Redefining cinema: international and avant-garde alternatives

1

Concepts of national cinema

Stephen Crofts

Prior to the 1980s critical writings on cinema adopted common-sense notions of national cinema. The idea of national cinema has long informed the promotion of non-Hollywood cinemas. Along with the name of the director-auteur, it has served as a means by which non-Hollywood films—most commonly art films—have been labelled, distributed, and reviewed. As a marketing strategy, these national labels have promised varieties of 'otherness'—of what is culturally different from both Hollywood and the films of other importing countries. The heyday of art cinema's 'new waves' coincided with the rise of anglophone film-book publishing in the mid-1960s. Later, 1960s radical politics extended the range of territories covered to those engaged in post-colonial struggles. The ideas of a national cinema underpinning most of these studies remained largely unproblematic until the 1980s, since which time they have grown markedly more complex. Prior to this period, ideas of national cinema tended to focus only on film texts produced within the territory concerned while ideas of the nation-state were conceived primarily in essentialist, albeit if in sometimes anti-imperialist, terms.

Problematizing the nation-state

Key publications in the rethinking of the nation-state and nationalism have been Anderson (1983), Gellner (1983), Hobsbawm (1990), Smith (1991), and Hutchinson (1994). These have all advanced non-essentialist conceptions of the nation-state and national identity, arguing for both the constructedness of the 'imagined community' (Anderson) which constitutes the nation-state, and its historical limits as a post-Enlightenment organizer of populations, affected particularly by the huge migrations and diasporas resulting from post-

Second World War processes of decolonization. Such ideas have informed recent accounts of national cinemas which seek to resist the homogenizing fictions of nationalism and to recognize their historical variability and contingency, as well as the cultural hybridity of nation-states (so that US culture, for example, is seen to be a part of most 'national' cultures and to interact with them). In Philip Rosen's words, 'identifying the . . . coherences [of] a "national cinema" [and] of a nation . . . will always require sensitivity to the countervailing, dispersive forces underlying them' (1984: 71).

Historically, the 1980s and 1990s have put further pressure on the national, with the global spread of corporate capital, the victory of finance over industrial capital, the consolidation of global markets, the speed and range of electronic communications, and the further weakening of national cultural and economic boundaries which has followed the disintegration of Soviet communism and Pax Americana. Half a century after 1945 it is difficult to imagine a nation-state retaining the congruence of polity, culture, and economy which characterized most nation-states before then. Arjun Appadurai's (1990) model for accounting for these developments emphasizes the deterritorialized character of the supranational imagined communities which displace those of the nation-state. He pinpoints the accelerating transnational flows of people (tourists, immigrants, exiles, refugees, guest workers), of technology (mechanical and informational), of finance and media images (all moving ever faster through increasingly deregulated markets), and of ideologies (such as the global spread of Western rhetorics of democracy), and the disjunctions amongst these flows: 'people, machinery, money, images and ideas now follow increasingly non-isomorphic paths . . . the sheer speed, scale and volume of each of these flows is now so great that the disjunctures [rather than overlaps] have become central to the politics of global culture' (1990: 297–301).

This conceptualization of the post-national does, however, have weaknesses. Shohat and Stam (1994) note that 'discernible patterns of domination channel the "fluidities" even of a "multipolar" world; the same hegemony[ies] that unifies[y] the world through global networks of circulating goods and information also distribute[s] them according to hierarchical structures of power, even if those hegemonies are now more subtle and dispersed' (1994: 31). Nevertheless, Appa-

durai's model has many implications for the study of national cinemas, some taken up later, some now. One consequence of the disjunctive relationships he identifies 'is that the state and the nation are at each other's throats' (1990: 304). The former Yugoslavia—with its five nations, three religions, four languages, and two alphabets—stands as a grim emblem of the historical role of the state in suppressing ethnic, religious, and cultural differences. In view of the growing lack of congruence between nations and states, I therefore propose to write of states and nation-state cinemas rather than nations and national cinemas, while clearly differentiating states within a *federal* system, and without of course collapsing all into totalitarian states.

