Cinemas, Identities and Beyond

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Edited by

Ruby Cheung with D. H. Fleming

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For Mama
—Ruby Cheung

For Moira and David Fleming with eternal gratitude
—D. H. Fleming

“A film is a petrified fountain of thought.”
—Jean Cocteau
Esquire, February 1961

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INTRODUCTION

CINEMAS AND IDENTITIES

RUBY CHEUNG AND D. H. FLEMING

Within the field of Film Studies, debates surrounding the construction and projection of identity formulate some of the hottest and most contested discourses. Existing studies often tend to concentrate on a particular national context or cinematic paradigm. We believe that discussions about cinemas and identities will be more profitable, however, if opened up to a wider spectrum of texts, contexts and approaches to the subject. The need for such a collection was initially highlighted during an AHRC-funded conference held at the University of St Andrews in 2006, where an eclectic range of papers were delivered upon various issues surrounding the production and projection of identity within a global cinematic context. Discussions during and after this lively gathering served to highlight this gaping hole within the field, which we hope to broach in this volume. What this collection strives to achieve therefore is to collate a series of heterogeneous chapters that consider a wide range of cinematic contexts, and production and reception spheres in order to grant our readers a comprehensive overview of some of the newest and most exciting approaches revolutionising the field. This, we hope, will offer insights into some of the complex issues and forces found affecting the construction and projection of "identities" within World Cinema. As a consequence, the core questions and issues raised by the book become manifold, but remain grouped together by a shared concern with key ontological issues: What is identity? What is the relationship between cinema and identity, in both general and pragmatic senses? Answering these questions often leads to a series of further questions and qualifications, such as: What barriers currently restrict our understanding of the relationship between cinema and identity; and how can these be broached and transcended? Thus, as a collection, the book will appeal to readers interested in individual contexts or topics discussed here. It will also function as a work greater than the sum of its parts for those interested in issues surrounding identity in cinema more generally.

To Begin with …

Identity is a complex and multifaceted issue that can be approached through the lenses of psychology, biology, nationality, sociology, geography, class, etc., with all perhaps synergistically interfacing with ideology. For Louis Althusser (2001), one's identity and ideology are produced even before birth, and the individual is always-already a subject. Here, even if we drop the "sentiments" or the forms of family ideology in which the unborn child is expected (paternal/maternal/conjugal/fraternal), we can remain certain that the child will bear its "Father's Name" and will therefore already have an identity and be irreplaceable. The expected child is always-already a subject, and once conceived appointed a subjectivity within the specific familial and cultural ideological configuration. The child thus enters an implacable and more or less "pathological" structure wherein the former subject-to-be will have to find "its" place. This involves becoming a "sexual" subject (boy or girl) which it already is in advance (ibid., 1505) before other ideological striations are implanted or reproduced through learning and education within the family, schools, universities, work-place, society, media, etc. For Althusser, these institutions take children at their most vulnerable infant-age and for years on end "drums into them, whether it uses new or old methods, a certain amount of know-how wrapped in the ruling ideology" (ibid., 1494). This know-how spans fundamental behavioural patterns (shaking hands, making eye contact, having a name) through to more complex notions instructing what a good citizen, a reliable worker, a good mother, etc., are. A child therefore becomes the product of a culture and inherits ideology and identity which it reproduces in order to perpetuate the dominant and established configurations and allow further production. Outwith families, schools, universities and various other forms of "Ideological State Apparatus" continually work to programme and delimit the behaviours, thoughts, actions, desires, and identities of its subjects.

If each "subject" reproduces the conditions and reality of their production, the same may also be argued for cinema. Here, cinema emerges as another cultural product that reproduces the "reality" of its embedding ideological framework and apparatus. Cinematic identities thus emerge as part of a complex ideological synergy. Jean-Luc Comolli and Jean Narboni (1999, 754) argue that cinema—as a product of the economic and ideological system—also inadvertently reproduces its own conditions. Indeed, "*every film is political,* in as much as it is determined by the ideology which produces it (or within which it is produced, which stems from the same thing)" (ibid.; italics in original). Cinema and art here become branches of ideology, and like pieces of a jig-saw puzzle have their own allotted places within a larger framework. For the authors, "The system is blind to its own nature, but in spite of that, indeed because of that, when all the pieces are fitted together they give a very clear picture" (ibid.).

