyse different types of cinema. Principal among these is the centre-periphery model of cinema that positions Hollywood as central and consigns all, or most, other national and local cinemas to the periphery. Interestingly, the designation of ‘peripheral’ is not necessarily associated with relegation in terms of critical esteem – indeed, as indicated in this thesis, one of the unhelpful polarisations of a centre-periphery model is the tendency to idealise any film which is perceived to counter Hollywood. This is then frequently linked to a concomitant denigration of Hollywood films. This thesis found that neither idealisation nor denigration dislodges Hollywood from being located at the centre of scholarly concern. I argue that it is the centre-periphery model itself that obscures and sometimes denies the many and varied interactions between Hollywood and non-Hollywood cinemas, as well as those between the different types of national and local cinemas. In other words, this thesis highlights the significance of exploring and contesting the issues of inclusion and exclusion that are involved in processes of categorisation but only rarely made manifest.

It is difficult to challenge existing categories of analysis because they provide the shared tools through which scholars develop their research approaches. I have been mindful of this important consideration throughout my research. Nevertheless, following many hours of viewing Hollywood and non-Hollywood films, it became increasingly clear to me that there was an urgent need for a re-examination of the categorising processes. My viewing suggested that cinemas and filmic categories were neither as stable nor as clear-cut as was widely imagined. It became clear that the task of analysing cinema was far more mobile, labile and chaotic than commonly
perceived. There was often evidence before my eyes (and ears) of overlaps as ideas, images, technologies and other elements of the mise-en-scene and soundtrack entered and exited the frame. If I chose to look, there was evidence of intercinematic relationships in the film texts themselves as well as in the interconnections between film text and film institutions. I chose to look.

Instead of looking for cinematic essence, my attention moved to the notion of cultural flows and transfers in search of a more nuanced understanding of the cinematic terrain. This brought into focus processes of location, dislocation and relocation, of movement and instability, and of impact and change in cinematic culture. Appadurai’s framework of disjunctive global cultural flows was particularly valuable because of its innovative approach to the spaces of culture. The first step in developing a paradigm shift was thus to switch from a focus on the formal properties of the film text to a focus on cultural ‘space’. Whereas the former proposes cultural essence contained by fixed borders, the latter suggests a series of sites with permeable borders. Appadurai’s framework thus opened up the possibility of seeing that contemporary transnational cultural flows, while faster and more intense than ever before, are not necessarily new. By including temporality as another analytical factor, I could apply knowledge of contemporary cinema to the history of cinema. This framework furthermore offered a means for observing and analysing the creative tensions caused by the disjunctive cultural flows. This meant I could show some of the ways in which hybrid cultural forms emerge from the interstices of these asymmetrical flows, a finding that challenges established notions of cinematic conventions and encourages a rethinking of the centre-periphery model of global cinema.

The screenscape that emerges from my analysis of intercinematic relationships, developed in a series of case studies of cinematic practices, is unlike anything that is typically imagined or found in most discussions and studies of cinema. The case studies document particular concatenations of cultural flows as they stop, start, clash, synchronise, gather speed and intensity or slow down in unpredictable ways. Each case study provides a slightly different means of mapping the global screenscape. This is no easy matter in cinema where the objects of study are mutating as one examines them. The analysis does not disavow Hollywood’s undeniable hegemonic power but it does call into question long-standing arguments for Hollywood’s
position as the centrally defining factor of all other cinemas, and as the cinema from which others are in need of protection. The analysis allows the reader to see the heterogeneity that exists in a constantly mutating and hybridising screen environment and thus opens the way for future explorations of this kind.

Cinema plays a special role in our understanding of globalisation not only because it is implicated in globalising processes but also because of the unique ways in which it allows us to see, hear and actively participate in these processes. ‘On a fundamental level,’ Yoshimoto notes, ‘globalization and image are inseparable from each other.’ For him, the question then is where the image is to be situated in the restless dynamics of globalising processes. My dissertation provides one response to that question. From here, the next step is to better integrate the study of globalising processes and the study of cinema so that film theory and cinematic practice can find new synergies. The question of how Film Studies can contribute to our understanding of globalising processes remains an open yet pressing issue. The need for further study is nowhere more evident than in Tessa Perkins’ claim – a thought that has accompanied me throughout the process of researching and writing this dissertation — that film theory must think integratively about the relations between cultural struggles and social and economic struggles.

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