Problematizing nation-state cinema studies: categories of analysis

Nation-state (or 'national') cinema studies until the 1980s focused almost exclusively on the film texts produced within the territory, sometimes seeing these—in a reflectionist manner—as expressions of a putative national spirit. Typically, a historical survey would construct its chosen films as aesthetically great works (usually seen as made by great directors) and as great moments (the longest film, most expensive film, and so on). Such studies rarely analysed the industrial factors enabling the films to be produced.

Since the 1980s new categories of analysis have begun to emerge. A number of these are summarized in Andrew Higson's 'The Concept of National Cinema' (1989), one of the first general considerations of nation-state cinema, based on generalizations around the British case. Higson argues that nation-state cinemas should be defined not only in terms of 'the films produced by and within a particular nation state', but also in terms of distribution and exhibition, audiences, and critical and cultural discourses. Textual and generic questions, however, are strange lacunae in his (industrially oriented) account; for texts do, after all, mediate between exhibition and audiences. The factors which analyses of nation-state cinemas involve, therefore, may be identified as follows:

Production. David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson's monumental *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* (1985) redresses the lack of attention to the industrial which has been characteristic of film studies. They reject any simple reflectionist thesis of text–

context relations and argue how the economic, technological, and ideological factors affecting Hollywood production act as mutually interacting determinations which are irreducible to one another (Lapsley and Westlake 1988: 117). Hollywood's mode of film practice, they conclude, 'consists of a set of widely held stylistic norms sustained by and sustaining an integral mode of film production' (Bordwell et al. 1985, p. xiv). Most subsequent analyses of production have adopted a similarly post-Althusserian model. Crisp's (1993) account of the production of French cinema between 1930 and 1960, for example, develops the Americans' mode of analysis, breaking down the heading of production into various components: political economy and industrial structure, plant and technology, personnel and their training, discursive endeavours to form audiences, authorial control in relation to the mode of production, and work practices and stylistic change.

Distribution and exhibition (these two are taken together because of their virtual interconnectedness). Higson argues that categories of analysis of nation-state cinemas should include 'the range of films in circulation within a nation-state' (1989: 44). One of the few analyses of imported films and their audiences is Paul Swann's *The Hollywood Feature Film in Postwar Britain* (1987), but attention towards 'imported' cinemas is becoming more common in nation-state cinema studies as in Thomas Elsaesser's *New German Cinema* (1989). Given Higson's concern that nation-state cinemas should not be defined solely in terms of production, it is fair to note that many states actually have no production industry. Poor states, especially in Africa, cannot afford it unless, like Burkina Faso—one of the world's most impoverished states—foreign funding sustains an art cinema offering exotic representations to foreign audiences. Some states principally watch films in a language they share with other states, for instance Tunisia and Uruguay. Other states, such as in South Asia and the South Pacific, have no audiovisual production and no cinemas, but do have flourishing video distribution.

Audiences. This remains an under-researched category. It is arguably to the benefit of film studies that it has not followed media studies in its massive investment in empirical audience research. Film studies has thus largely avoided the latter's effective collusion with global consumerisms since the 1980s (see Willemen 1987*b*). Largely, but not entirely: see John Hill's critique of Higson's willingness to allow Hollywood's popularity in Britain 'to blur the arguments for film *production*

which is specifically British rather than North American' (1992: 13–14). Unlike the approach to the audience in media studies, however, nation-state cinema studies has in the main analysed audiences in terms of box-office statistics. Discussion of audiences has been particularly significant in studies analysing the problems which locally produced cinemas experience when faced with transnational domination by Hollywood (Hill 1994), or in sustaining an indigenous 'art cinema' as in Elsaesser's (1989) analysis of the audience desperately sought by the state-funded practitioners of the New German Cinema.

Discourses. The discourses in circulation about film, as well as wider cultural discourses in the nation-state, clearly affect industry and audiences, and also inform—and are articulated within—film texts. Given cultural hybridity, these will of necessity include foreign-originated ideas. Hence, since the 1980s nation-state cinema studies have less commonly treated films as objects for the exercise of aesthetic judgement than as instances of (national-)cultural discourses. Hill (1986), for example, analyses British cinema's ideological articulations—and repressions—of class, gender, youth, consumerism, and related categories in films from the period 1956–63. Marsha Kinder's (1993) account of Spanish cinema gives central attention to 'its distinctive cultural reinscription of the Oedipal narrative, that is, the way Oedipal conflicts within the family were used to speak about political issues and historical events that were repressed from filmic representation during the Francoist era and the way they continue to be used with even greater flamboyance in the post-Franco period after censorship and repression had been abolished' (1993: 197–8). In a similar vein, some scholars have adopted the idea of a national or social imaginary (Elsaesser 1980; Dermody and Jacka 1988: 15–23).