Comolli and Narboni argue that dominant ideology tells us that cinema is concerned with the "real" and reproducing "reality": As this is what a camera and film stock are for. We are reminded, however, that the tools and techniques of film-making are themselves always already a part of this "reality" and what film does more precisely is to reproduce an image of the world around it: Filtering this "reality" through the lens of the dominant ideology. Thus, reality is nothing but an expression of the prevailing ideology. They argue:

> Seen in this light, the classic theory of cinema that the camera is an impartial instrument which grasps, or rather is impregnated by, the world in its "concrete reality" is an eminently reactionary one. What the camera in fact registers is the vague, unformulated, untheorised, unthought-out world of the dominant ideology. (Comolli and Narboni 1999, 755)

Here cinema simply becomes an ideological mode through which the world communicates itself to itself (ibid.): With films, film-makers, producers, studios, and government/funding bodies inadvertently shape and reproduce the conditions in which identity and subjectivity are constructed, negotiated, produced, performed and perceived within culture.

Linda Williams (1986, 508) examines how this was the case from cinema's infancy and can be seen working already in the *scientific* "chronophotography" work of Muybridge and Marey during the late 1800s. Reflecting a scientific ideology we find the films attempting to document the previously unobserved facts of the body and its movements. What becomes striking for Williams, however, is that the images and scenes lack any true scientific "objectivity," reflecting instead dominant ideological and identity paradigms. This becomes most evident in the divergent ways in which "scientific" subjects of different genders are framed and depicted by the camera. As the mastery of the cinematic-illusion of motion neared completion, there already emerged (or remained) a gratuitous "fantasisation" and "iconisation" of women's bodies that had no parallel in the representation or depictions of men (1986, 511). Williams points out how painting and photography had already set precedents for the eroticisation and objectification of women's bodies within art and culture, and argues that Muybridge simply inherited and reproduced these dominant views. In evidencing this we find striking differences begin to emerge around the various tasks, postures, situations and props allotted to each gender as well as the different regimes that emerge governing their movements and actions. Although some similarities do emerge between male and female subjects, for Williams the props associated with women (baths, bed clothes, jugs of water, cigarettes) are never simply devices utilised to elicit movement, but always become "something more, investing the woman's body with an iconographic, or even diegetic, surplus of meaning" (ibid., 514). For Williams, this ultimately served to illuminate that "even in the prehistory of cinema, at a time when the cinema was much more a document of reality than a narrative art, women were already fictionalised, already playing assumed roles, already *not there* as themselves" (ibid., 520; italics in original). Such insights serve to illuminate how the roles, subjectivities and identities played out in cinema often already pre-exist their (re)production and performance on-screen. In this instance, the images and scenes inadvertently reflect and illuminate certain inherent identities and ideologies signalled by the culture as particularly feminine or womanly. Cinema in this model is not a recorder of reality and subjectivity therefore, but rather a machine that reproduces and (re)projects the dominant ideological models.

The growing popularity of cinema as a mass entertainment highlighted beyond doubt its power to communicate and project powerful (and programmatic) images and ideas to large numbers of people. During the early twentieth century as narrative cinema became ever more popular, films like *The Birth of a Nation* (D. W. Griffith, USA, 1915) and *Bronenosets Potyomkin/The Battleship Potemkin* (Sergi Eisenstein, Soviet Union, 1925) were increasingly found to project ideologically sound images that displayed and relayed how someone of a certain nationality, age, class, gender, politics, race, sexuality, should behave, act and be perceived (both at home and abroad). If all cinema is indeed political, then, we may argue in an Orwellian fashion that some cinema is "more" political than the others. From the agitprop films of early Soviet cinema (e.g. *Oktyabr/October: Ten Days that Shook the World* [Grigori Aleksandrov and Sergei Eisenstein, Soviet Union, 1928]), through the European fascist films of the 1930s and 1940s (e.g. *Triumph des Willens/Triumph of the Will* [Leni Riefenstahl, Germany, 1935]), to the Maoist-dominated Chinese films (e.g. *Bai Mao Nu/The White-haired Girl* [Wang Bin and Shui Hua, China, 1950]), and the anti-communist films of the USA of the 1950s and 1960s (e.g. *I Was a Communist for the FBI*

[Gordon Douglas, USA, 1951]), cinema continued to demonstrate strong political and ideological ties to the dominant State Apparatus through predominantly projecting and reflecting idealised models of identity and ideology.

