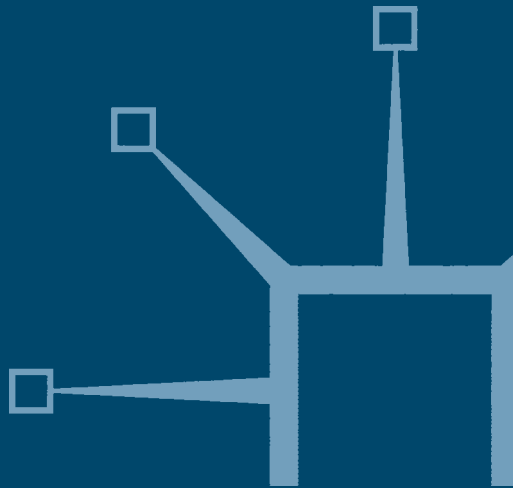


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World Cinema's 'Dialogues' with Hollywood

Edited by
Paul Cooke



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Paul Cooke

University of Leeds

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Introduction: World Cinema's 'Dialogues' with Hollywood

Paul Cooke

As a starting point for this collection of essays looking at the relationship between Hollywood and the rest of the world's cinema, let us return to the Oscar ceremony of 1994 when host Whoopi Goldberg began proceedings by declaring the event to be a celebration of 'the best of Hollywood cinema, which is the best of world cinema'. This was an especially provocative statement at the time, given the heated debates that had just occurred during the Uruguay round of the GATT talks (General Agreement on Trades and Tariffs), when the French argued that the exemption of film from the free-trade agreement was necessary in order to protect the world's (or at least French) culture from American domination (Jeancolas 1998: 47–60). The statement remains contentious over a decade later, prompting consideration of what precisely is meant by 'the best', or indeed 'Hollywood' and 'world cinema'. This introduction will examine the contested nature of these terms in order to open up the concept of cinematic 'dialogue' around which the volume is organised.

First of all, what is meant by 'the best'? If this is to be understood in purely economic terms, then there can be little debate. Hollywood films consistently achieve the biggest worldwide grosses. From almost the beginning of cinema's history, US film companies recognised the exportability of their product and by the end of the twentieth century films by the major studios dominated the world's cinema screens. If one looks at the European market over the last two decades, this has been increasingly driven by a small number of Hollywood blockbuster 'event films', the release of which is invariably preceded by a multi-million dollar marketing campaign designed to entice spectators into theatres and protect the film studios' investment against the vagaries of critical opinion. In order to give a sense of scale to the economic disparity between Hollywood and the rest of the world, one of the

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most internationally successful German films to date has been Bernd Eichinger and Oliver Hirschbiegel's account of the last days of Hitler, *Downfall* (*Der Untergang* 2004), which grossed \$92 million worldwide during its cinematic release (Box Office Mojo 2006a). The most recent Hollywood event film at the time of writing, Ron Howard's adaptation of Dan Brown's best-selling novel *The Da Vinci Code* (published 2003, film 2006) achieved \$224 million in its opening weekend; this despite universally scathing reviews from the critics (Box Office Mojo 2006b). Although this should mean that Columbia will recoup its estimated \$125 million production costs, this is still small beer for the Hollywood majors when compared, for example, with the \$1.8 billion gross of Paramount's *Titanic* (James Cameron 1997) (Box Office Mojo 2006c) or George Lucas' Star Wars cycle; *Episode One: The Phantom Menace* (1999) grossed \$924 million worldwide (Box Office Mojo 2006d). If we look at the relative percentage of ticket sales the picture is even starker. In Australia, for example, the domestic production market saw its box-office share decline from 6.4 per cent in 1993 to 3.5 per cent in 2003, with US films increasing theirs to 83.8 per cent (Australian Film Commission 2003). Anne Jäckel notes that in 2000 US films accounted for 93.3 per cent of the domestic American market and 73 per cent of the European market. Conversely, European films took only 3.9 per cent of the North American box office (Jäckel 2003: 92–93). Indeed, in the United States the situation presently seems to be near terminal for non-Hollywood films. In a recent article for the *New York Times*, Anthony Kaufman posed the question 'Is Foreign Film the New Endangered Species?', noting that in 2005 only 10 foreign films achieved ticket sales of \$1 million (itself a miniscule sum when compared, for example, to the \$234 million grossed by Spielberg's *War of the Worlds* that same year). While an increasing number of non-US films are attempting to break into the US market, ever fewer are being released. Kaufman points to the record number of 91 entries to the 2005 Academy Awards for the best foreign-language film, but also notes that only seven of these films managed to gain American distribution, 'the lowest number in years' (Kaufman 2006).

That Hollywood films dominate the world market economically cannot be denied. What is more open to question is why this should be the case. An obvious answer is that Hollywood is simply the best at giving audiences what they want, namely action-driven fictions, produced in the 'continuity style' which elides the constructed nature of film as a medium, thus allowing the spectator to escape completely into the film's fantasy world (for a more detailed discussion of Hollywood style, see Bordwell 2006). This contrasts with what are often viewed as

the more 'difficult', esoteric aesthetics and complex open-ended narratives associated with films produced in other parts of the world. As Paul Shrader puts it, when looking at the difference between Hollywood and European films:

American movies are based on the assumption that life presents you with problems, while European films are based on the conviction that life confronts you with dilemmas – and while problems are something you solve, dilemmas cannot be solved, they're merely probed.

(quoted in Elsaesser 2005: 44)

Such a division is generally seen in terms of a cultural hierarchy, with Hollywood producing expensive, populist 'low culture', while the rest of the world offers spectators lower-budget, more demanding 'high cultural' fare aimed at a discerning 'art house' audience that eschews the glitzy comforts of the multiplex, whether by choice or by the lack of it. Consequently, Hollywood might be the best at producing profitable 'popular culture', but if 'the best' is to be defined in terms of 'high culture' then this is to be found elsewhere.

However, to what extent is the 'Hollywood equals popular culture' versus 'non-Hollywood equals high culture' dichotomy sustainable in actuality? Popular entertainment films are made the world over, most notably as we shall see later in this volume in India and Hong Kong – two massive producers of popular genre films for domestic, regional and diasporic consumption. Even in Europe popular entertainment films dominate film production statistically if not in terms of international impact (Dyer and Vincendeau 1992). Indeed, this dichotomy often says more about the marketing of foreign films outside their domestic market than about aesthetics or any intrinsic cultural 'value', with popular entertainment films at home, such as Patrice Leconte's *Ridicule* (1996), being sold in the United States as 'art house' simply by virtue of the fact that they have sub-titles. Moreover, it is a dichotomy that has been troubled in recent years by the rise of the American 'indie'. Although limited, there clearly is a market for 'art house' films in the United States. The problem for non-English language film-makers today is that Hollywood has begun to corner this niche market too, with films like Ang Lee's gay Western romance *Brokeback Mountain* (2006) – produced by Universal's subsidiary 'independent' company Focus Features – filling screens that would have been showing the latest Godard or Tarkovsky 20 years earlier.¹

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On the other hand, the success of mainstream Hollywood abroad might just be a result of the attractiveness of the world that such films present. As Geoffrey Nowell-Smith puts it:

Sometimes the banal truths are the valuable ones and the fact is that the much-mouthed banalities about Hollywood as dream factory are not only true but important. They are perhaps not all perfectly and unequivocally true, but they are true enough. Hollywood is the biggest fabricator of fantasy, and that is its enormous unchallenged strength.

(Nowell-Smith 1998: 12)

For at least parts of its history, the Hollywood 'project', if it might be termed in such a homogeneous manner, has centred upon selling the American way of life to the rest of the world. In so doing, it has generally been pushing at an open door. Toby Miller et al. cite the example of 1930's Italy, where the 'fabulous modernity' projected by Hollywood films fascinated the entire population, from Mussolini down, all eager to lose themselves in a world where 'beauty, youth and wealth merged under the sign of fun' (Miller et al. 2001: 25). As we can see in many of the contributions to this volume, the Italians were far from unique. The same can be said of audiences from the United Kingdom to India, who have, more or less voraciously, consumed Hollywood's version of the American dream. A ticket to a Hollywood film allows them to enter a fantasy world, the draw of which most other national cinemas have never come close to achieving.

Thus, it could be argued that Hollywood is so powerful economically because it is the best at providing the world with the most appealing film aesthetics and narrative structures as well as the most attractive message, setting the norm for mainstream film-making, against which all other cinemas must be judged. Yet such a reading of film history does not take into account the effort that Hollywood, along with a variety of US Governments, have put into gaining global dominance in the areas of distribution and exhibition. It is Hollywood that largely controls which films audiences get to see wherever they may be. With most cinema screens in large parts of the world showing Hollywood product, it is with such films that spectators are most familiar. As we can see from Kaufman's article quoted above, it is often very difficult for foreign films to gain distribution, particularly in the United States. Even films from outside North America that do well at the major film festivals such as Venice, Berlin or Cannes generally remain confined

to the periphery, unable to gain the screen space that would allow them to secure a bigger share of the audience. Little wonder, then, that it is by Hollywood's standards that we define what we mean by 'mainstream' film-making. The United States is also fiercely protective of its distribution dominance, lobbying for increasing global deregulation during the GATT and subsequent World Trade Organisation talks (much to the chagrin of the French, of course), so that it can further increase its market share in parts of the world that continue to protect domestic film production and distribution.

Needless to say, the wish to sell American films abroad has often been given an altruistic 'spin'. Here we might mention the post-9/11 discussions between the White House and Bryce Zabel, chairman of the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, about how Hollywood 'could help the government formulate its message to the rest of the world about who Americans are, and what they believe'. The rationale behind this was that if more (specifically the Muslim part) of the world understood the benefits of American democracy it would help protect the country against further terrorist attacks (Miller and Rampton 2001: 12). However, if this was ever truly a concern for the industry, the economic imperative remains paramount. Hollywood cannot survive without foreign markets. Since the 1950s and the rise in home entertainment, the industry has become increasingly reliant on overseas sales. Indeed, the cost of producing and marketing a Hollywood blockbuster is now so high that it is often impossible to amortise films domestically (Elsaesser 2005: 40).² The United States' domestic market is still hugely important for the world's cinema industry, with many film-makers and production companies desperate to see their work released there. However, for Hollywood itself it often accounts for less than half of the gross that their major films can earn. *The Da Vinci Code*, for example, earned just over \$200 million during its cinematic release at home, and almost \$500 million abroad (Box Office Mojo 2006e).

The importance of the foreign market to Hollywood leads us to the second term that requires further clarification. What precisely is meant by 'Hollywood cinema'? Hollywood is simply the district of Los Angeles that became home for much of the American film industry at the beginning of the twentieth century due to its reliable weather. How does this relate to a film like *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (Peter Jackson 2003) which received a substantial part of its funding from German and New Zealand investors, largely to the cost of tax payers in these countries (see Campbell 2001: 17–24). It was shot on location in New Zealand, from where its director as well as much of its crew

originate. It is based on a book by the British author J. R. R. Tolkien with a largely British cast and more people in Europe saw the film than in North America. The lion's share of the profits, however, flowed back to the 'Hollywood' major TimeWarner, which has its headquarters in New York. Indeed, the majority of the major studios themselves only have limited ties to the Hollywood area of Los Angeles. More significantly, again like the majority of such companies, TimeWarner, although associated with the United States, is part of a global media conglomerate, many of which are not even based in the United States. Columbia, for example, is owned by the Japanese Sony Corporation. Similarly, Twentieth Century-Fox is part of the wide-ranging portfolio of companies owned by the Australian-born Rupert Murdoch's *News Corporation*.

Such companies are very adept at adjusting to changing markets, maximising the opportunities of globalisation to make the most of fluctuations in exchange rates, of local tax breaks offered by national governments designed to attract film production, or of cheap labour and location costs. The 'Run Anyway' production, as Hollywood films that exploit opportunities abroad are termed, have long existed (some of them are discussed in this book) but in the last decade their number increased rapidly, from 7 per cent of production at the start of the decade to 27 per cent by its end (Miller et al. 2001: 58). Since the end of the Cold War, the former communist states have become particular beneficiaries (or 'victims', depending on one's point of view) of this phenomenon, the reasons for which Miller et al. make very clear:

After London, Prague is today Hollywood's 'second centre' in Europe. At 2001 prices, labour was 40% cheaper than in Los Angeles – union painters are paid less than US\$3 an hour, for example, while extras 'command' US\$15 a day to Hollywood's US\$100.

(Miller et al. 2001: 72)

Hollywood is increasingly a global industry. As such, the best of its product, however this might be defined, might well be said to be the best of 'world cinema', or at least of a globally produced cinema.

For the film-maker Volker Schlöndorff this is very much the case. However, he takes an opposing view to Goldberg on Hollywood as a global cinematic phenomenon. Writing of developments since the end of the Cold War, he suggests:

Although the markets opened up, culture has been shut out. This paradox is to be seen in Asia and South America, just as much as it

can in Middle and Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet states, where the flood of American films in recent years has washed away a wealth of national cinematography.