Textuality. Rather than see nation-state cinemas in terms of 'great works', writers have increasingly identified systems of textual conventions, principally generic ones, as characterizing 'national' cinema. Dermody and Jacka, for example, employ a quasi-generic taxonomy to identify the 'aesthetic force-field' of Australian cinema between 1970 and 1986. Genres, in this respect, are seen less in industrial terms than as codifications of socio-cultural tendencies.

National-cultural specificity. National-cultural specificity may be differentiated from both nationalism, and definitions of national identity. As Paul Willemen argues: 'The specificity of a cultural formation may be

Antonio das mortes (1969)—Latin American counter-cinema

marked by the presence but also by the absence of preoccupations with national identity . . . the discourses of nationalism and those addressing or comprising national specificity are not identical . . . the construction of national specificity in fact encompasses and governs the articulation of both national identity and nationalist discourses' (1994: 210). Nationally specific cinema, then, is not bound to the homogenizing myths of nationalism and national identity. Hill uses Willemen's example of black British cinema to illustrate the point, arguing how such films display a 'sensitivity to social differences (of ethnicity, class, gender and sexual orientation) within an identifiably and specifically British context' (Hill 1992: 16) and that this is strikingly different from the nationalistically 'successful . . . marketing and packaging [of] the national literary heritage, the war years, the countryside, the upper classes and elite education' noted by Elsaesser (1984: 208) as characterizing dominant British cinema. In contrast, the international co-production can often be seen to erase cultural specificity: as Geoffrey Nowell-Smith observes of *Last Tango in Paris* (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1972), it 'had no nationality in a meaningful sense at all' (1985: 154).

The cultural specificity of genres and nation-state cinema 'movements'. A nation-state cinema's capacity to produce culturally specific genres depends on whether it can sustain production in sufficient volume to support the requisite infrastructures and audience familiarity; on the power of its local cultural traditions; and on how strongly these are articulated by film relative to other artistic practices. The generation and/or survival of local genres has been a gauge of the strength and dynamism of nation-state cinemas, but this may be less so in the 1990s as genres diversify, fragment, and recombine. Local cultural traditions and their articulation through film rather than other artistic practices have likewise underpinned the best-known nation-state cinema 'movements'. These have frequently arisen at historical moments when nationalism connects with genuinely populist movements to produce specifically national films that can claim a cultural authenticity or rootedness (Crofts 1993). Some of these—Italian Neo-Realism, Latin American Third Cinema, and Fifth Generation Chinese Cinema—arose on the crest of waves of national-popular resurgence. The French Nouvelle Vague marked a national intellectual and cultural recovery in the making since the late 1940s. However, cultural hybridity is often a characteristic as well. As Kinder (1993: 6) notes, such movements regularly borrow from elsewhere formal 'conventions to be adapted to the [importers'] own cultural specificity': Italian Neo-Realism from French poetic realism, the Nouvelle Vague from Hollywood and Rossellini, the Fifth Generation from Chinese and foreign painting traditions.

The role of the state. The idea of nation-state cinema needs to be conceptualized in terms not only of the categories above, but also of the state's own involvement. The state retains a pivotal role. For all the much-vaunted 'disintegration' and/or 'supersession' of the state under the forces of globalization and cyber-hype, and alongside the more realistic recognition of its fragmentation under sub- and suprastate pressures, it is still state policies and legislation (or lack of them) which substantially regulate and control film subsidies, tariff constraints, industrial assistance, copyright and licensing arrangements, censorship, training institutions, and so on. Individual states desiring to restrict Hollywood imports, for instance, do at the least have the power to decide whether or not they *want* to risk a trade war, as can be seen in the case of South Korea in 1990, when it battled with the Motion Picture Export Association of America to reduce Hollywood imports to roughly 5 per cent per year (Lent 1990: 122–3).