More often than not the idealised images often gain more force when contrasted with a less-than-desirable Other who has an alternative (less-desirable) or threatening ideology, identity, or desire. The manner in which certain identities and subjectivities perform within narratives help to reproduce and reassert the rewards of being a good citizen whilst concomitantly projecting the perils of being ideologically-subversive. Marxist sociologist Siegfried Kracauer engaged with some of these issues as early as 1947 within his seminal work *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of German Film* (1947). Here, Kracauer argued that early Weimar cinema and its character constructions not only served to reflect the contemporary culture which produced them, but also served to unearth certain underlying truths that were not immediately obvious (in this case, anticipating Germany's embrace of fascism). Kracauer depicted film and its images as a form of cultural mirror that could be studied to better understand the world and culture that produced them.

During the 1950s theoretical models and discourses arising within the pages of *Cahiers du Cinéma* formulated around the *auteur* theory and often examined the recurring themes, characterisations and identities employed throughout a director's oeuvre. Subsequently in the 1960s and 1970s, as academia began to seriously engage with the study of film, new Language, Linguistic, Structural, Semiotic, Psychoanalytic, and Anthropological paradigms were increasingly opened up for better understanding and interpreting cinema (and identity). Structural and Semiotic approaches, for example, often worked to examine how meaning and ideology resided within the films and texts themselves, while other trends simultaneously (and symbiotically) focused upon the text-reader relationship. The former trends predominantly examined narrative structure, editing, *mise-en-scène*, frame composition and cinematography; while the latter investigated how meaning was constructed by the spectator during the act of reading.

The British academic journal *Screen* increasingly forged new paths with regard to the study of identity (predominantly gender) and ideology in cinema through increasingly approaching characters and films via a Lacanian and Freudian psychoanalytic paradigm. This wave of *Screen Theory* allowed theorists such as Laura Mulvey and Colin MacCabe to begin viewing film as a very real ideological tool that helped project and perpetuate a hegemonic patriarchal order. That is to say, a machine that limited character types and identities to a range of positions and thresholds strictly demarcated within a rigid and already established matrix of meaning. Here psychoanalysis and gender studies became key tools for illuminating how film reproduced and constructed certain positions for characters on-screen, reflecting a deeper set of psychological and ideological structures.

Complicating this view, however, was the manner in which throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries the opportunity to make and produce films spread beyond the large studios and state-governing bodies to increasingly grant a wider range of previously marginalised groups and individuals the opportunity to make films and explore alternative models of identity and ideology on-screen. Here, a whole range of new cinemas and identities began to emerge via new waves of film movements. Amongst others, the Third Cinema of the post-colonial period (e.g. *Borom Sarret*, Ousmane Sembene, Senegal, 1966), interstitial and transnational cinemas of the peripheries (e.g. *Lakposhtha Parvaz Mikonand/Turtles Can Fly*, Bahman Ghobadi, Iran/France/Iraq, 2004), queer cinema (e.g. *Poison*, Todd Haynes, USA, 1991) and the politically dissident films of marginal sub-cultures (e.g. *La Haine,* Matieu Kassovitz, France, 1995) began arriving and unleashing new spectra of characters and worlds onto screen. Alternative ideologies and identities were explored as new cinemas increasingly projected alternative perspectives and models of identity politics. Group identities, individual identities, public identities, private identities, gendered identities, sexual identities, national identities, sub-class identities, hero/villain identities, and Otherness all emerged as lively vectors increasingly problematising the construction and interpretation of identities and ideologies within cinema.