(Schlöndorff 1999: 196, my translation)

For Schlöndorff, then, globalisation in the film industry is leading inexorably to homogenisation, or more specifically to Americanisation, where the only films that are shown, and ultimately that will be made, will come from the United States. However, how far is this actually the case? It is at this point that we might turn to the question of how we are to define 'world cinema'.

For Schlöndorff and Goldberg, Hollywood is the only real world cinema due, for better or worse, to its global dominance. However, generally 'world cinema' is not defined in such terms. As Lúcia Nagib notes, 'it is not usually employed to mean cinema worldwide. On the contrary, the usual way of defining it is restrictive and negative, as "non-Hollywood cinema"' (Nagib 2006: 26). Indeed, it is often limited still further than this to mean 'non-western' cinema, thereby excluding European film from its purview (see, for example, Hill and Gibson 2000). World cinema tends to be used, therefore, to suggest cinema existing at the margins of the film industry, as opposed to Hollywood which is designated as being the centre. As we have seen, if we use the optic of economic success this is reasonably incontestable. However, if one turns to other statistical viewpoints, the question of what constitutes the centre and what the margins becomes harder to define. Nagib goes on:

one could point out the fact that in the late 1930s and again in the mid-1950s, Japan was the most prolific film producer in the world, reaching the mark of 500 feature films a year. In the early 1970s, it was surpassed by India, which remains the world's leading film producer up to today, attracting annually over one billion viewers.

(Nagib 2006: 26–27)

With regard to the volume of film production, James Chapman points out that Hollywood accounts for 'approximately only 6 per cent of total film production in the world'; Asia, on the other hand, accounts for 50 per cent (Chapman 2003: 33). Here we could also return to the question of film grosses. While Hollywood might generate the biggest in terms of raw numbers, by looking at the percentage of profit a different picture emerges. If we take Ang Lee's earlier Taiwanese/US co-production *Wedding Banquet* (Hsi yen 1993), although the film only

grossed \$36 million, it cost \$1 million to produce, thus providing its backers with a 3600 per cent return on their investment (Internet Movie Database 2006). This compares with the 800 per cent return provided by *The Phantom Menace*. Lower budgets mean that lower costs need to be recouped which in turn provide greater relative grosses. Cheaper films need to make less money to be profitable.

Thus, it would seem that Schlöndorff's prediction of the death of non-Hollywood film is somewhat premature. Indeed, as has been noted by many commentators, globalisation is a phenomenon that could actually help preserve cultural diversity, with global communication networks allowing individual communities to bring their cultural specificity to the attention of the world, promoting what David Held sees as 'the sharing of cultures and understanding among nations around the world' (Held 2000: 22). The Internet, in particular, is often seen as a great levelling device in this regard, of particular benefit to film-makers by allowing artists and small production companies to distribute and publicise their work, thereby side-stepping Hollywood's international stranglehold on distribution with its concomitant impact upon exhibition. One need only look at the way that Internet 'bloggers' created hype around the low-budget American 'indie' *Snakes on a Plane* (David R. Ellis 2006) to see the potential power of cyberspace (Mueller 2006). This is something that has, of course, been long known to one of the main drivers of technological development in film, the pornography industry. However, it currently seems that the Hollywood majors are also waking up to the power of the Internet and the possibilities of digital distribution. Consequently, it might not be long before they also control this sphere (Kontzer 2001; Zook 2003; Chmielewski and Hoffman 2006).

The chapters collected together in this volume are a result of work carried out by the Centre for World Cinemas at the University of Leeds. In line with the view of the centre, which 'defines world cinema as a polycentric phenomenon with (often overlapping) peaks of creation in different places and periods', the volume takes world cinema to mean 'cinema of the world', in which Hollywood is one part amongst many, albeit a cinema that has played a hugely significant role in shaping the history of the medium (University of Leeds 2006). In much of what has been outlined above, it would seem that if one can speak of a 'dialogue' between Hollywood and non-Hollywood film production at all, it is one where the former does all of the talking. However, in what follows we shall see that in many ways this is far from being the case, the notion of a 'dialogue' operating on a number of at times competing economic, aesthetic or philosophical levels. Indeed, the volume suggests

that it is ultimately impossible to understand Hollywood film, however it is defined, without grasping the complex nexus of influences on it that come from the rest of the world.

Dialogues with Hollywood

The book is structured broadly chronologically, focusing on a range of important case studies from different periods of film history that are illustrative of Hollywood's relationship to the rest of the world's cinema. We begin, in Chapter 1, by looking at the relationship between German Expressionism and Hollywood. Here, a number of cinematic 'dialogues' are introduced that are picked up by other contributors. Most importantly, the chapter investigates how concepts such as 'art house' and 'mainstream' are not necessarily objective descriptors of the nature of a film but can be used as a marketing tool. To this end, Paul Cooke examines how an idea of German Expressionism was manipulated as a brand with intellectual caché in the aftermath of the First World War in order to sell German product to the United States. Cooke then traces the development of the dialogue between German film and Hollywood over time, looking at how the use of Expressionistic tropes in cinema reflects both the complex relationship between these two nations post-Second World War, as well as the evolution of cinema itself within an ever-changing media landscape. Graham Roberts in Chapter 2 looks at the equally problematic relationship between America and the Soviet Union in the early part of the twentieth century, highlighting the perhaps counter-intuitive attraction of radical Soviet film-makers to what they saw as the demotic vision of modernism offered by Hollywood. Focusing on the work of Sergei M. Eisenstein, we find very early proof of the fact that whether or not Hollywood exists as a geographical descriptor for film, it has a strong mythological power for many parts of the world. For Eisenstein and his fellow Soviet film-makers, this brought particular challenges as they attempted to divorce the myth from capitalist ideology. For the Anglo-American cinematic relations examined by Charles Drazin in Chapter 3, however, it was precisely this capitalist ideology that was so attractive. Drazin explores the work of the producer and director Alexander Korda, who came to prominence in the interwar period. Unlike Eisenstein, Korda saw Hollywood as a 'state of mind' that British film-makers needed to adopt if they were to compete. Britain and the United States have, of course, often seen themselves as natural partners, due to their common language. In Drazin's chapter, however, we see the problems that this can also create, particularly

when either nation fails to acknowledge the specific differences between their cultures, which in Korda's case manifested itself in a profound sense of frustration at his inability to 'translate' his British oeuvre into a product that could attract American audiences. Chapter 4 turns to the question of literary adaptation and the role that European high literary culture has played in shaping the history of Hollywood. Catherine O'Rawe examines MGM's *As You Desire Me* (George Fitzmaurice 1932), an adaptation of Luigi Pirandello's modernist play *Come tu mi vuoi*. O'Rawe goes beyond the type of 'fidelity criticism' that plagued the early reception of the film and which saw it dismissed by Pirandello scholars as a poor, inauthentic version of the theatrical masterpiece. Instead, by drawing on Ruth Vasey's notion of the 'sociology of adaptation' she explores the film's relationship to the studio's adaptation policy at the time, a discussion that problematises the high culture/popular culture, non-Hollywood/Hollywood dichotomy. This she achieves by highlighting the function of the film's star, Greta Garbo, and the manner in which her star text sheds new light on many of the key concerns of Pirandello's original play. In Chapter 5 we stay with the 'Classical Hollywood' period, looking in more detail at American film production at the time and specifically the work of Frank Capra who, as Sam B. Girgus suggests, is perhaps the 'quintessential American director', his films providing the defining image of a idealistic 'white-picket fenced' America. Girgus, however, probes the tensions and complexities within the world of 'Capracorn', examining the extent to which his work can be seen as part of a 'developing national dialogue' about the direction American culture was taking in the 1930s and 1940s, as well as a dialogue with the European culture of his birth. Through a close reading of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), Girgus highlights the way that Capra's version of the American dream was highly influenced by a European modernist philosophical tradition, pre-empting the ethical debates that would be performed postwar in the writing of Emmanuel Levinas.

In many of these chapters we find examples of how Hollywood sees the rest of the world's culture as its talent pool. Chapter 6 examines the profound impact of this view on Brazilian cinema in the 1940s, the South American market being one of the few that was open to the United States during the Second World War. Looking further at the function of the star in Hollywood discussed by O'Rawe, Lisa Shaw investigates the impact on film of Roosevelt's 'Good Neighbour Policy', which led to the rise of Carmen Miranda as a major star, her samba-singing 'tutti frutti' *baiana* image becoming the face of Brazil for US cinema goers. Miranda's persona was attacked at the time for being patronising to

Brazilians. Shaw, however, highlights the parodic elements in Miranda's star text that actually challenged what critics have generally seen as the colonising gaze of North America. Moreover, she suggests that the re-importation of the *baiana* to Brazil in the 1950s points to an interesting postcolonial moment in cinematic history, the re-appropriation of Miranda at the time allowing film-makers to challenge a view of cinema which saw Hollywood at the centre and Brazil at the periphery.

In Chapter 7 we begin our examination of the postwar period, with Geoffrey Nowell-Smith discussing the relationship between Italian cinema and Hollywood, from Neorealism in the 1940s and 1950s to the 'Spaghetti Westerns' of the 1960s and 1970s. While, as we have already noted, Hollywood's version of the American dream was extraordinarily popular with the Italian public, Nowell-Smith makes the point that its influence on Italian film-makers has often been overstated. In Nowell-Smith's view it is a misreading of film history to see, for example, the inclusion of sex, crime and adventure story lines in Italian films simply as an attempt to compete with Hollywood: 'there is no reason to suppose that Italian films would have gone all ascetic and anti-dramatic if American competition had been removed'. Chapter 8 takes us back to US film, examining the way that Hollywood appropriated Europe in the 1950s musical both as material to be filmed and as an increasingly important market for its product in the face of its decline domestically. Fiona Handyside investigates the extent to which these films perform the dichotomy of Europe as a space for high art versus Hollywood as the home of entertainment, a dichotomy which was also central to the critical reception of these films in the French media that feared Hollywood's ostensibly homogenising, colonising power was intent upon turning Paris into an exotic version of the United States.

In both Handyside and Nowell-Smith's chapters we sense the ambivalence that many postwar European nations felt towards America, an ambivalence which finally fed into the discourse that helped to re-invigorate domestic cinema across the continent and in France led to the rise of the *Nouvelle Vague* at the end of the 1950s. It is the *Nouvelle Vague* which is the focus of Chapter 9. Here, Diana Holmes looks at the attraction the critics of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, who would later become the film-makers of the *Nouvelle Vague*, felt towards a number of Hollywood directors that they deemed to have transcended the limitations of a philistine Hollywood studio system to become *auteurs*. She goes on to examine how these French film-makers subsequently became an important influence on the 'New Hollywood' cinema of the late 1960s and 1970s, as the major American studios tried to stem the decline in popularity

of their films at home by, once again, looking to the rest of the world for inspiration. Of particular interest for Holmes is the way that this dialogue with Hollywood involves a 'misreading' of gender relations in some of the Hollywood films examined by the *Cahiers* critics, their androcentricism ignoring the problematisation of gender stereotypes in the work of Nicholas Ray or Alfred Hitchcock. Ironically, however, in the films that the likes of Godard and Truffaut went on to make, we find these same stereotypes challenged, opening up new possibilities for their female protagonists which, in turn, went on to be explored further in 'New Hollywood' films such as *Klute* (Alan J. Pakula 1971) or *The Last Picture Show* (Peter Bogdanovich 1971).

In Chapter 10 and 11 we return to the issue of adaptation and specifically here the remake. Rachel Hutchinson (Chapter 10) examines the dialogue between the Japanese film-maker Akira Kurosawa, the Italian Sergio Leone and the American Western, looking at Leone's remake of Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* (*Yōjimbō* 1961), *A Fistful of Dollars* (*Per un Pugno di Dollari* 1964), the quintessential 'Spaghetti Western'. As we saw in O'Rawe's chapter, Hutchinson moves discussion of the remake beyond the question of fidelity, asking us to reconsider the value of the remake per se, as well as examining the specific impact these films had on the Hollywood Western genre. In so doing, Hutchinson takes Japanese cinema in particular away from any potential orientalist reading that posits it as operating in response to Hollywood, thus once again questioning a view of Hollywood film as central and 'world cinema' as peripheral to cinema's development. We are also given a further indication of the importance of external influences on the development of the 'New Hollywood' of the late 1960s. Hutchinson highlights how the liminality of the narratives in these non-Hollywood films, where the distinction between heroes and villains is profoundly blurred, became the norm for later US Westerns. In Chapter 11, Eric Thau investigates the trajectory of Sirkian melodrama from the United States in the 1950s to the New German Cinema of the 1970s and to Spain in the 1980s and 1990s before returning to the United States and the independent film-maker Todd Haynes at the turn of the century. Thau traces the place of the remake in the shift from modernist critique to postmodern pastiche in Western film-making. On the one hand we see Fassbinder use Sirk as a model in order to heighten his critique of West German society and its treatment of foreigners, while Almodóvar, on the other hand, celebrates the artificiality of Sirkian melodrama in his exploration of gender in post-Franco Spanish society, a take which is then intensified in Haynes' *Far From Heaven* (2002). This recent homage to Sirk's aesthetic saw Haynes create

a simulacrum of the earlier director's world, albeit one in which this later film-maker can explicitly discuss the homosexuality only ever suggested implicitly in Sirk's work, a shift which also acknowledges the appropriation of Sirk's films from the 1960s by the United States gay community which has long recognised and celebrated their camp appeal.