The global range of nation-state cinemas. In an argument also applicable to film, Geoffrey Hartman argues that every literary theory is 'based on experience of a limited canon or generalised strongly from a particular text/milieu' (1979: 507). In a similar fashion I have argued previously that '[f]ilm scholars' mental maps of world film production are often less than global . . . Sadoul (1962), informed by French colonialism, knows more of African cinema than of Latin American,

while an American scholar, informed by the US imperium and substantial Hispanic immigration, knows more of Latin American cinema than of African cinema' (Crofts 1993: 60–1). Such limited understandings of the cross-cultural have severe implications for canon formation as well as for global politics. Even in 1962 Sadoul took note that Third World production was more plentiful than North American and European combined (1962: 530–1). It is this global range of nation-state cinemas that the following section aims to cover.

Varieties of nation-state cinema production

Table 1 presents a model for differentiating types of nation-state cinema that takes into account the three main industrial categories of production, distribution and exhibition, and audiences as well as those of textuality and national representation (this account distils and substantially reworks Crofts 1993: 50–7). As in most taxonomies, these varieties of nation-state cinema are highly permeable. Individual films can be cross-bred between different varieties. And a given state may host different varieties by sustaining different modes of production, most commonly the industrial and cultural modes. Moreover, the export of a given text may shift its variety, as in the common recy-

TABLE 1. **EIGHT VARIETIES OF NATION-STATE CINEMA PRODUCTION**

	Mode of production as regulated and controlled by the state			
	Minimal ('market economy')	Mixed economy	Maximal, centrally controlled economy	Other or outside state provision
Industrial	1. United States cinemas 2. Asian commercial successes	3. Other entertainment cinemas	4. Totalitarian cinemas	
Cultural	5. Art cinemas:			
	American art	Art 6. International co-productions	Art for socialist export	
Political (anti-state)				7. Third Cinemas 8. Sub-state cinemas

cling of films from Third and totalitarian cinemas as art cinema.

The eight varieties of nation-state cinema shown in the table can be briefly summarized as follows:

1. *United States cinema.* This is covered in Part 2 of this volume. It is so called to include the recent medium-budget 'independent' films associated with, say, the Sundance Institute as well as Hollywood. Hollywood's domination of world film markets since as early as 1919 is so well known (Guback 1976; Thompson 1985) that Western nation-state cinemas are habitually defined against Hollywood. It is hardly ever spoken of as a national cinema, perhaps because of its transnational reach. This has been further consolidated since the 1980s by its increased domination of West European screens, and the substantial inroads it has made into East European and other new markets.

2. *Asian commercial successes.* With large domestic and reliable export markets, Indian and Hong Kong cinemas can afford to ignore Hollywood, while Japanese production sometimes outstrips Hollywood imports at the local box-office (Lent 1990: 47).

3. *Other entertainment cinemas.* These include European and Third World commercial cinemas which adopt genres such as melodrama, thriller, and comedy. They customarily depend more on private than state investment, but mostly fail to dominate their local markets (except in rare cases such as Egypt, which supplies other Arab states). This variety of nation-state cinema includes anglophone (Australian, Canadian) imitations of US cinema and Bangladeshi imitations of Indian cinemas.

4. *Totalitarian cinemas.* These include those of fascist Germany and Italy, communist China, and the Stalinist regimes of the Soviet bloc.

5. *Art cinemas.* These vary somewhat in the sourcing of their finances, and in their textual characteristics. Bordwell (1979, 1985) describes the textual characteristics of art cinema in their heyday and Smith (Part 3, Chapter 2) summarizes its features.

6. *International co-productions.* Like offshore productions, these films exemplify the mobility of capital and personnel, as well as the international merging of media images noted by Appadurai (1990) above.

7. *Third Cinemas.* This term originally referred to the anti-imperialist cinemas of Latin America, but its definition has been expanded, especially by Willemen, to cover films with 'a historically analytic yet culturally specific mode of cinematic discourse' (1987a: 8). Directors such as the Indian Mrinal Sen, the Filipino Kidlat Tahimik, the Africans Ousmane Sembene and Souleymane Cissé, as well as black British filmmakers have been included in this category (Pines and Willemen 1989).