In response to the ever-changing modes and models of cinema appearing throughout the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, film scholars and academics increasingly sought out new theoretical paradigms with which to (re)approach issues of cinema and identity. Increasingly, post-structuralist approaches to film and images inspired by the work and thinking of Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze (et al.) served to open up new and exciting avenues for approaching issues of identity and ideology on-screen. In his cinema books and works co-authored with Félix Guattari, for example, Deleuze (2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b) offered new *schizoanalytic* and *nomad thought* models that helped open up a complex rhizomatic-web of included disjunctions (inner and outer forces, powers, agents, etc.). These in turn shaped and affected individual and group identities. Often these new approaches served to undermine the previously stable concepts of the psychoanalytic subject and challenged the dominant modes of Logocentrism, which dominated as the governing model of Western knowledge and thought. As this system was broken down and transgressed, what went on between the normal Logocentric binary systems was increasingly examined. Derrida's concept of *différance* (Derrida 1982, 1978, 2004), for example, became instrumental in alerting us to the infinity of possibilities that may exist between most models of binary thought. Homi Bhabha (1994) similarly began paying attention to the spaces in between nations (and by extension, many other apparently oppositional fronts) which he identified as a form of "Third Space."

In *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, Jonathan Rutherford (1990) attempted to outline exactly what identity and identification were from a post-structuralist Marxist perspective to illuminate new ways of thinking about identity, and how they could inform changing concepts of ideology and politics. Here, Rutherford acknowledged that the perception of "difference" between individuals and groups led to the construction of "identity." Following a broader trend, binary categories such as gender, race, class and sexuality increasingly became re-examined and reappraised in order to move on and recognise how difference, autonomy and interdependence factored into identity. On each side of difference, however, lurked various other levels and forms of difference that were always already at play, forever haunting those who tried to stabilise and codify the mechanisms we used for distinguishing ourselves from one another. Rutherford found that "[t]here is no final deciding logic that masters and determines this complex structuring of identity" (ibid., 20). Rather, we "are caught between the decline of old political identifications and the new identities that are in the process of becoming or yet to be born" (ibid., 23). Such sentiments also echoed the findings of Stuart Hall, who whilst examining identity in Caribbean cinema found that "cultural identity … is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being.' It belongs to the future as much as to the past" (Hall 2000, 706). "Transformation" thus emerged as one of the few "constant" constituents structuring "identity."

Different Takes on Cinemas and Identities

In this volume we have put together fifteen chapters that illuminate some of the contemporary trends within English-speaking academia to grant a glimpse into some of the hottest discourses defining the study of identity in and through film. To house the heterogeneous spectra of approaches we have divided the collection into two broad sections. Part I engages with transnational cinema and identities, while Part II examines specific cinematic practices and contexts.

Part I, "Transnational Cinemas and Identities," opens with William Brown's "Lost in Transnation," a chapter that works to problematise the concept of "transnational" and its growing utilisation within both film studies and industries alike. Using the examples of Hollywood and Iranian cinemas, among others, Brown demonstrates some of the arbitrary problems in employing the term indiscriminately or within an unconsciously privileged context. The chapter argues that there appear multiple ways in which a film might be "transnational," so much so in fact, that we run the risk of rendering the term meaningless if we are not careful to explain—in each and every context—what *type* of "transnationality" a specific film exhibits. Brown argues that the need to do this involves correctly identifying the precise circumstances of each film through considering who finance it, who make it, what issues ("transnational" or otherwise) the film deals with, and how it has performed and been received in different cultural and commercial contexts.

In "Cultural Specificity and Cross-cultural Analysis," Hui Miao offers a culturally/historically specific cross-cultural analytical approach to Chen Kaige's *Ba Wang Bie Ji/Farewell My Concubine* (China/Hong Kong, 1993). Acknowledging the inherent geopolitical qualities of the film with an international audience in mind, the chapter highlights how Chen's film in effect distinguishes the local audience as a privileged hermeneutic community whilst facilitating a state of internal dialogue and differentiating those within from without through marking who partakes in a shared history. Rather than justifying a cultural determinism, the author's intention here is to highlight the dangers of scholars adopting Western models of subjectivity when analysing films from the cultures.