Definitions of modernity also play a key role in Kaushik Bhaumik's overview of Bombay cinema (Chapter 12). Tracing the influence of Hollywood from the Indian stunt films of the 1920s to the rebranding of Bombay as 'Bollywood' in the 1980s, Bhaumik discusses how Western notions of modernity and postmodernity became problematic in a non-Western context. Although the relationship between Bombay and Hollywood would initially seem to be one of the subaltern being defined by the hegemon, on closer inspection it becomes far more complex. Indeed Bhaumik suggests that at times Bombay cinema offers an alternative version of 'the modern', one driven by a longing for a new sense of the collective which eschews what Bhaumik sees as Hollywood's celebration of the individual.

In the concluding chapters we continue the exploration of recent film begun at the end of Thau's contribution, taking stock of contemporary cinema in Hollywood and beyond. In Chapter 13, Rob Stone discusses the highly innovative work of the 'indie' film-maker Richard Linklater, specifically examining how *Before Sunrise* (1995) and its real-time sequel *Before Sunset* (2004) reflect recent developments in the dialogue between European and US film. Stone explores how the 9-year gap between these films allows for an analysis of generational, geographical and dialogical ellipses, offering a further evidence of the interdependence of Hollywood and European cinema, and the growing importance of the American 'indie' in the international 'art house' scene. Although this suggests the continued dominance of the global market by US film, Julian Stringer and Qiong Yu suggest in Chapter 14 that this might not be the case. Through their discussion of *Hero* (Yingxiong, Zhang Yimou 2002), defined as 'the first Chinese blockbuster', they examine the contention that if twentieth-century film culture was dominated by America, then in the twenty-first century it will be China's turn. Stringer and Yu, however, suggest that just as the binaries of Hollywood as entertainment and non-Hollywood as art have always been problematic, so is seeing *Hero* as a national cinematic product distinct from Hollywood. Rather they suggest that it is better to describe the film as a transnational phenomenon, a highly visible result of globalisation, it being the product of an international, very mobile team of professionals.

Clearly, this collection of essays cannot hope to offer a definitive account of world cinema's multiple dialogues with Hollywood. Another volume might have included chapters on, for example, the relationship between Hollywood and the Egyptian film-maker Youssef Chahine or the growing significance of Iranian film on the world cinematic stage. Nonetheless, this volume does offer an overview of many of the key moments of cinematic dialogue between Hollywood and the rest of the world over the course of the medium's first century. Although it is problematic to suggest that Hollywood is the 'best' of the world's cinema, it cannot be denied that, currently at least, it still has the 'loudest' voice (Stringer and Yu's chapter, of course, suggests that this might not always be the case). Yet, as this volume as a whole attests, Hollywood's dialogue with films and film-makers from the rest of the world, however whispered such conversations may be, remain vital to the global evolution of cinema's art and industry.

Notes

1. Most of the major Hollywood studios now maintain such subsidiaries to release 'indie', niche pictures, from Fox Searchlight Pictures (owned by Twentieth Century-Fox) to Paramount Classics.
2. It should be noted, however, that this is changing with the increased importance of DVD sales and tie-in merchandise, which constitute a substantial income that even threatens to displace box-office intake into subsidiary income for a film. That said, even if this allows studios to recoup costs domestically, the foreign market for these other sales remains of crucial importance.

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1

From Caligari to Edward Scissorhands: The Continuing Meta-Cinematic Journey of German Expressionism

Paul Cooke

Since the publication in 1947 of Siegfried Kracauer's *From Caligari to Hitler*, Robert Wiene's silent horror film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (*Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* 1920) has been used by commentators as the starting point for a number of 'journeys' that have traced the cinematic legacy of German Expressionism (Kracauer 1947). Initially, Expressionism had very little to do with film, the zenith of this avant-garde cultural phenomenon coming in pre-First World War Germany when the medium was in its infancy. Instead, it was in the crudely abstract images of the *Blaue Reiter* group of painters in Munich, in the scream of *angst* seen throughout Kurt Pinthus's famous poetry anthology *The Twilight of Humanity* (*Menschheitsdämmerung*), or in the violent struggle between generations depicted in the theatre of Walter Hasenclever that Expressionism was to be found. These artists were responding with a deep-seated sense of ambivalence to what they perceived to be the increasingly powerful forces of a modernity in which humanity might be heading either to its final emancipation or to its destruction (Sheppard 1991: 383–392). Although on the wane in the Weimar period, the sense of ambivalence felt before the war continued to resonate with artists as they came to terms with life in a now self-consciously modern, democratic society that, at the same time, seemed to be repeatedly on the cusp of its own destruction. While, as Barry Salt has identified, only a handful of films – like Wiene's story of the mad Doctor and his murderous somnambulist henchman Cesare – can be defined as wholly Expressionist, aspects of Expressionism had a huge impact on Weimar film culture in general (Salt 1970: 119–123). These include the use of wildly abstract sets, highly stylised acting and chiaroscuro lighting, as

well as an engagement with many of the thematic concerns of pre-war artists mentioned above. As such, it informed the nightmare visions to be found not only in Wiene's film but also in F. W. Murnau's version of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Terror* (*Nosferatu: eine Symphonie des Grauens* 1921) and many of Fritz Lang's early films – from his representation of a mechanised dystopia of the future in *Metropolis* (1927) to his tale of one city's hunt for a child murderer in *M* (*M - eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder* 1931).

For Kracauer, the monsters of these and many other examples of Weimar Cinema provide us with a weathervane of the German social psyche, pointing the way to the horrific takeover by the Nazis in 1933. While Kracauer's reading of German film history has been attacked as somewhat tautologous, focusing solely on those texts that best fit his thesis, both his examination of film as socio-political document and his exploration of the monstrous in Weimar Cinema have helped to shape the approach taken by many later scholars. Anton Kaes' study of the New German Cinema *From Hitler to Heimat*, for example, can be read, as the title suggests, as a sequel to Kracauer which looks at the impact National Socialism had on the post-Second World War generation of film-makers (Kaes 1992). Alternatively, S. S. Prawer's *Caligari's Children: The Film as Tale of Terror* examines how the Expressionist monsters of Weimar reappeared in Universal's horror cycle of the 1930s, such recycling due in no small part to the influx of German émigrés to Hollywood from the mid-1920s onwards. And, it is not only here that the presence of such émigrés plays a role. Numerous critics have suggested that the psychological despair of Weimar identified by Kracauer was transposed neatly to the bleak world of 1940s and 1950s film noir and the society in crisis to be found in the American films of Lang, Billy Wilder, Robert Siodmak and others. Moreover, it is an influence which has rubbed off on a variety of subsequent film-makers, from Orson Welles and Alfred Hitchcock to Ridley Scott and Tim Burton. In the work of these later film-makers, critics generally view this German avant-garde movement as a kind of inherited style that casts its shadow over the production design they adopt in their work (see, for example, Coates 1991: 156–192; Doel and Clarke 1997:140–167; Spicer 2002: 11–14; Bould 2005: 24–40; McMahon 2005: 83).

In this chapter I intend to explore the interplay of these thematic, socio-political and stylistic journeys, looking at the impact that the 'dialogue' between German Expressionism and Hollywood has had on the cinemas of both these nations. In particular, however, I focus on the legacy of the 'meta-cinematic', or self-referential elements on this

dialogue (Pisters 2003: 14–44). This is a key trope of German film-making in the 1920s and 1930s (Elsaesser 2000: 7). A number of the later films considered to have been influenced by Expressionism have also been examined individually as examples of meta-cinema (see Coates 1991: 164–170). That said, the critical focus on Expressionism as a vehicle for the presentation of a psychologically disturbed monstrous world has tended to ignore the extent to which its legacy necessarily inflects the way film-makers have explored the very notion of cinema itself. The one notable exception is Thomas Elsaesser's study of Weimar Cinema, which does consider the broad meta-cinematic impact of Expressionism on film noir (Elsaesser 2000: 420–440). My chapter builds on Elsaesser's work, going beyond film noir to examine how German Expressionism has impacted upon a broad range of film texts that reflect the status of film within an ever-changing media landscape, a landscape that sees Expressionism move from Weimar and early debates on the cultural value of film to a world dominated by the all-pervading television culture of the late twentieth century, and indeed beyond.

Expressionism and Weimar film

In the 1920s, the cinema of Weimar Germany was one of the few to be able to compete with Hollywood internationally (see Salt 1970: 119–123). That said, the influence of America was never far from the surface, with Hollywood providing the touchstone by which the German film industry was always judged. When the German industry went into decline in the mid-1920s, it was Hollywood, in the shape of Paramount and MGM, that was waiting in the wings to bail out the ailing UFA – the company largely responsible for the nation's cinematic success – and provide a home for German talent (Petrie 1985). Even the way Expressionism came to the German screen was, to a degree at least, a response to American culture. In 1919, the Allied world was not queuing up to show the films of a nation that had been vilified for the previous 5 years as the aggressors in a world war. Thus Expressionism provided a useful 'brand' which German film-makers could use to access an international market, the most lucrative of these being, then as now, America. As Eric Pommer, the producer of *Caligari* and the driving force behind many of Weimar's most influential films, explains:

The German film industry made 'stylized films' to make money. Let me explain. At the end of World War One the Hollywood industry

moved towards world supremacy. [...] It would have been impossible to try and imitate Hollywood [...]. So we tried something new; the Expressionist or stylized films. This was possible because Germany had an overflow of good artists and writers, a strong literary tradition, and a great tradition of theatre.

(Hardt 1996: 48)

In post-war Germany, Expressionism still had an artistic cachet that allowed the German industry to differentiate its films from American product, allowing them to be successfully exported to markets that might otherwise have resisted them.

Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* was the first film to be treated in this Expressionist style. The film tells the story of the deranged physician, Dr. Caligari, who comes to the town of Holstenwall with a travelling fair as the proprietor of a freak show. Here he exhibits one of his patients, the somnambulist Cesare, whom he also manipulates to commit a series of murders in the town. The film's Expressionist credentials lay in the highly stylised acting of Werner Krauss as Caligari and Conrad Veidt as Cesare, as well as in the sets designed by Hermann Warm, Walter Röhrig and Walter Reimann, all three of whom belonged to the Expressionist *Sturm* group. In Warm's view, the point of film was to present 'drawings brought to life', and the world of Holstenwall clearly achieves this aim. The town and the fair look just like an Expressionist painting in which jagged, out-of-perspective buildings jut out at curious angles from the landscape. Even the film's chiaroscuro shadow-play lighting effects – a trade-mark of Expressionist theatre – are painted on to the stage sets, giving the film a flat, deliberately abstract feel.

As Mike Budd notes, the film's use of Expressionist motifs was central to its marketing in America, with the magazine advertising campaign that heralded its arrival in cinemas setting great store by the film's European avant-garde style. For its New York opening, a modernist-style score was even commissioned to accompany the film, designed further to augment the film's high cultural credentials. In particular, it was hoped that such a marketing strategy might make the film attractive to a middle-class audience. This was a part of the population that had until then largely eluded the industry, seeing film as a medium of little cultural value (Budd 1990: 64). Indeed, *Caligari* was instrumental in the construction of an art house cinema tradition in the United States, when the film was revived in the second half of the 1920s in the programmes of the numerous 'art cinemas' that were then beginning to spring up (Thompson 1990: 149). However, Budd also points out that Pommer was

careful Wiene did not go too far in his use of Expressionist traits. The film was to be considered unusual but not so much so that it would have no commercial value (Budd 1990: 8). Thus, *Caligari* could also simply be watched as a horror film, a piece of popular culture with mainstream appeal, conforming to the norms of a commercial Hollywood cinema in which style is subordinated to the telling of an exciting story (1990: 16).

The critical reception of the film has largely focused on the status of the film's framing device, controversially added after the submission of the original script. This turns the story into a flash back narrative told by Francis (Friedrich Fehér), one of the inhabitants of Holstenwall. In the final framing sequence we discover that Francis is a patient in an asylum and that Caligari is the asylum's doctor. The mad man is therefore shown not to be Caligari but Francis himself. The murders, it would seem, have not taken place at all, but are simply a figment of this patient's imagination. In Kracauer's view, the framing device neuters the film, changing it from a revolutionary allegory on an establishment gone mad (represented by Caligari) which had led the masses (represented by Cesare) to destruction in the war, to a film that affirms the social status quo. The Doctor's authority is ultimately re-confirmed when in the final moments he assures the spectator that he now knows what is wrong with Francis and that he can cure him (Kracauer 1947: 61–76). In some more recent studies of the film, however, critics have challenged this reading, looking at the extent to which the framing device fails to contain the Expressionist horror story. After all, Expressionist motifs continue to inform the *mise-en-scène* of the closing sequence when we have ostensibly left the subjective world of the narrator. Francis' narrative seems to burst out of the frame, leaving the spectator less than reassured by the Doctor's insistence at the end of the film that all will be well (see for example Murphy 1991: 48–56).