8. *Sub-state cinemas.* These may be defined ethnically in terms of suppressed, indigenous, diasporic, or other populations asserting their civil rights and giving expression to a distinctive religion, language, or regional culture. Catalan, Québecois, Aboriginal, Chicano, and Welsh cinemas are examples.

While the categories of state regulation and control on the horizontal axis of Table 1 are self-explanatory, the three modes of production may require some clarification. The industrial mode is that which characterizes Hollywood and applies similarly to the Hong Kong and Indian industries. The cultural mode of production is distinguished from Hollywood by state legislation overtly supporting production subsidy— increasingly via television—and quotas and/or tariffs on imported films. In its anti-state politics, the political mode of production is characterized by artisanal modes of filmmaking, and in its purest form—for example, *Hour of the Furnaces* (Argentina, 1969)—is conducted clandestinely and at risk to the film workers involved.

Under its two axes, Table 1 subsumes nine categories analysable in nation-state film industries. These allow us to expand upon the categories of analysis described in the preceding section:

(a) Mode of production effectively subsumes:

(b) the mode of audience address targeted through distribution and exhibition of texts of the mode of production involved; and

(c) the kinds of genre which it typically produces. Similarly, state regulation of production and distribution–exhibition comprises the following three categories:

(d) state subvention and regulation or control of production (or not);

(e) state intervention in and regulation or control of distribution and exhibition (or not)—in the case of the 'free market' option, the lack of regulation is nevertheless an active state policy decision; and

(f) the implicitly or explicitly nationalist, or indeed anti-nationalist representations—if any (for, as seen above, there need be none)—encouraged by the mode of production concerned.

Three further categories, concerning audiences, are implicit in the table and will be explicated below:

(g) the success or otherwise of the variety of state cinema within its local market;

(h) its success in exporting to other territories; and

(i) the range of competing entertainment forms available within the state concerned.

Under the industrial mode of production there is an almost complete correlation between categories (a) to (c): between, that is, the industrial mode of production, entertainment modes of address in distribution and exhibition, and entertainment genres, with the inflexion of the entertainment mode of address towards the didactic in the case of totalitarian mode. Similarly, there is a strong correlation between the cultural mode of production, the modes of address of the art film—to the cultured, film-literate viewer—which characterizes art cinemas' distribution and exhibition channels, and art film genres. The bulk of international co-productions also conform to these criteria, with the main exceptions being the higher-budget samples of 'Euro-pudding'. Much as the political mode of original Third Cinema production is clandestine, fugitive, and makeshift, so its politicized mode of address endangers its target audiences, and its typically agit-prop documentary genres serve its anti-state politics. Later versions of Third Cinema are less life-threatening. With variable production levels and degrees of access to mainstream distribution and exhibition, the substate cinemas are also instances of this mode of production but are less co-ordinated in their strategies of production, mode of address, and genre.

The horizontal dimension covers categories (d) to (f): state regulation and intervention in the sectors of production and distribution and exhibition, and the explicit or implicit nationalisms advanced by the cinemas involved. Most varieties of state film production exhibit a strong correlation between these three categories. The minimal government subsidy to production which characterizes Hollywood, Asian commercial successes, and to a lesser extent other entertainment cinemas finds echoes in the general lack of intervention in the distribution and exhibition sectors in the territories involved, and in the usually implicit forms that any nationalistic representations adopt. This contrasts with totalitarian cinemas, whose states control production—with the exceptions of fascist Italy and pre-1938 Nazi Germany—and which intervene strenuously in distribution and exhibition with censorship scrutiny of local and foreign product, and which urge expressly, and usually explicitly, nationalistic representations.