Sarah Gilligan's "Get Me an Exit: Mobile Phones and Transforming Masculinity in *The Matrix* Trilogy" examines *The Matrix* trilogy (The Wachowski brothers, Australia/USA, 1999/2003/2003) and intertextual promotional discourses surrounding the films. The chapter examines the ways in which mobile phones are promoted within and outside the texts to construct and enable (predominantly male) spectatorial fantasies of a transformation and transcendence of the ordinary. Here we find a "shop window" cinema intercepting capitalistic ideological forces through utilising contemporary, fashionable gadgets within the diegesis to transport characters between "authentic" and "inauthentic" worlds. These gadgets are also found to play significant roles in the construction, representation and performance of masculinity and signal a collapse between the fantastical imaginary universe of sci-fi and the contemporary reality of the audiences. As trans-media texts incorporating global brands such as Nokia and Samsung, the films ostensibly link the branded lifestyle and ideological position of the characters with fashionable new technologies. The mobile phone is thus invested with meaning not in terms of "use value," but rather as a status and a lifestyle commodity that enables a point of entry into a highly aspirational (yet fictional), slick and stylish world.

Lars Kristensen examines the work of Sergei Bodrov as one of Russia's most influential film-makers in the post-Communist era in "Home and Away: Sergei Bodrov and Transnational Film-making." On account of Bodrov's film *Mongol* (Kazakhstan/Russia/Mongolia/Germany, 2007) being chosen to represent Kazakhstan, and not Russia at the 2008 Oscars, however, Kristensen problematises the director's exclusive links with Russian cinema. Even though Bodrov's works typically remain tied to his Russian homeland, Kristensen argues that the director constitutes a post-Communist *transnational* film-maker working across a multiplicity of national boundaries. Thus, over and above, Bodrov being a film-maker is found taking advantage of a series of opportunities that come his way. The themes of Russia and Russianness that define his works serve to illuminate Bodrov as an *auteur* working within the realms of transnational co-productions.

In "The National Cinema versus the Co-production: Intangible Transnational Practices in Recent South Korean Cinema," Miriam Ross engages with South Korean cinema entering the global sphere of audiovisual circulation at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Ross attempts to complicate the taken-for-granted view that these films are the straightforward products of a "national cinema." Such a view originally stems from Anglo-American/European discourses that dominate discussions upon international films. To counter this Ross examines the extent to which these films are often co-produced by South Korea with other nations in transnational film-making practices. This allows a reconciliation of the concepts of an authoritative "national cinema" with transnational processes that employ various types of international collaborations. In considering the manner in which South Korean films are received in overseas markets, Ross helps enlighten our understanding of transnational cinematic practices in which South Korea gets involved. Combining these elements throughout serves to develop a concept of transnational film practice that goes beyond simple "border-crossing" projects.

Mary Ainslie examines the Thai film industry as one of the fastest growing in South-East Asia in "The Monstrous Chinese 'Other' in the Thai Horror Movie *Zee-Oui*." Here, the "New Thai Cinema" is interrogated as a product of a new bourgeois urban spectatorship that transformed "the urban cinema from a den of teenage angst" to a new space that increasingly aimed to offer audiences the "pleasure of remembrance." Ainslie works from the premise that the transformation of Thai cinema can be most productively explored through the recent incarnations of the ever-popular horror genre. This serves to illustrate the way in which the depiction of its central Chinese character as a monstrous "other" has been deliberately tailored by film-makers to serve the various social discourses relevant to the changing context. The disturbing depiction of "otherness" in the form of monstrous Chineseness is linked to the pursuit of "authenticity" and "nostalgia" associated with true Thainess. Ironically and paradoxically this signals a diachronic departure from earlier progressive movements towards an ethnically diverse modern Thailand to a range of xenophobic and threatening stereotypes.

In "Building up Asian Identity: The Pusan International Film Festival in South Korea," SooJeong Ahn engages with the growing interest and importance of film festivals as a topic within discourses of World Cinema in Film Studies, but critiques modern academics' practices of privileging high profile European festivals, such as Cannes, Venice and Berlin. Ahn attempts to counter this scholarly bias through examining the different social and cultural contexts of non-Western film festivals, paying particular attention to the Pusan International Film Festival (PIFF) in South Korea. Since its inception in 1996, the Pusan festival has remained the single most significant event for showcasing Asian cinema. Specifically, this chapter focuses upon Pusan's Asian programming in order to illustrate the festival's ambition to be both a critical and an industrial hub for Asian cinemas. The vital role of the festival is related to its attempts of uniting national and regional film industries, and is examined as a first step towards charting the unexplored roles that such a festival plays in the global film economy.