Moreover, as Elsaesser has pointed out, if the film is to be read allegorically, it might be viewed less as the story of authoritarianism gone mad than an exploration of the status of cinema itself in post-war German society, a meta-cinematic intervention in the so-called 'Kino Debatte' (Cinema Debate) that raged in Germany in the 1910s on the cultural value of this new medium (Elsaesser 2000: 61–105). At several points the narrative self-consciously draws attention to its status as a film. When we are first introduced to Cesare, for instance, the spectator is invited into the world of the fairground freak show, precisely the arena in which films were first exhibited in Europe and which helped propagate their *déclassé* reputation (Kaes 1993: 47). The camera follows the crowd into Caligari's tent, placing the spectator in the fairground audience. We

then move through the crowd to the front row where we watch Cesare slowly wake. When he finally opens his eyes the monster is shocked at the sight of the audience. However, by this stage the only audience that we can see is the one in the cinema of which we are a part. Cesare looks with horror directly at us, reversing the normal voyeuristic relationship between the spectator and the film. For a moment the dream-world of the film cracks and there is a real person staring at us, shocked by the fact that we have been staring at him, jarring us out of our passive acceptance of the pictures flickering on the screen.



Cesare Awakes, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Robert Wiene 1919)

Caligari self-consciously critiques its own status as a piece of cinema and Wiene was not alone in using this new medium self-referentially. From the very early days of cinema in Germany films would include what Sabine Hake describes as 'a kind of promotional self-referentiality' that would focus on the 'virtuoso presentation of cinematic trickery' (Hake 1992: 37). However, in numerous other texts, including Paul Wegener's *The Golem: How He Came into the World* (*Der Golem: wie er in die Welt kam* 1920), Lang's *Metropolis* (1927) and Murnau's *The Last Laugh* (*Der Letzte Mann* 1924), we find the cinematic space used to critique the power of the moving image in contemporary society,

the theatrical world of Wiene's film transformed into the less abstract but no less oppressive cities to be found in these later narratives. Such films repeatedly draw attention, in a similar manner to *Caligari*, to the voyeurism at the heart of the act of watching a film. Here we might mention the montage sequence in *Metropolis*, where we see a crowd of men mesmerised by the naked dance of the evil robot Maria (Brigitte Helm), a highly sexual mechanised moving image with the capability of inspiring death and destruction to those who come within her orbit. Or, in *The Last Laugh*, along with an exploration of the power of the cinematic gaze, Murnau critiques the priorities of the cinema industry, ironising the need for mainstream (Hollywood) films to provide the spectator with a happy ending. The film tells the story of a hotel doorman (Emil Jannings) who is forced to take the lower status position of toilet attendant when he can no longer carry out his duties. The main narrative of the film ends with an image of the former doorman slumped against the wall of his toilet reduced to the point of destruction by the hotel's treatment of him. At this moment the film takes a farcical turn. In the only intertitle used we are told that in 'real life' the man would have spent the rest of his days working in the lavatory. Luckily, the writer of the film has apparently taken pity on him and decided to give his story a happy ending. We then move to the epilogue, where we discover that the man has inherited a large fortune from a millionaire who died in his toilet. Curiously, the rich man's will included a clause stating that his fortune was to go to the person in whose arms he dies. This, by chance, happened to be our hero. The idea for this ending came from Pommer, who insisted that 'without it the film would have been too much like real life and would have been a commercial failure' (Hardt 1996: 77). To Pommer's credit, the film was a huge commercial success both at home and in America. However, the reference to 'real life' in Murnau's intertitle ironises Pommer's view quoted above, self-consciously drawing attention to the film's forced compliance with the norms of mainstream cinema, thereby ridiculing the epilogue's inclusion.

While Murnau might not have been pleased about the inclusion of the happy ending in his film, he was content to take advantage of the attention the success of *The Last Laugh* brought him from the American industry. Indeed, he was not the only person to benefit from the film's international popularity. It was very helpful in further opening up the American market to German products, whetting Hollywood's appetite for the German talent that would increasingly cross the Atlantic, attracted both by the greater earning potential in the American industry

and, during the 1930s, by the shelter it offered to German refugees wishing to escape Nazi oppression. Many of these émigrés were very keen to cash in on the cultural capital with which the cachet of Expressionism provided them. Along with Murnau and Pommer other key figures connected with Expressionist films specifically and Weimar Cinema more generally, including directors such as Lang, Siodmak and Wilder, cinematographers such as Karl Freund and Eugen Schüfftan, along with actors like Jannings, Peter Lorre and Marlene Dietrich, all, more or less successfully, made the move to Hollywood (Krämer 2002: 227–237).

The émigrés in Hollywood

The most obvious immediate impact that the influx of talent from the German-speaking world had on American films was on Universal's cycle of horror movies in the 1930s. One thinks, for example, of Boris Karloff's 'Cesare-like stance' as the monster in James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931), or the 'shadow-and-light play' in the American work of Karl Freund, both as a cinematographer (*Tod Browning, Dracula* [1931]; *Robert Florey, Murders in the Rue Morgue* [1932]) and when he briefly made the move to directing (*The Mummy* 1932) (Prawer 1980: 167). However, it is for the film noirs of the 1940s and 1950s that German émigrés are best known. Film noir is notoriously difficult to define and might be best described, in James Naremore's words, neither as a genre nor a film style, but as 'discourse – a loose evolving system of arguments and readings that helps to shape commercial strategies and aesthetic ideologies' (Naremore 1998: 11). Over the course of this evolution the importance of German Expressionism has at times been somewhat overstated. Elsaesser, for example, highlights the confluence of events in France in the 1950s, where the term first gained currency – being retrospectively applied to American films of the previous decade – that made it expedient for the intellectuals of the *Cahiers du cinéma* to foreground the influence of Expressionism (Elsaesser 2000: 420–423). Nonetheless, whether, as has been pointed out, all the specifically 'German' influences on the body of film generally described as noir can be attributed to different origins, points of correspondence between Weimar Cinema and these American films can be drawn. In most of Fritz Lang's American work (for example, *Ministry of Fear* [1941]; *The Big Heat* [1953]), as well as that of Robert Siodmak (*The Killers* [1946]; *Criss Cross* [1949]) and a number of films by Billy Wilder (*Double Indemnity* [1940]; *Sunset Boulevard* [1950]), the anxiety explored by Weimar film-makers meets the poetic realism of French cinema, the world of the

American Gangster Movie from the 1930s (Mervyn LeRoy, *Little Caesar* [1931]; Howard Hawks and Richard Rosson, *Scarface* [1932]) and the hard-boiled crime fiction of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett. The product of this assortment of influences is typically the portrayal of an unforgiving, angst-ridden society full of flawed anti-heroes, of hard-nosed villains and femmes fatales, where nothing is as it seems and no one can be trusted.

Throughout both film noir and the Universal horror cycle we also continue to find the meta-cinematic deconstruction of the cinema as an art form. Often we find a further engagement with the power of cinematic voyeurism. We think, for example, of the all-seeing gaze of Whale's Dracula, or Wanley's (Edward G. Robinson) obsession with the image of the 'woman in the window' in Lang's film of the same name (*Woman in the Window* 1945). Elsewhere, Paul Coates has identified a further examination of the cultural value of cinema, which is reminiscent of the German 'Kino Debatte', albeit with a very different point of view to that found in the German films discussed above. He notes the impulse in John Huston's *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) or Howard Hawks' *The Big Sleep* (1946) to discredit ' "high art", which is identified as un-American and aristocratic'. He points, for example, to the eponymous statue in *The Maltese Falcon*, a high-cultural artefact that 'brings death to its would-be handler'. Instead such films hold up cinema as a democratic art form that, as Walter Benjamin suggests in his essay on 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1936), is able to dispel the elitist 'aura' of the art object (Coates 1991: 172).

In Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard*, a particularly interesting film noir with regard to its referencing of Expressionism, we find the reverse of the impulse identified by Coates. Instead the film critiques the deleterious nature of the Hollywood movie business and in particular its fetishisation of celebrity. The film narrates the story of Joe Gillis (William Holden), a down-on-his-luck screenplay writer who is drawn into the world of Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson), a former star of the silent cinema but who now lives in her ridiculously extravagant mansion on Los Angeles' Sunset Boulevard, forgotten by the business but desperate to return to the screen. Norma asks Joe to write the screenplay for her comeback and Joe agrees, happy to take her money even though he knows she has no chance of success. A disturbing relationship develops between them, which finally ends when Norma murders the writer as he attempts to leave her. Rather than celebrating cinema as a medium of cultural democracy, the film is an indictment of the movie business, more radical than that to be found in Weimar films. The 'twilight' of

German Expressionism described in Pinthus' seminal anthology, which at least allowed the possibility of a new dawn for humanity, has by now been replaced by the less ambiguous notion of 'sunset', and with it all sense of hope has disappeared. Here the high art of European modernism is held up as an ideal lost to a film industry driven by money and a media culture more obsessed with sensationalism than with striving for aesthetic beauty. This is encapsulated in Joe's rhetorical question to Betty – the woman who might save him from Norma and who insists that with his talent as a writer he could do much better for himself than to hawk the rubbish he is currently trying to sell to the studios: 'exactly what kind of material do you recommend, James Joyce, Dostoyevsky?' Talent, he explains, 'was last year. This year I'm trying to earn a living.'

Although usually described as a film noir, *Sunset Boulevard* can in fact be read, as Richard Corliss has identified, as 'the definitive Hollywood horror movie', which strongly recalls earlier cinematic images. Corliss specifically points to the influence of the Universal cycle, 'Desmond-Swanson is Dracula or perhaps the Count's older, forgotten sister', who lives 'in an old dark house that opens its doors only to the walking dead' (Corliss 1975: 147–148). Yet Norma is far more directly reminiscent of the monsters of Expressionism, her deranged descent towards the camera at the end of the film as she is taken away by the police strongly evoking Max Schreck's performance as Count Orlok in Murnau's *Nosferatu*. While Murnau's undead monster was sustained by the blood of his victims, Norma feeds on the imagined adulation of her non-existent fans, the illusion of their love being maintained by her butler and one-time husband Max (played by Austrian émigré Erich von Stroheim), who provides her with 'fan mail' that he himself writes. Once this truth has been revealed, Norma is unable to cope with the reality of her lost career and is finally engulfed by a megalomaniacal madness. While the end credits roll she turns and walks directly towards us, the audience, 'those wonderful people out there in the dark', whom she so covets but whom, as her picture fades from the screen, it is clear that she will never again reach.

Translating 'Expressionism' back into German: Film noir and the New German Cinema

In the wake of the Second World War, the influx of American aid to West Germany meant that the Western regions were quickly permeated by American culture. Its subsequent dominance was largely accepted,

even welcomed, by the population as a necessary *quid pro quo* for the avoidance of awkward questions about its National Socialist past and its own tainted cultural tradition. Things started to change in the late 1960s with the emergence of the New German Cinema. In society at large, those who were born with little experience or knowledge of the war years had come of age, and were beginning to attack what they saw as American cultural imperialism and, more specifically, the hypocrisy of their parents' acceptance of it. In 1967–1968, this new generation took to the streets, bringing about a seismic shift in West Germany, forcing their parents to re-examine their relationship to National Socialism, and to expose what these young radicals viewed as continuities with fascism in the Federal Republic that had never been dealt with. For film-makers such as Rainer Werner Fassbinder and, later, Wim Wenders, however, the main cultural language that they could draw on in order to critique both their parents' historical amnesia and the domination of American culture was, paradoxically, that of America itself. As Robert and Bruno, the protagonists in Wenders' *Kings of the Road* (*Im Lauf der Zeit* 1976) agree 'the Yanks have colonised our subconscious'. At the same time, in much of the work of film-makers such as Wenders this issue is made more complex still by their own deep-seated *attraction* to this same American culture, which ultimately for them, as for their parents, provided a refuge from the problems of a German cultural tradition, albeit a refuge from which they sensed they must now attempt to distance themselves (for further discussion, see Elsaesser 1998: 142–155).