The most familiar art cinemas (i.e. of the European model) differ again in that while their production depends largely on state subsidy, their distribution and exhibition operates largely *without* state intervention (post-Second World War France being the conspicuous exception) and their representations are aesthetically constructed before they are nationalistic. American art cinema differs in the lack of state production support, while socialist states subsidize their art cinemas in both production and export distribution. International co-productions function in the same way as art cinemas, except that any nationalisms may disappear in the bland mix (while those of the Fifth Generation Chinese Cinema post-Tiananmen seriously *question* the nationalisms of the People's Republic of China). Original Third Cinema enjoys state support for neither production nor distribution, and its practitioners would argue that their states' abuse of freedoms of speech and assembly justify—indeed necessitate—its anti-state representations. Later versions enjoy less brutal, if still less than comfortable, state patronage. Third Cinema representations overlap with substate cinemas' interests in regions, ethnicities, religions, and/or languages which are non-hegemonic within the state. These latter rarely benefit from state support in production or distribution and exhibition unless from states within a federal system such as the Québecois.

Audiences, conceived in box-office terms, figure under headings (g)–(i): the films in predominant circulation in the state concerned, the success or otherwise of its exports, and the range and popularity of competing entertainment forms available within the state concerned. The last of these is a factor for consideration in nation-state cinema studies. As regards the first two,

nation-state cinemas can be categorized as net impor- ters and net exporters. Hollywood, Indian, Hong Kong, and big totalitarian cinemas dominate their local mar- kets, through market and/or regulatory means, and garner varying degrees of additional revenue from foreign markets. Smaller totalitarian cinemas (the Soviet Union's European satellite states) and the other five varieties of nation-state cinema production fight over the remainder, their principal enemy being Holly- wood, which dominates most anglophone markets and exerts considerable influence through the United States' world-wide strategic, economic, and cultural links. Indian and Hong Kong cinemas export to their ethnic diasporas, Hong Kong also throughout East Asia, and big totalitarian cinemas to their colonized and satellite territories. Art cinemas of all kinds distri- bute themselves broadly world-wide, but also thinly, within the limits, that is, of art film distribution and exhibition channels. Third and substate cinemas rarely break out in the mainstream (an exception is the Qué- becois *Jesus of Montreal* (Denys Arcand, 1989) which was in fact a Canadian–French co-production). Given their predominant anti-state politics, circulation is sorely limited, and sometimes wider—because less policed—outside their country of origin.

Recent cultural issues and debates

Politically critical national cinemas

Perched on the edge of Table 1, the space for anti-state cinemas is very limited, emerging from the political underground in the case of the original Third Cinemas, from the interstices of the contradictions of liberal plur- alist funding regimes, from the capacity of production units with progressive heads to cross-subsidize fund- ing in the Fifth Generation Chinese case, or, in the case of those same directors post-Tiananmen, from their ability to raise non-PRC international co-production finance on the strength of their names as auteurs. Willemen has noted the growing pressures on politi- cally unorthodox cinema:

The capital-intensive nature of film production, and of its necessary industrial, administrative and technological infra- structures, requires a fairly large market in which to amortise costs, not to mention the generation of surplus for invest- ment or profit. This means that a film industry [other than Third, substate, and poor cinemas] must address either an international market or a very large domestic one. If the

latter is available, then cinema requires large potential audi- ence groups, with the inevitable homogenising effects that follow from this . . . a cinema addressing national specificity will be anti- or at least non-nationalistic, since the more it is complicit with nationalism's homogenising project, the less it will be able to engage critically with the complex, multi- dimensional and multidirectional tensions that characterise and shape a social formation's cultural configurations . . . the marginal and dependent [politically critical] cinema is simultaneously the only form of national cinema available: it is the only cinema that consciously and directly works with and addresses the materials at work within the national cultural constellation. (Willemen 1994: 211–12)

In terms of the table, internationalizing economic inter- ests force their way downwards and to the right; cul- tural, national ones struggle upwards and to the left!