Part II, "Spatial and Temporal Identity Negotiations," opens with Jack Newsinger's "Identity Policies: Regional Film Policy and Regional Identity in England." The chapter examines developments in regional identities and regional film policy in England from its origins in the 1960s through to the heyday of the regional Film Workshop Movement of the 1980s. Newsinger discusses the construction of regional identity within this movement by conducting a case study of the first and most active regional Film Workshop, Amber Films. Exploring the negotiations between policy and practice that have helped to construct and develop a range of regional identities in British cinema, Newsinger engages with the so-called "centre-periphery" tension in British cinema and examines the status of the English regions as the site of a "more" indigenous, authentic and socially responsive cinema. Here the regions have a progressive status: That of a more authentic, democratic and socially responsive cinema, less tarnished than the "centre" by the derogatory connotations of commercialism and mystification associated with the mass culture debate.

In "'Scottish' Screen? Exploring the Role of National Identity in Scotland's Screen Agency," Lynne Hibberd examines how the promotion of Scottish national culture has become a key feature of the Scottish Executive's policies since the devolution in 1999. Hibberd investigates the role that these policies have played in Scotland's screen agency, "Scottish Screen." This chapter argues that in the early years of devolution, film policy in Scotland was geared towards supporting film which could serve a cultural remit—promoting Scottish identity; or an economic role—bringing inward investment into the country. Being a national agency in a newly devolved nation Scottish Screen's remit has been complicated by performing both as an agency concerned with screen industries, and the cultural and commercial impact of film. Connecting film policy with film practice, Hibberd studies the manner in which national identity is appropriated, used, claimed and made visible in the Scottish Screen-financed *Red Road* (Andrea Arnold, UK, 2006).

Stefano Baschiera examines how the idea of "home" functions in contemporary cinema in "Beyond the Home: Domestic Space and Identity in the Cinema of the Coen Brothers." Baschiera engages with the changes and gradual renegotiation of the concept of "home" from a traditional shelter and a safe haven where the family defines, protects and perpetuates itself (and its own history). Examining the historical context of post World War II period and the ensuing Cold War, Baschiera considers how neorealist films of Italy through to modern European cinema continually demonstrate how homes lost their traditional association with family history and their function as a protection zone safe from the external world. Baschiera thus examines a perceived identity crisis that has become simultaneously national, personal, and domestic, and demonstrates how cinema has become the privileged medium for engaging with these changing trends.

In "Signifying Identity: American Landscape and the Ordinary-life Hero in *The Straight Story*," Gracia Ramírez engages with David Lynch's *The Straight Story* (France/UK/USA, 1999) which formulates a film often regarded as an anomaly within the director's idiosyncratic oeuvre. In this "uncomplicated" narrative focusing upon a righteous, everyday hero, Ramírez looks beyond the film's facile portrayal of the Midwest and its townspeople to examine the moral striving that pervades the character. In this manner Ramírez attempts to demonstrate how *The Straight Story*'s hero is endowed with a conditioned existence that is communicated through the use of images associated with Romanticism and Regionalism. These ultimately serve to amend certain essentialist notions of the American identity. The chapter argues that although the main protagonist's solitude and embrace of nature work to evoke a search for transcendence, the film ultimately examines a greater sense of an unknowable universe and human mind.

In "The 'Pill-films' of Alejandro Jodorowsky: Expanding the Head-film into the Cinematic Body," D. H. Fleming aims to open up a philosophical and aesthetic investigation into the 1970s films of the "nomadic," cult film-maker Alejandro Jodorowsky. Beginning with an examination into the director's own deterritorialised, existential outlooks, Fleming uses these insights to shed light upon the unconventional character constructions within *El Topo* (Mexico, 1970) and *La Montaña Sagrada/The Holy Mountain* (USA/Mexico, 1973). Textual analysis serves to unearth unusual ontological models underpinning and informing the construction of the films' protagonists. Here, a new concept of identity emerges which appears fluidly open to outside agents, forces, and powers of affection. Consequently the stable concept of subject or being is replaced by that of "becoming." The films are also considered in relation to their original production and screening contexts to illuminate how their exploration of new identity paradigms (and metaphysical outlooks) and aesthetic regimes were relevant to both their audience and time.