One way in which this generation's problematic relationship with both German and American cultural traditions is particularly neatly exemplified is in its reworking of film noir, re-importing, albeit critically, the legacy of Expressionism in the form of the film culture the German émigrés helped create. Fassbinder's final film, *Veronika Voss* (*Die Sehnsucht der Veronika Voss* 1982), for example, self-consciously reworks the central motif of *Sunset Boulevard*, telling the story of the last days in the life of a has-been star from the Nazi era, Veronika Voss (Rosel Zech). After a chance meeting on a tram, the sports reporter Robert Krohn (Hilmar Tate) follows her home, where he discovers that she is being driven to ruin by a corrupt doctor who keeps her addicted to morphine in order to rob her. *Veronika Voss* is shot in black and white, and its high-contrast film stock, along with the use of symbolically laden camera angles, directly echoes the film noir of the 1940s and 1950s, translating the world such films evoke back into a German idiom in order to explore continuities between the barbaric behaviour of the National Socialist period and the institutionalised corruption of the Americanised Federal

Republic of the 1950s. The success of the evil doctor and her cronies in this new society highlights the continued existence of the violent behaviour inherited from Germany's totalitarian past. The film's anti-heroine is isolated by a world which superficially rejects Nazism, embracing the 'democratic' culture of its American conquerors, while in reality it has done very little to overcome the fundamental societal traits that led to Hitler's takeover.

Crucially in the film, if Fassbinder is concerned with the concept of American 'colonisation' identified in Wenders's *Kings of the Road*, this film culture is also presented as an integral part of Fassbinder's own film history, functioning as a kind of bridge that can reconnect him with a past to which he and his generation have been denied access. In this context, the echoes of *Sunset Boulevard* become highly significant. Although, as Elsaesser notes, one must be careful not to conflate German and American film history, many film critics, nevertheless, construct film noir as what he terms 'film history's German imaginary' (Elsaesser 2000: 420). Film noir, in a sense, can be viewed as a product of the German film industry that never was, and as such stands as the reverse side of the actual German film industry of the period, an industry dominated by Goebbels and the Nazi propaganda machine. In *Veronika Voss* Fassbinder indulges in this comparison, bringing the 'German/Hollywood noir' and 'Nazi' traditions together. In his allusion to Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard* he evokes the work of the German émigrés who left Germany but to whom Fassbinder ironically now has easier access than to those who stayed, due to the fact that they became part of the American culture industry. Fassbinder then uses this German-American tradition as a conduit through which he gains access to the culture of the National Socialist period. As a result, he produces an emotional connection to this forbidden period in the spectator, reinstating it into the historical consciousness of his generation.

The journey continues: Consumer culture, television and Expressionism

Since the 1980s the presence of Expressionism on both the German and American screen has shown no sign of diminishing. In Germany, for example, Oskar Roehler's film *No Place to Go* (*Die Unberührbare* 2000) offers the spectator a further revisitation of Wilder's film, used in this case to critique the political position of Fassbinder's own generation. Set at the moment of German unification, Roehler replaces the has-been movie stars of both Fassbinder and Wilder's films with a

hypocritical leftwing writer from the 1960s who, having been rejected by her publisher, is unable to come to terms with a society that does not value her ideological position. Here Roehler uses Fassbinder's oeuvre in particular as a point of reference to evaluate the contribution this generation has made to present-day German society, comparing the radicalism of the 1960s with the empty consumer-driven pop culture of his own generation. In so doing, Roehler presents us with a vision of Germany that evokes not only the noirish elements of both these earlier films, but also returns us at times directly to the grotesque world of Expressionism. The porter in the hotel, for example, to which Roehler's protagonist escapes in Berlin as she tries to come to terms with the new reality of unification, is a figure who clearly evokes the misshapen monsters of Weimar film. His presence here on the nightshift of the hotel calls to mind the nightmare world of this earlier period, thereby throwing into relief the psychological turmoil of the film's heroine as she battles with this new 'post-ideological' world of consumerism (Cooke 2004: 33–44).

In many American films of the last few decades we also see a continued engagement with the noir style of the 1940s and 1950s. Indeed, if anything, such 'neonoir' is becoming increasingly popular. Famous examples include Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (1976), Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* (1994) and Curtis Hanson's *L. A. Confidential* (1997) (Schwartz 2005). At times such films give the genre a decidedly postmodern twist, which in turn radicalises the use of meta-cinema we find in the original cycle. The most obvious illustration of this is Tarantino's work. *Pulp Fiction*, for example, constantly draws attention to its status as a film, playing with genre and narrative conventions, as well as the status of the film as a piece of high art and Tarantino himself as an auteur (see Polan 2000). Elsewhere, we also see noir returning to earlier Expressionist tropes. A much-cited case of this is Ridley Scott's 'sci-fi noir' *Blade Runner* (1982). Scott's futuristic United States' cityscape is an updated version of Lang's *Metropolis*, which similarly constructs a world predicated on an immutable vertical hierarchy between the masters who live high up on the top floors of city's skyscrapers – in Scott's case creating the cyber technology that is moving society forward – and the underclass which struggles to make a living in the city's gutters. The evocation of Lang's film in *Blade Runner* is, of course, deeply ironic since it was from his first view of the New York skyline that Lang famously took the inspiration for his image of the future. Thus in *Blade Runner* we see this particular moment in Germany's dialogue with Hollywood come full circle.

Yet it is not only via film noir that we find echoes of German Expressionism in contemporary American cinema. In the films of David Lynch and Tim Burton, for example, we can identify a more direct recollection of this earlier age. With regard to Burton, Rick Heinrichs, the designer of Burton's fantasy horror movie *Sleepy Hollow* (1999), makes this connection explicit, suggesting that 'Some of the sets are reminiscent of the old German Expressionist films *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and *Nosferatu*, which have a very strong, graphic two-dimensional look within a three-dimensional environment. That's something that Tim and I always liked to play with in the films we've done together' (quoted in Smith and Matthews 2002: 202). One of Burton's most overt echoes of *Caligari* comes in his 1990 film *Edward Scissorhands*. This is the story of an artificial man (Johnny Depp), built by an inventor (Vincent Price) who dies before he could finish him, leaving his creation with scissors instead of hands. Although Burton himself likes to play down the German influence, and the film clearly also has a number of other antecedents (for example, Whale's *Frankenstein*), one cannot overlook the echoes of Veidt's Cesare in Depp's performance. In Burton's film the nightmare world of Holstenwall is replaced by a surreal vision of suburban American into which the inventor's creation enters when he is discovered living alone in a gothic castle, curiously located on the outskirts of this neighbourhood, by Avon Lady Peg (Dianne Wiest).¹ Here Expressionist style, along with its high cultural credentials, is used to throw into relief the everyday reality of American life, casting its television-driven consumer culture in a new critical light. There has also been an important shift in focus in *Edward Scissorhands*. In Wiene's film Cesare is a silent monster, an external manifestation of Caligari's, or indeed Francis' suppressed desires. In *Edward Scissorhands*, it is the 'monster' himself who has become the focal point. Through this shift Burton humanises his version of Cesare, showing the real 'monsters' to be those inhabitants of suburbia who are happy to exploit Edward's ability to use his hands to create the extraordinary hairstyles and topiary that become essential accessories in their quest to keep up with their neighbours, but who eventually turn on him when they decide that they no longer have a need for his talents.

The most overt echo of *Caligari*, however, returns us to the issue of meta-cinema. At the height of Edward's popularity he is invited to be a guest on a daytime chat show, perhaps the closest late twentieth-century Western society comes to the type of circus freak show we see in Wiene's film – one thinks, for example, of the blatant voyeurism of *The Jerry Springer Show*, or *Trisha*, staples of such programming. At the

end of his interview Edward is asked if he has a girlfriend, at which point the film cuts to Kim (Winona Ryder), with whom he is in love and who is watching the show on television. The film then crosscuts in a gradual close-up between Kim staring at the television screen and Edward staring out from the studio, until the shot finally comes to rest on Edward's distraught face. As in *Caligari*, through the gradual close-up the diegetic audience is removed from the frame, leaving the centre of the freak show staring directly at the spectator, clearly disturbed by being in the television spotlight and desperate to escape.

Conclusion

The cinematic journey outlined above is just one possible dialogue between German Expressionism and other national cinemas. Here we have seen Expressionism exploited as a form of cultural capital by filmmakers on both sides of the Atlantic, at times to gain access to the American market, at times to critique this same market or to explore the relationship between America, Germany and German history. It is, of course, not only Hollywood that has adopted Expressionist tropes in its films – Teinosuke Kinugasa's *Crossroads* (1928), for example, highlights the influence of Expressionist style on Japanese cinema, an influence which continues today in the *Metropolis*-inspired cities found in numerous Japanese animé (see for example Katsuhiro Ôtomo's *Akira* [1988] or Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* [1995]), and which, more recently, has also begun to have an impact on American screens. The most obvious case of this is Frank Miller and Robert Rodriguez's *Sin City* (2005), a violent, noirish story that mixes animation with live action. One might also mention here the way that Expressionism is now even moving beyond the cinema screen, inflecting the graphics and narratives of many contemporary video games such as *Resident Evil* or *Max Payne*. As such we would seem to have come a long way from *Caligari* and the films of 1920s Germany. Or perhaps we have simply returned to the start of our journey, with such computer animation at last realising the designer of *Caligari*, Hermann Warm's wish mentioned above. After all, what is the video game if it is not 'drawings brought to life'?

Note

1. Although Burton admits to having seen Wiene's film, he claims that the Expressionist elements in his work are more reminiscent of Dr. Seuss than

Caligari; see Salisbury 1995: 19. Apart from the connection I suggest above, the influence of Expressionism on Burton's work is also surely revealed in his naming the character played by Christopher Walken in his 1992 film *Batman Returns* Max Shreck.

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2

Dream Factory and Film Factory: The Soviet Response to Hollywood 1917–1941

Graham Roberts

‘we prefer Charlie Chaplin’s arse to Eleonore Duse’s¹ hands’
FEKS manifesto ‘We are Eccentrism in action’.

— (*Ekstsentrism* 1922)

A group of young film-makers emerged in the early years of the Soviet state who were wedded both to cinematic experiment and political change. At the same time, this first generation of Soviet film-makers also fell under the spell of ‘American-ness’ (*amerikanshchina*). As I shall discuss in this chapter, the dialogue that ensued between Soviet perceptions of American demotic modernism and nascent revolutionary politics are at the heart of the outpouring of breathtaking talent which characterised Soviet cinema in its first decade. What is particularly interesting in the Soviet–Hollywood ‘dialogue’ is how it highlights the tensions involved in attempting to separate the issues of content and context from film form. The figure most affected by the tensions within this dialogue was Sergei M. Eisenstein who will take a central role in this study.

The birth of ‘Soviet cinema’ in the period 1918–1928 (after which it can be claimed it met its untimely death to be usurped by ‘Stalinist cinema’ by the mid-1930s) should be seen as the result of a combination of three factors: the response to pre-revolutionary cinema; the civil war conditions (Roberts 1999), and a perhaps surprising, even counter-intuitive, warm response to Hollywood. This topology is not meant to downplay the influence of modernism (particularly in its Russian forms of suprematism and constructivism), but we must bear in mind that ‘America’ (the idea not the real place) in itself equated to modernism in the (urban) Soviet Union of the 1920s.

'Detailed mise-en-scène and measured performance' (Drew 2002): 'Pre-Soviet' Cinema

The first showing of moving pictures in the Russian Empire took place on 4 May 1896 – a Lumière Brothers show just 5 months after the Paris premiere (with the same films). The company and its rival Pathé both saw Russia as a lucrative market, exhibiting their films at fairground sideshows. The 'illusions' were viewed as a fairground attraction (and nothing more) much as they were in the USA and elsewhere. As Richard Taylor puts it, 'in the Russian Empire, as elsewhere, cinema was the "dream palace", a world where illusion of a better reality could be created and maintained' (Taylor 1992: 45).

Russian fiction film began with Alexander Drankov's *Stenka Razin*, released on 15 October 1908. It was a historical melodrama based on the life of the eponymous hero – a legendary Cossack leader. The film portrays the Cossacks as bucolic and rather child-like. Much of the content focused on drinking and singing the popular song 'Down the Mother Volga'. Within 2 months, Alexander Khanzhonkov – Drankov's great domestic rival – presented his *Drama in a Gypsy Camp near Moscow* (*Drama v tabore podmoskovnykh tsygan*). In this film another exotic group engage in a bucolic, rather bovine rural existence. Thus, the film-makers of pre-Revolutionary Russia presented the countryside as a site of simplicity. As an urban elite, they revelled in the image of (their) city as a sight of decadence, which showed simple folk, often new to town, who were unprepared for its lures. Here one might also mention Khanzhonkov's 1913 production *The Sorrows of Sarah* (*Gore Sarry*) (with Ivan Mozhukin), Iakov Protozanov's 1913 films *The Shattered Vase* (*Razbitaya vaza*) or his hugely popular melodrama *Keys to Happiness* (*Klyuch schastiya*), all of which present the city as a sight of opulence and ruination.