Arguing for the cultural

While box-office dollars increasingly drive the industry globally, this should not preclude our attending to cultural issues—indeed, it should demand it. Europe in the 1990s provides some key debates. Even French cinema, which has probably been the world's most successful in meshing industrial and economic con- cerns with cultural discourses, is feeling the pressure of global commodification in the 1990s. In the case of Britain, Hill elegantly advances cultural against eco- nomic arguments in seeking to influence policy and practice on nation-state cinemas, critiquing in particu- lar the policy endorsement of 'the operations of the market place (and its domination by transnational con- glomerates) and, hence, the restricted range of cultural representations which the market provides' (1992: 18). This returns the argument to the issue of cultural spe- cificity set out above. The Celtic poor cinema for which Colin McArthur campaigns poses acute problems for the realizability of acceptable culturally specific repre- sentations. Given centuries of English othering of Cel- tic Scotland, Ireland, and Wales as 'uncivilized' and 'backward', he offers this 'axiom to Celtic film-makers: the more your films are consciously aimed at an inter- national market, the more their conditions of intellig- ibility will be bound up with regressive discourses about your own culture' (1994: 118–20). In the context of the much more powerful West German state, Elsaes- ser still has occasion to urge the importance of commit- ment to 'the politics of culture, where independent cinema is a protected enclave, indicative of a will to create and preserve a national film and media *ecology*

amidst an ever-expanding international film, media and information *economy*' (1989: 3).

Export and cultural difference

As observed above, a given film can shift its variety of nation-state cinema when exported, depending on the distribution and exhibition parameters of the importing state and its political relationships with the exporter. Cross-cultural readings are more of a worry for art and substate cinemas than for Hollywood, the world's biggest producer of largely undifferentiated product for export. Elsewhere I distinguish three levels of critical response to imported films:

(a) blank incomprehension, which is mostly pre-empted by distributors' not importing culturally specific materials such as the films of Werner Schroeter or Alexander Kluge, or most social realist and poor cinemas;

(b) the subsumption of the unfamiliar within depoliticizing art cinema discourses of 'an essentialist humanism ("the human condition"), and complemented by a tokenist culturalism ("very French") or an aestheticizing of the culturally specific ("a poetic account of local life")'; and

(c) ethnocentric readings, such as in US accounts of *Crocodile Dundee* (Peter Faiman, 1986) which use the film to inscribe American frontier myths and to rediscover an age of innocence (Crofts 1992, 1993: 58–9). This last mode of reading Willemen calls a 'projective appropriation' (1994: 212).

Theorizing the culturally specific

Besides 'projective appropriation', which includes the 'imperial and colonising strategy' of universalist humanism (Willemen 1994: 210), Willemen distinguishes two other ways of analysing cultural specificity. 'Ventriloquist identification' has the speaker 'immersed in some ecstatic fusion with the others' voices . . . the monopolist-imperialist's guilty conscience' (213). The move beyond these complicit stances is based on Bakhtin's dialogic mode, and is 'not simply a matter of engaging in a dialogue with some other culture's products, but of using one's understanding of another cultural practice to re-

perceive and rethink one's own cultural constellation at the same time . . . a double-outsideness' whereby the analyst relates both to her or his situation and to the group 'elsewhere' as an other (214, 216–17). Rajadhyaksha and Willemen's (1994) encyclopaedia of Indian cinemas represents a realization of that goal. In a similar vein Chow argues for the relevance of the Western theoretical discourse of psychoanalysis to the examination of Chinese social and cultural repressions (1991, p. xiv). And later positioning herself outside both Western and Eastern readings of China, she challenges the notion of an authentic cultural identity as any more than an ideological construct (Chow 1995).

Future projections

Will the wash of globalization rinse out cultural differences between states? If nation-state cinemas and their marketing constitute a point of resistance to the growing pressures against the state from within and without, many argue that they cannot resist for long: 'the concepts "cinema", "nation" and "national cinema" are increasingly becoming decentred and assimilated within larger transnational systems of entertainment' (Kinder 1993: 440). The accelerating flows of people, technologies, images, and ideas combine with the intensifying search of film producers for multiple international markets to imply growing homogeneity in nation-state film production. And the possibility of distinguishing product with nation-state cinema labels is threatened not just by the increasing number of international co-productions, but also by developments in electronic and fibre-optic delivery systems with their encouragement of indiscriminate channel-zapping and image-mixing. On the other hand, art film sectors world-wide offer new hopes of interest in cultural specificity, even if only in the form of finding new foreign sets on which to inscribe old scenarios of innocence and nostalgia. Growing attendances at film festivals in many parts of the West hold out hopes for raised interest in cultural specificities. And the emergence in the 1990s of 'cross-over' distribution successes and of the American 'independent' production sector holds out some promises for growing consumer discrimination, at least in the West, against the typically Hollywood mainstream fare.

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