Christina Bruns studies recent dynamic changes in German cinema in "Defamiliarising the Familiar: Regional and Rural Identities in Contemporary German Documentary Cinema." Changing trends are illuminated through a cinema not only made in Germany but ostensibly all about Germany. Because the "national" approach to film often fails to take note of the region and its importance within the larger national framework, Bruns chooses to examine the growing popularity of regional and rural identities in German documentary films that have so far avoided any academic discussions. This chapter attempts to understand these developments through considering a range of texts that demonstrate parallels and similarities in their depictions and representations of contemporary regional and rural identities.

In "A True Goddess": Irene Papas and the Representation of Greekness," Olga Kourelou examines the specificity of Papas' star persona as it is constructed in the screen adaptations of classical drama. Through close textual analysis Kourelou investigates some of the major elements that constitute Papas' star image and considers how they have helped

Papas to emerge as the perfect image of Greece and, by extension, Western civilisation. Apart from Papas' "classical looks," the star is also found to cultivate an image that has become comparable to the wild landscape around her. Papas' persona is thus examined in relation to the historical and cultural background of 1960s Greece and considered within the Euro-American cinematic and cultural contexts in which her image circulated. By discussing Papas' persona in relation to both classical Greek art, and Greek and European modernism, Kourelou examines how Papas' image has become synonymous with attributes such as "goddess" and how this resonates with values of high art in Western culture. Through particular reference to the film *Ilektra/Electra* (Mihalis Kakogiannis, Greece/USA, 1962) Kourelou demonstrates how discourses about national identity and culture help inform and define a star's persona.

In "Always on the Move: Identity in Wong Kar-wai's *Days of Being Wild*," Ruby Cheung renders a diasporic reading of Wong's film through the narrative, narrative structure and character development. Informed by Hamid Naficy's "accented cinema" paradigm, Cheung argues that *Days of Being Wild* provides a convincing example of accented film, wherein Wong mobilises six different characters to embody and project a view from the perspective of a diasporic Shanghainese living in the Cantonese Hong Kong; and as a diasporic Chinese facing the decision of staying behind or going away as the 1997 Handover was approaching. In the sense of accentedness in film, Wong is found to cultivate a sombre mood that reflects the sadness, distress and rootlessness of the people and place the film represents.

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PART I:

TRANSNATIONAL CINEMAS AND IDENTITIES

CHAPTER ONE

LOST IN TRANSNATION

WILLIAM BROWN

This chapter falls into two parts. The intention of the first half is to raise tentative questions about the politics of the transnational as the concept has been defined within film studies. That is, the chapter understands the need for the concept of the transnational in film studies, but feels that there are potential shortcomings with the term as it is commonly used in academia. As such, the chapter posits (at least) two different types of "transnationality" within cinema: One born of *necessity* (film-makers who must work within the transnational context in order to be able to make films), which can be opposed to a transnationality enjoyed as a *privilege* (typically, Western backers investing in film-makers in developing nations, with all of the issues that this raises of exoticising otherness and cultural imperialism). The chapter then questions the political role that academia itself plays in determining the meaning of the transnational and of films themselves, suggesting that academia, too, might unthinkingly enjoy its position of privilege in defining concepts such as the transnational and in defining film-texts themselves. For, this chapter views these two types of transnational cinema as emblematic of two sides in *nothing less than* a globalised war for visibility on the world's cinema (and other media?) screens, one in which academia can play an important role. For this reason, the second half of the chapter looks at the transnational aspects of Hollywood cinema in order to establish how layers of privilege might emerge, whereby the first world (Hollywood and its "allies") stands in opposition to the second and third worlds (non-mainstream American, European, and Third World film-makers), and how we academics must be careful to pick apart how and why creative and commercial alliances take place across these layers of cinematic production so as better to understand the meaning of such agreements in what we might term a world war of cinema.

What is Transnational Cinema?