At the same time, we see the development of what became known as the 'Russian style'. These films are often rather risqué, the cinema in its narrative content and stylistic presentation holding out the promise of decadence. They are, however, always very polished and extraordinarily mannered. In construction, Russian films were radically different from the American films of the time, especially in terms of narrative. The Russian taste for sad denouements, particularly as punishment for earlier misdoings, led to films needing alternative happy endings for export. Russian films also differed from imported movies in terms of their pacing (due to a much longer shot-length) and the fact that they used rather fewer inter-titles.

The big Russian star (*zvezda*) of the pre-First World War period was Ivan Mozzhukin, who was launched with a 1911 adaptation of *The Kreutzer Sonata* (*Kreitzerova sonata*, Pyotr Chardynin). He starred in several (classical) literary adaptations such as Dostoyevskii's *Nikolay Stavrogin* (Iakov Protazanov 1915) and, most famously, an adaptation of Pushkin's *The Queen of Spades* (*Pikovaya dama*, Protazanov 1916). His performances, like those of his peers, were consistently very theatrical. The most famous director of the day was Iakov Protozanov, whose *The Queen of Spades* was praised by Ian Christie for its 'psychological intensity and dream-like fluidity' and 'Slavinskii's famous tracking shot through the countess's house' (Christie 2005). This is a cinema far removed from the kinetic world of the contemporary American film.

The other great master of pre-revolutionary cinema was Evgenni Bauer. In 1914, Khanzhonkov's production company presented Evgenni Bauer's *Child of the Big City* (*Ditya bolshogo goroda*). The urban setting is a backdrop for a shallow formality, which scarcely hides decadent behaviour. The characters drip ennui as they corrupt or are corrupted. The ingénue seamstress is quickly inveigled by the luxury of her seducer's lifestyle. She outdoes him in her wastefulness and amorality, the film ending with the ruined young man lying dead on the steps of his mistress' house.

Bauer's films on psychological themes anticipated such later developments as German Expressionism. They also retain the 'Russian' brooding on sex and death. Thus, as William Drew notes, in Bauer's 1914 adaptation of the Symbolist story *Life in Death* (*Smert' na Zhizn'*), the character played by Ivan Mozzhukin 'is so obsessed with the beauty of his wife that he murders her and keeps her embalmed body in his cellar'. He goes on:

Bauer's work was distinctly different in tempo from his American contemporaries [...] film-makers like Bauer built on Griffith's early Biograph experiments to create an alternative cinema of their own with a slower pace of acting and editing [...]. Bauer effectively used cutting within scenes and striking close-ups throughout his career but always within the context of a style that placed primary emphasis on detailed mise-en-scène and measured performance rather than the blending of rhythmic, dramatic editing with dynamic acting characteristic of Griffith's films.

(Drew 2002)

'Down with the Russian psychological picture' (Kuleshov 1988a: 69): The birth of the Soviet 'style'

In 1917, as the Russian Empire collapsed, Bauer made *The Alarm* (*Nabat*) with a young art director named Lev Kuleshov, an art student who gave up his studies to make moving pictures. For a brief moment, the cinema of Tsarist Russia and the future Soviet cinema crossed paths. Kuleshov's earliest writing on film – 'The Tasks of the Artist in Cinema' – chimes firmly with Tsarist cinema in its focused attention on staging: 'On the screen what is important is not what is in the frame but how the objects are distributed.' However, Kuleshov also points forward to what would come to be known as 'montage'. He also suggests that 'To make a picture the director must compose the separate filmed fragments, disordered and disjointed, into a single whole and juxtapose these separate moments into a more advantageous, integral and rhythmical sequence' (Kuleshov 1988b: 41).

Between the shooting of *The Alarm* and Kuleshov's first foray into print, not only had Bauer died (whilst on location in the Crimea) but after popular uprisings against the war in February the Tsar had abdicated. In October 1917, the rather ineffective 'Provisional Government' was removed from office by a *coup d'état* (with popular support). The Bolsheviks, led by Lenin promising 'Peace, Bread, Land', were in power and along with Soviet Russia (after 1923 the Soviet Union) Soviet cinema was born.

Unfortunately for Lenin, cinema in Russia itself had gone missing.² The major producers were filming in the south when the Bolsheviks seized power. They left with all haste, often burying what films and equipment they could not carry first. However, the Bolshevik regime did not give up on cinema. It could be argued that the strength and weakness of Bolshevism was its very inability to know when to give up. First, they nationalised the film 'industry'. Secondly, they set up a special cinema section in the Commissariat of the Enlightenment with Krupskaja – Lenin's wife – in charge.

Times were hard. There was a civil war (which until late into 1919 it seemed likely the 'Reds' would lose). Nonetheless, young people flocked to the film industry. As Anatolii Lunacharskii, the first Commissar for Enlightenment in the Bolshevik government, put it in 1919: 'It is a matter of fostering a completely new spirit in this branch of art and education' (Lunacharskii 1988: 47). Newsreel was the kindergarten of the new Soviet cinema. The cadres of Soviet newsreel included Eduard Tisse (Eisenstein's cinematographer) as well as Dziga Vertov and

Lev Kuleshov – who returned from newsreel duty in the civil war as a veteran of war and cinema (aged 20).

Kuleshov ran his own workshop at the State Film School – largely because he was the only experienced film-maker left in the Soviet Union. Thus, another Soviet master, Vsevolod Pudovkin, could write, ‘We make films, but Kuleshov made cinema’ (Pudovkin et al. 1988: 270). This was a new cinema – a break with theatre and Bauer. Kuleshov’s collective developed acting techniques by staging ‘films without film’. Kuleshov also became a champion of cinema as *cinema*.³ And, in 1918, he wrote of ‘cinema specificity’ (*kinomatografichnost*), which established the centrality of montage to Soviet cinema (Kulshov 1988c: 45–46). At the Institute Kuleshov made a short film *Engineer Prite’s Project* (*Proekt inzhenera Prayta* 1919), which put his theories of rapid cutting into practice.⁴ There was a simple and very practical reason for the creation of montage. There was little film stock available so no waste could be allowed. Short shot length leaves less chance of mistakes or mishaps in shooting. This practicality was linked to Kuleshov’s newsreel experience where there was no time or need for smooth transitions. However, interestingly Kuleshov first used the term ‘montage’ in 1917, that is *before* his civil war experience, when he wrote of ‘regularly ordered in time and space a cinema that fixes organised human and natural raw material and organises the viewer’s attention at the moment of projection through montage’ (Kuleshov 1988b: 42).

Moreover, it was Kuleshov who was the first to write with specific reference to American film in the Russian cinema press. Until 1918 the central debate (led first by Mayakovskii and then Meyerhold) focused on the new medium’s relationship with theatre and particularly on issues of acting. However, in 1918 Kuleshov’s ‘The Art of the Cinema’ went straight to the heart of the matter, exploring cinema on its own terms. It is no coincidence that he alights upon the American cinema of the period as his lodestone:

Each individual work of art has its own basic method to express the idea of art. Very few film-makers (apart from the Americans) have realised that in cinema this method of expressing an artistic idea is provided by the rhythmical succession of individual still frames or short sequences conveying movement – that is what is technically known as montage.

(Kulshov 1988c: 46)

In his journalism, Kuleshov continued to expound upon why American film was so important. American film, he suggests, 'shows [...] how much plot you can get into a very short film [...] they strive to achieve the maximum number of scenes and maximum effect with the minimum waste of film' (Kuleshov 1988d: 73). He went on to call for a 'genuine cinema', which he viewed as 'a montage of American shots' (Kuleshov 1988d: 73). It is important to note that this is a provisional welcome: 'Down with the Russian psychological picture. For the moment, welcome *American* thrillers and stunts' (Kuleshov 1988a: 69a).

And Kuleshov was not alone in his admiration of the pace of American film, which contrasted starkly with the 'Russian style'. Even a more overtly radical film-maker like Dziga Vertov, whilst taking a fundamental position against *all* fiction film, could still state in 1922 that 'the cine-eye thanks the American adventure film with its ostentatious dynamism, to the dramatizations of American Pinkertonism for their rapid shot changes and close-ups'. This welcome is again conditional and provisional 'they are good but disorderly' (Kuleshov 1988a: 69).

There remains a question mark as to what exactly the new Soviet film-makers were watching during this crucial developmental period. Even after trade relations were somewhat eased with the New Economic Policy in 1921, there would be no sudden influx of new American films. That said, we do know that D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916) got through the blockade in 1919 and was widely distributed (Leyda 1983: 142–143). Soviet audiences may have been thrilled by the crosscutting, or just relieved not to be watching worn-out prints or short didactic *agitki* (agitational films produced from 1918 onwards). Griffith certainly influenced Pudovkin: 'as far as I can remember I had not seen a single film before 1920 [...] I had seen D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance* which made a tremendous impression on me [...] it fascinated me and I was eager to go into this new field [...] I applied to the state film school, a former private mansion on a small Moscow side street' (Leyda 1983: 149–150). Research into the early Soviet cinema press is inconclusive as to which American films the Russian public in general were watching – from cinema adverts it is not easy to tell which films are which (and titles may have been changed). There are plenty of feature articles on Pickford, Griffith, Chaplin et al. We do know that Moscow audiences were watching the US film *Robin Hood* (Allan Dwan 1922) in 1924,⁵ and that there were certainly precious few new Russian movies to watch.⁶

By the time Kuleshov was filming *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* (*Neobychnyye priklyucheniya mistera Vesta v strane bolshevikov* 1924), he clearly had had some exposure to

American movies. *Mr West* shows the influence of Harold Lloyd, and specifically an acquaintance with his 1923 feature *Safety Last!* (Fred C. Neymeyer 1923). *Mr West* looks just like Lloyd's character. It also betrays the film-maker's healthy diet of US Westerns. In the movie a naïve American visitor to the Soviet Union is taken in by a group of criminals who literally 'take him for a ride'. Mr West is saved by a cowboy – with more than a passing resemblance to Tom Mix (star of Selig and Fox westerns of the 1910s and 1920s). Whilst the influence of American film style – particularly in terms of action within the frame and rapid cutting – is evident here, we should note that Kuleshov's portrayal of 'America' is as both naïve and vital. Kuleshov does not divorce himself entirely from the strategies he learnt with Bauer. The iconography of *Mr West* repeats the decadent motifs of Bauer's films. As part of his seduction *Mr West* is entertained with 'tea – Soviet style'. This scene knowingly apes a scene in Bauer's *Child of the Big City* (*Ditya bolshogo goroda* 1914), when the 'fallen' seamstress herself begins the seduction of a waiter as he serves tea. Yet there is a new spirit in this film: it is quick (in every way); *cinematic* in its use of cinematography and editing to give particular elements meaning; and finally *political*, a crucially important aspect of Soviet film-making.

Kuleshov and Vertov were not alone in their engagement with America and American cinema. In 1922, Kozintsev and Trauberg had formed their 'Factory of the Eccentric Actor' (FEKS). The FEKS was launched with a manifesto notable for its playfulness and its own particular take on America as part of a whole catalogue of things they love, including 'risk, bravery, violence, chase, revolution, gold, blood, laxative pills, Charles Chaplin' and especially circus: 'ALL THE TWO HUNDRED TOMES OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM ARE NOT AS EXPRESSIVE AS A CIRCUS POSTER'. The statement continues:

We prefer a Pinkerton cover to the concoctions of Picasso!!!!

1) YESTERDAY – comfortable offices, Bald foreheads, People pondered, made decisions, thought things over.

TODAY – a signal. To the machines! Driving belts, chains, wheels, hands, legs, electricity. The rhythm of production.

2) YESTERDAY – the culture of Europe

TODAY – the technology of America

Industry, production under the Stars and Stripes. Either Americanization or the undertaker

Cloaked in situationalist rhetorical flourishes though it is, the manifesto still makes clear what it is that so attracts the FEKS to America:

TODAY – the shouts of newspaper-sellers, scandals, policemen's truncheons, noise, shouting, stamping, running.

The pace today;

The rhythm of the machine, concentrated by America, realised on the street.

... Only our methods are indivisible and inevitable:

THE AMERICANISATION OF THE THEATRE in Russian means ECCentriSM

(Kozintsev et al. 1988: 63)

It is clear that what the FEKS took from 'America' was (their perception of) its youthful enthusiasm, its technology and its 'noise'. For the FEKS 'America' is a stick with which to beat 'YESTERDAY', rather than a political paradigm. With their films of the 1920s such as *The Adventures of Oktyabrina* (*Pokhozheniya Oktyabrin* 1924), *The Devil's Wheel* (*Chyortovo koleso* 1926) and *New Babylon* (*Novii Vavilon* 1929) they tried in their own way to marry the energy of American film style with overtly Bolshevik ideology.

'The study of methods does at first proceed through imitation': Eisenstein and American cinema

Another burgeoning radical theatre director with a penchant for circus, Eisenstein, launched his film-making career in 1924. He, like the FEKS (and indeed Vertov and Kuleshov), finally floundered on the attempt to square the circle of political revolutionary zeal in politics and art. In similar fashion to his comrades, he looked to America for a formula. Eisenstein had joined the *Proletkult* theatre – a state-sponsored troupe aiming to celebrate 'proletarian culture' – after service as an engineer in the civil war. He had been apprised of the power of cinema by his friend Esfir Shub, who was editing Western films for the Soviet authorities (Roberts 1991: 149–159). Eisenstein changed career and began by re-editing Chaplin movies at Goskino (the State Cinema organisation).

In 1923, Eisenstein worked on his first filmed exercise *Glumov's Diary* (*Dnevnik Glumova*) and wrote of 'The Montage of Attractions', which he saw as 'a free montage with arbitrarily chosen independent (of both the particular composition and any thematic connection with the actors) effects (attractions) but with the precise aim of specific thematic effect' (Eisenstein 1988a: 88). In a slightly later article Eisenstein then made the political purpose of this aesthetic choice more explicit. As with much of

Eisenstein's written work, the piece is severely technical in its language. Nonetheless, it points to the centrality of American film style to his cultural politics:

The downfall of the majority of our Russian films derives from the fact that the people who make them do not know how to construct attractional schemas consciously but only rarely and in a fumbling fashion hit on successful combinations. The American detective film and, to an even greater extent, the American comedy film (the method in its pure form) provide inexhaustible material for the study of these methods (admittedly on a purely formal level, ignoring content).

Griffith's films [...] would teach us a lot about this kind of montage, albeit with a social purpose that is hostile to us. It is not, however, necessary to transplant America, although in all fields the study of methods does at first proceed through imitation. It is necessary to train ourselves in the skill of selecting attractions from our raw material [...] there is and should be no cinema other than agit-cinema.

(Eisenstein 1999: 39–40)

Here we see Eisenstein encapsulating the 'Soviet' response to American cinema. This response could be described as a dialogue – but a rather particular one, namely: embrace American technique but reject American ideological content. In this spirit Eisenstein could launch into his revolutionary trilogy of *Strike* (*Stachka* 1924), in which the stirrings of revolutionary consciousness are thwarted due to the lack of disciplined leadership; *Battleship Potemkin* (*Bronenosets Potyomkin* 1925), which celebrates the first – ultimately pre-emptive – revolution of 1905; and *October* (*Oktyabr* 1928), planned as a 10th anniversary celebration of the Bolshevik Revolution. All three films utilise rapid cutting (literally in some places 'machine-gun' editing) and *Strike* in particular contains images and sequences that can be seen as a homage to American comedy and detective movies of the previous decade.

Changes in 'The General Line' (1926–1929)

Battleship Potemkin was warmly received by cineastes in the West and achieved a certain *success de scandal* in Berlin and London before being banned from general showing in France and limited to film club showings in the United Kingdom.⁷ In the United States, it was forbidden on the grounds that it 'gives American sailors a blueprint as to how to

conduct a mutiny'.⁸ Consequently, the Soviet rejection of the ideological content of American cinema – whilst admiring its technique – was mirrored in Western responses to *Potemkin*.

Eisenstein returned from a triumphant trip to Germany in 1926 with some degree of international fame but to a future of increasing interference. During the making of Eisenstein's next films *The General Line* (aborted during filming in 1926) and *October*, criticism (perhaps intensified by a certain professional jealousy) grew to a pitch. *October* was received with mixed reviews after its release was delayed over 2 months – the result of a need to re-edit the film to remove the newly disgraced Trotskii. Thus, one of the chief engineers of the Revolution was removed from its historical record completely. Ronald Bergan makes a strong case for this delay being a result of the direct intervention of Joseph Stalin (Bergan 1997: 134). Whether or not this is the case, it is clear that by 1928 Soviet cinema, like Soviet society itself, was seen to be in need of much firmer central control. Regime change had been signalled on 23 October 1927 when Stalin delivered his speech 'The Trotskiist Opposition Before and Now' to the joint plenum of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission of the Communist Party and in the purge of Trotskiites which followed the 10th Anniversary of the Revolution. The new political order was confirmed on 19 December. The Fifteenth Congress of the CPSU elected Stalin as General Secretary. Collectivisation (in effect a military campaign for central control of the whole country) could begin in earnest in 1928. The change in the artistic atmosphere was clearly evident by the March 1928 Party Conference on Cinema. The Cinema Conference hastened the decline of any formal experimentation in its demand for cinema to be a 'more effective weapon of cultural revolution' (quoted in Taylor and Christie 1988: 108–115). Indeed, with touching naiveté, on the eve of the conference, Eisenstein even called for 'a rod of iron now for all those who bring disgrace to the cinema' (Bergan 1997: 139), which would ultimately manifest itself as a tighter control of his own cinematic artistry.

Eisenstein's *The Old & New* (*Staroye i novoye* 1929) is a key text in illustrating the new tighter control in artistic and political fields. The film portrays why and how the countryside needed to be forced into the future. Whilst the peasantry exhibits the same bovine quality as shown in pre-revolutionary cinema, here we are now shown the solution. Thus the film ends with Marfa, the wise peasant, triumphant and empowered (by political education from her urban 'superiors') intercut with shots of her personal and political development through the film. The final inter-title proclaims 'And so the divisions between the

city and the countryside are being erased.’ – a powerful slogan that rings hollow after the struggles that have been shown in the film that precedes it. In *The Old & New*, Eisenstein moved from the somewhat unfathomable ‘intellectual montage’ of *October* and succeeded in his wish to ‘make films directly from a slogan’ (Eisenstein 1995: 546). The problem was that slogans tend to make duller films.

Eisenstein was being asked to make films that did not question or challenge and he, like Vertov and Kuleshov and the FEKS, was struggling to do so. Crucially, however, even as the strident voices of proletarianisation were bemoaning that ‘We have no Soviet Cinema’ (Petrov-Bytov 1988: 259–261), there was still space to debate whether – or how – to react to the cinema of Hollywood. Indeed Adrian Piotrovsky, a noble defender of artistry as Director of the Leningrad studios until he was purged in 1937, could still write in defence of ‘Westernism in our Cinema’ (Piotrovsky 1988: 267–270). However, Piotrovsky sounded like a dissonant and even dissident voice as the industry came under stricter Bolshevik control with the imposition of ‘Union Cinema’ (*Soyuzkino*) under the leadership of Boris Shumyatskii, a Bolshevik bureaucrat. The tone of the times was set by a *Cinema and Life* (*Kino i Zhizn*) editorial of June 1930: ‘The “wise old men of cinema” who [...] declared that “intelligible form leads to oversimplification” are wrong. These apologies for theorists have been beaten’ (see Taylor and Christie 1988: 297–299 [298]).

The little boy from Riga in the belly of the beast – Eisenstein in the West

As a ‘wise old man of cinema’ with an international reputation, Eisenstein was dispatched to Europe in August 1929. He was accompanied by long-standing collaborators Grigori Alexandrov and Eduard Tisse. The ostensible reason for the trip was to investigate developments in sound technology. In addition, Eisenstein had been encouraged by the offer of work in Hollywood made by Douglas Fairbanks (on a visit to Moscow in 1926) and Douglas Shenck, Russian born President of United Artists. However, protracted negotiations between the Hollywood studio and the Soviet authorities left Eisenstein touring Western Europe as a much feted intellectual but unable to make a movie.

In April 1930, Jesse Lasky, the Vice-President of Paramount Pictures, arrived in Paris to offer Eisenstein’s team a contract to make three films for his company (alternating with productions back in the Soviet Union). The offer of hard currency (for the Soviet authorities) and the

opportunity of a new experience (for Eisenstein) were irresistible. Thus Eisenstein, Alexandrov and Tisse arrived in the United States in May. Their welcome was not wholly warm; Eisenstein was named as part of a 'Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy to turn the American cinema into a Communist cesspool' (Bergan 1997: 191). Clearly, 'dialogue' might be difficult in these circumstances although Eisenstein was made to feel at home by former acquaintances like Douglas Fairbanks and, in one historic meeting, by the sadly burnt-out D. W. Griffith in the lobby of the Astor Hotel, NY. Eisenstein's treatment by the Hollywood moguls can best be summed up in a remark attributed to Samuel Goldwyn: 'I've seen your film *Potemkin* and admire it very much. What I would like is for you to do something of the same kind, but a little cheaper, for Ronald Coleman' (Bergan 1997: 197).

Eisenstein's stay in Hollywood was a chastening experience. He had replaced the frustrations of lack of resources and inefficient state bureaucracy with the vagaries of the studio system. Away from the admittedly sometimes bitter scrap for resources at home, Eisenstein's team found themselves in that more American experience: development hell. Numerous projects were suggested and failed. *Sutter's Gold* (based on a novel by Blaise Cendrars) was seized upon as a piece that would allow Eisenstein to essay his theories on contrapuntal sound. Paramount thought not. The film was made by – and failed for – Universal in 1936. Paramount offered him Theodore Dreiser's *American Tragedy* instead (Griffith and Ernst Lubitsch having failed to film it). David Selznick sealed the project's fate with his memo: 'the most moving script I have ever read [...] As entertainment, I don't think it has one chance in a hundred. [It] cannot possibly offer anything but a most miserable two hours to millions of happy minded young Americans' (Bergan 1997: 211).

Without the backing of Selznick it was inevitable that Eisenstein's Paramount contract would be terminated. Sadder and wiser, Eisenstein, Alexandrov and Tisse left Hollywood in December. They had signed a contract with Upton Sinclair to shoot *Que Viva Mexico*. In a year Eisenstein's team had shot almost 200,000 feet of film which had been sent to Hollywood for processing, due to lack of facilities in Mexico. Eisenstein was overrunning Sinclair's budget (a small one to begin with). Sinclair – perhaps unaware of the dangers to his Soviet colleagues – communicated his displeasure to the Soviet authorities (and thus to Stalin himself). In January 1932, Sinclair ordered Eisenstein to stop shooting. Eisenstein planned to return to Hollywood to edit the Mexican footage. In March, Eisenstein was allowed into the United States but refused permission to see the Mexican rushes. Before

leaving for Moscow, he reached an agreement with Sinclair that would allow him to edit the film in the Soviet Union. But the agreement was forgotten as soon as Eisenstein was on his way home. Instead, Sinclair signed a contract with Sol Lesser, producer of Tarzan epics, to have a film made out of Eisenstein's uncut footage.

Death of the 'dialogue' (1932–1941)

Eisenstein returned to the Soviet Union in the spring of 1932. His attempt to engage with the Hollywood production process had been a signal failure. He may have managed to miss the more ridiculous Cultural Revolution posturing of the 'proletarianisation' of cinema. However, the party *apparatchick* Boris Shumyatskii remained at the ideological reins of the industry. In September 1932, Eisenstein took up a post teaching film direction at The State Film School. This employment in itself could be seen as evidence of the marginalisation of the masters of the first generation of Soviet film-makers. The 1928 changes had begun to play out to their increasingly surreal conclusion with the increased centralisation of control of film production and, in August 1934, the official sanctioning of 'Socialist Realism'. Ian Christie, amongst others, has argued against what he calls 'the appearance of a decisive watershed between the free 20s and the "shackled" 30s' (Christie 1988: 3). Nonetheless, as Christie and Taylor also note, 'the film-maker's letter to Stalin of November 1934 is a vivid example of the degree to which aesthetic considerations were now subjugated to ideological ones' (Taylor and Christie 1988: 316). The film-makers (including Vertov, Kuleshov, Kozintsev and Trauberg as well as Eisenstein) wrote, 'we are all inspired by [...] the ideas of the brilliant Leader of the most extraordinary and revolutionary Party: Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin' (see Taylor and Christie 1988: 335–337 [337]).

For Eisenstein, the Hollywood experience had not been a pleasant one. However, the situation at home was far from ideal. He was now functioning in an atmosphere where the artists of the Soviet Union had decided (and were told) that they could learn nothing from the *innostrantsii* (outsiders) of the capitalist world and their agents within. The Soviet citizen now lived in the best of all possible worlds where, in the words of their Leader, 'life has become more joyous' (Stalin 1935). In the mid-1930s, it would have been foolish for Soviet film-makers to claim to be learning lessons from the enemy, and even more foolish to claim fame or influence in the West. As I have discussed in more detail elsewhere, an increasingly embattled Vertov tried precisely that

tactic in 1932: 'by reference to foreign praise for his film *Enthusiasm*. Edition 3 of *Proletarskoe Kino* contains the lengthy – and desperate – compilation entitled "Charlie Chaplin, the Hamburg Workers and the Prescriptions of Doctor Wirth" [...] The editors replied immediately with a bitter attack on the author. He [was] damned for self-advertisement' (Roberts 1999: 101).