The term transnational, as applied to cinema, appeared as a response to perceived limitations in the study of national cinemas (although, as has been pointed out and as we shall see, transnational cinema relies on a continuing history of nations to exist at all; see Ezra and Rowden [2006]). With the onset of globalisation (and in the aftermath of what we might term, after Fredric Jameson [1986], an age of multinational capitalism), the analysis of films as products of a specific national industry and/or cultural context seemed insufficient, not least because many films today involve cast, crew, and financial backers of diverse nationalities. Many contemporary films also deal directly with issues of cultural identity. They explore the questions raised by diasporic communities, or feature protagonists in exile (voluntary or otherwise) from their nation of origin, protagonists who have a national identity but no state, "minority" cultures within a nation-state, protagonists whose identity comprises elements from various nation-states (hybrid identities), protagonists who travel (for work, for pleasure, or out of necessity) across various nation-states, and/or, quite simply, protagonists whose nation-state finds itself influenced (whether positively or negatively) by foreign forces (economic, political, cultural, military). In other words, many contemporary films deal with the very issue of trying to define a or any national identity in the context of a "globalised" world that is characterised by economic, cultural and political exchange across all borders and boundaries, exchange that is enabled in no small part by media channels and networks (including cinema itself). In addition, the "transnational" exhibition and reception of a film (at festivals, via foreign theatrical distribution, video/DVD sales, television/cable, online, etc.)—and the changing "meaning" that a film will have depending on the cultural and technological context in which it is exhibited, as well as on the identity (hybrid or otherwise) of the spectator herself—truly does help to underline how limiting and limited the study of film can be when using national paradigms (Higson 2000).

As a tool used to critique the "nationalist" approach to cinema, the concept of the transnational has proven most useful. However, "transnational" also engenders many problems when applied to film studies, for the term is vague and general, as the list of possible "types" of transnational films above is supposed to exemplify. In fact, there are endless possible ways in which a film might be "transnational," and the term runs the risk of becoming meaningless if we are not careful to explain—in each and every context—what *type* of "transnationality" a specific film exhibits. The need to do this involves correctly identifying the precise details of a film: Who financed it, who made it, what issues ("transnational" or otherwise) the film deals with, and how it has performed and been received in different cultural and commercial contexts. This in itself is no mean task, rendering the interpretation of a single film a job that could keep a scholar occupied for some time. If a film is, say, a Mexican, French, Dutch and German co-production, which is filmed and set in Mexico, but featuring characters speaking Plautdietsch (as is the case for Carlos Reygadas' recent *Stellet Licht/Silent Light*, France/Germany/Mexico/Netherlands, 2007), then it will take some time to identify and to interpret the different political/cultural issues that such a film raises (regardless of the film's "universal" content—themes of love, philosophy, religion, etc.). If a film is a Senegalese, French, Burkinabé, Cameroonian, Moroccan and Tunisian co-production, directed by a Senegalese film-maker, but shot and set in Burkina Faso (the late Ousmane Sembène's 2004 film, *Moolaadé*), then, again, the sheer complexity of such a production will require time to negotiate (for more on similar issues, see Roberts [1998]).

Furthermore, production and reception histories are not the only tasks that a scholar should undertake when studying a certain film in the context of its "transnationality." As Mette Hjort (2007) has pointed out, there are other, *qualitative* distinctions that a scholar might make: Is a film an international co-production out of necessity or opportunity? As Stephen Crofts (2000) might put it, given the limited funds available in large parts of the world, it makes sense for a film-maker like Abderrahmane Sissako (who was born in Mauritania, who grew up in Mali, and who was educated at VGIK in Moscow) to seek and to find funding from diverse sources (2006's *Bamako* is a Malian-American-French co-production). But it may be for more "cynical" reasons (the desire to exploit various national markets) that a French company like Europa Corp (headed by Luc Besson) makes a French-Mexican-American co-production (*Bandidas*, directed by Joachim Roenning and Espen Sandberg in 2006), a French-Japanese co-production (*Wasabi*, directed by Gérward Krawczyk in 2001), or a French-American co-production (*The Transporter*, directed by Louis Leterrier and Cory Yuen in 2002).

In other words, transnational cinema is a necessity for some (if making films can be deemed a necessity), and a privilege for others. Given the time required for and the potentially inexhaustible complexity of defining precisely a film's "transnationality" (and defining why doing so is important for our understanding of the film as an object of scholarship), scholars must judge which films are worthy of attention—because we do not have time to turn our attention to each and every film. A film dealing