Sadly, Vertov responded in print with a rant against all and sundry, including Eisenstein. The personal attacks on Eisenstein continued as he continued to teach. He was the particular brunt of much personal criticism from Leonid Trauberg during the January 1935 Conference of Workers in Soviet Cinema. His film *Bezhin Meadow* (*Bezhin lug*) was stalled by the authorities and was never satisfactorily completed. *Alexander Nevskii* (1939), at least, was made and remains a powerful historical epic. In terms of style it owes little to his earlier fascination with *americanschina*, although its narrative structure, which is predicated upon the attractive hero solving the basic disruption of the plot (Russia's domination by foreign powers) whilst going on a personal journey, would certainly fit a 'Classical Hollywood' paradigm.

Eisenstein ended his career with *Ivan the Terrible* (*Ivan Groznii* 1941–1943), a 'Russian' (not even Soviet) masterpiece with no trace of the 'American' influence that had characterised his earlier work. It is a voluptuous epic in its sweep, tragic in its tone. Thus Eisenstein – the most 'Western' of all the first generation of soviet 'masters' – could be said in his final films to have more in common with Bauer than Chaplin. That does not mean that Eisenstein had forgotten Hollywood cinema. Whilst filming *Ivan* in Alma-Ata in November 1941, for example, he composed a fragment full of praise for Walt Disney remembering how he wrote (in a somewhat safer political climate) 'the work of this master is the greatest contribution of the American people to art':

Disney is a marvellous lullaby for the suffering and unfortunate, the oppressed and deprived [...] Disney's films are a revolt against partitioning and legislating, against spiritual stagnation and greyness. But the revolt is lyrical. The revolt is daydream. Fruitless and lacking consequences. These aren't those daydreams which, accumulating, give birth to action and raise a hand to realize the dream [...] the talent of Disney and the 'great consoler' – the cinema.

(Eisenstein 1988b: 3–4)

For Eisenstein and his contemporaries the modernism of Hollywood was an attraction but essentially, as he said of Disney, it was also 'a lullaby

[...] fruitless and lacking consequences'. Eisenstein died trying to make a different cinema. What could be learnt from Hollywood was now both beyond the point and politically beyond the pale. The dialogue, if it existed in any real sense, was now a dialogue of the deaf. In the post-war period it was to become (potentially) a dialogue to the death.

Notes

1. Eleonora Duse (1858–1924) made a successful appearance at 14 as Juliet and in 1879 gained recognition in Emile Zola's *Thérèse Raquin*. She became the only rival of Sarah Bernhardt and appeared in the film *Cenere* (1916), which she also directed.
2. Lenin (it is claimed) believed 'for us the most important of all the arts is cinema...' (in a much utilised 'conversation with Anatoli Lunacharskii'. See as an example Taylor and Christie 1988: 56–57).
3. NB, *not* filmed theatre. For the importance of this debate see Taylor 1992: 42–65.
4. Yuri Tsivian used the 'cinemetrics' of this film as indicative of the change in pace pre- and post-1917 cinema at the BFI/SEES conference, Imperial War Museum, London, March 1990 and in *Silent Witnesses: Russian Films, 1908–1919* (Tsivian 1990).
5. We know this because of anecdotal evidence about the Moscow audience's reluctance to attend *Battleship Potemkin* – see, for example, Taylor 2000.
6. Leyda lists only 21 in 1918 (mostly shorts) down to 14 in 1919, 8 in 1920 and 4 in 1921 (one of which is a full-length compilation documentary of the civil war) with practically nothing in the period between 1922 and 1923.
7. The British Board of Film Censorship's Annual Report for 1926 mentions that the film was rejected for 'inflammatory subtitles and Bolshevist Propaganda' (see www.sbbfc.co.uk/BattleshipPotemkin.asp).
8. This is possibly apocryphal. See, for example, Matorelli 2004.

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3

Anglo-American Collaboration: Korda, Selznick and Goldwyn

Charles Drazin

Alexander Korda, who in the 1930s pioneered big-budget international film-making in Britain, had his first taste of Hollywood when he worked there between 1926 and 1930 as a contract director for First National and then Fox. It was an unhappy time. In Europe, Korda had been a respected producer/director, he had even run his own film studio; in Hollywood, he was just another employee. Restless and feeling thwarted, he wanted to return to Europe, but saw no reason why such a decision should limit his ambition or prevent him from putting to use the considerable experience he had gained in Hollywood. Writing to his friend and collaborator Lajos Biro, he observed:

In my opinion (1) you can make a great deal of money in Europe with a good picture; (2) a good English-speaking film has a tremendous market over here; (3) if one makes a good picture in Europe, one can get a new contract in America just as easily as if one made it here; and finally (4) if one earns good money in Europe, why the hell should one come back to this accursed Hollywood?

(Tabori 1959: 106–107)

Motivated by this initial desire to work in Europe yet still profit in America, Alexander Korda would pioneer the basic framework for Anglo-American partnership in film production and remain its key proponent for over a quarter of a century.

In this chapter, I shall explore why and how Alexander Korda put such a transatlantic model of film-making in place, and then trace how that model altered over time and particularly between the years 1933 and 1948. In the second half of the chapter, drawing on archive material, I shall then focus on the transatlantic film partnerships that Korda

established after the Second World War with the Hollywood producers – David Selznick and Samuel Goldwyn. These partnerships resulted in three films, whose production history I shall examine in some detail. While Carol Reed's production of *The Third Man* would enjoy huge international success, Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's films *The Elusive Pimpernel* (1950) and *Gone to Earth* (1950) were both box-office failures. By exploring the reasons for their contrasting fates, I hope to shed some light on the cultural tensions that Anglo-American collaboration entailed.

The birth of transatlantic film-making

It is worth emphasizing, because it is such a fundamental feature of the British film industry's relationship with Hollywood, that Government regulation has been the recurrent factor in bringing about American involvement in the British film production. Rarely has such commitment ever been voluntary. Indeed, if Britain was clearly attractive to Korda as an English-speaking production base, it was such regulation that provided him with the practical opportunity to make the move.

The Quota Act of 1927 required American film companies who wished to exhibit their films in Britain to invest in British film production. On returning to Europe, Korda first began to work for Paramount as a director making multiple-language films in France, but the new legislation encouraged Paramount to extend its film-making operation to Britain, and Korda arrived in London during the summer of 1931 to make one of the company's Quota films. Soon afterwards, he established his own production company, London Film Productions, which embarked on a contract to make a series of six Quota films for Paramount.

Most Quota films showed little ambition and were made on the smallest possible budget. The Hollywood companies were reluctant to invest any more than was absolutely necessary under the legislation, since they regarded the Quota films as unnecessary competition to their own Hollywood-made production. But one Hollywood company provided a notable exception to this attitude. Ever since its formation in 1919, United Artists sought to compete with its larger Hollywood rivals by focusing on quality rather than quantity. It therefore regarded its Quota production as an opportunity to enhance its reputation for distributing prestige films.

In 1933, it entered into a five-film production deal with London Film Productions to make two 'A' class pictures and three 'B' class pictures. The first film to be made under this deal was *The Private Life of Henry VIII*.

Costing £93,710, its total world receipts – as recorded in a 1938 audit for London Film Production's largest investor the Prudential Assurance Company – was £214,360 (Prudential Archive, box 2352). *The Private Life of Henry VIII* is often hailed by commentators as the first British film to break into the American market, but a more qualified appraisal is required because a key feature was the film's Anglo-American character.¹ It owed its success not only to the involvement of an American distribution company United Artists, but also to Hollywood-derived expertise and know-how: Alexander Korda, who directed the film, was the only British-based director already to have had substantial experience of working in Hollywood, where he had made ten films. Indeed, the style and approach of *The Private Life of Henry VIII* was inspired by one of his biggest box-office successes from this period, *The Private Life of Helen of Troy*, which he made for First National in 1927. The chief scriptwriter of *Henry VIII* was Korda's longtime friend Lajos Biro, who had written scripts for Paramount and First National. Critical, too, was the participation of the film's American editor William Hornbeck, who had started editing pictures in the silent days for Keystone, and possessed an intimate knowledge of Hollywood pace and style. Together, these collaborators – well versed in Hollywood film-making practices – consciously crafted a product that would appeal to an American market.

The Private Life of Henry VIII served as a model for the kind of prestige international film that Alexander Korda would go on to make through the rest of his career. But it was not enough simply to have a subject of American appeal. A vital element in Korda's model for transatlantic film-making was to have a powerful American distribution company to sell that subject into the American market. At first, the arrangement with United Artists was so successful that Korda's original distribution agreement of five films was extended at the beginning of 1934 to sixteen (United Artists Collection 1934). Then on 2 September 1935, keen to secure a supply of the suitable prestige product that Korda could provide, the distribution company invited him to become an owner-member. A new contract was drawn up under which Korda was required to make over the next 5 years a minimum of 20 films for United Artist's exclusive distribution.

However, it soon became apparent that, although there was no discernible gulf in terms of their quality or entertainment value, Korda's pictures were failing to match the grosses of United Artists' American-made product. When *The Ghost Goes West* was released in early 1936, the Vice-President of United Artists Arthur Kelly wrote to the

sales force exhorting them to make an extra-special effort (circular letter, no. 3410, 14 January 1936, box 1, file 3, United Artists Collection):

We have in the 'GHOST GOES WEST' a picture that definitely appeals to everybody. It is not a costume picture; it is not a so-called British picture. It is made strictly to appeal to an American audience. It is without doubt a tremendous piece of entertainment... On this picture, we can prove to Mr Korda, that with the right vehicle we can roll up a tremendous gross.

(United Artists Collection 1936)

But United Artists' salesmen routinely failed to meet such expectations. At the end of 1937, when London Film Productions was in serious financial trouble, Korda criticized United Artists for failing to secure greater returns on his pictures in America. At an acrimonious board meeting of the stockholders on 8 December he 'stated that the failure of United Artists... had caused London Films to lose two million dollars instead of making a profit of two million dollars' (United Artists Collection 1937).

Korda would have liked to believe that 'Hollywood' was a state of mind, but over time it became clear that, regardless of the intrinsic quality of any single film, the very fact of its having been made in England somehow limited its commercial potential. Korda's production of *The Thief of Baghdad* (1940) offers a particularly telling example. He shot by far the greater part of the film in England, but completed it in Hollywood. United Artists sought to get a Quota exemption from the British Board of Trade on the basis that *The Thief of Baghdad* was an English production, yet sold the film in America as a Hollywood-produced film (United Artists Collection 1941). In a circular to the company's sales staff, dated 4 October 1940, the then general manager of United Artists Murray Silverstone wrote:

THIEF OF BAGHDAD has cost Mr Korda almost two million dollars. A very considerable portion of this money was spent in production here in America. You know, of course, that the war, which broke a year ago, caught Mr Korda in the midst of production and necessitated his transplanting his entire organization with its half-finished picture from London to Hollywood.

In our earlier selling of THE THIEF OF BAGHDAD, it was sold as an English-made picture. Fate, however, has changed this and THIEF OF

BAGHDAD had been completed as an American-made picture and a fortune in American dollars has been spent in America to make it.

You must go out into the field and get a new contract on THIEF OF BAGHDAD at top terms for every old contract that was sold when THIEF OF BAGHDAD was expected to be an English-made production.

(United Artists Collection 1940)

It seemed that the general reputation of British pictures in America was something that a producer had to make an extra effort to live down. It was not that they were considered to be second-rate; rather that they were somehow overly complicated and difficult to follow. Commenting on the nature of the American audience that went to see these films, the American film critic Richard Griffith observed:

Even if they could understand the West End accents, which was more than doubtful, they could not understand the films. Some British pictures of the period certainly had ideas, taste and talent. There was only one thing wrong with them. So many of them simply were not films in the sense that American audiences understood films. However hard Korda tried to make films in the American sense, those that he made in England could not escape the general prejudice.

(Rotha and Griffith 1951: 550)

Korda stayed on in Hollywood to make *Lady Hamilton* (US title *That Hamilton Woman* 1940), *Lydia* (1941) and *Jungle Book* (1942), all three of which were sold as Hollywood pictures. But he knew that he would face the problem of the suspect British brand once he returned to England. Lacking faith in United Artists' ability to find a solution, Korda sold his stock in the company in 1943.

But he sought to put the same Anglo-American structure in its place – English-based production coupled with American distribution. This was a given. The trick was to find a version of such a relationship that would compensate for the failings of the British brand and allow him to keep his much-prized independence as a film producer. A generous deal with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, under which he would run a production unit for the American company in Britain, failed after just one film *Perfect Strangers* (US title *Vacation from Marriage* 1945), when the American company, quite understandably, began to impose increasing controls on the free way in which its extravagant British producer spent its money.

Helped by his windfall from the sale of his stock in United Artists, Korda then put together the vertical combine British-Lion after the

war, but once again the international scale of its production depended upon finding an American distributor. This time he turned to Twentieth Century-Fox. At the beginning of July 1947, Fox announced a 4-year agreement to distribute 14 British-Lion productions in America. 'This is the most important releasing contract Twentieth Century-Fox has ever made', commented Fox's president Spyros P. Skouras (*Los Angeles Examiner* 1947). But from the outset, there were private doubts. On the very day of the announcement the managing director of London Film Productions, David Cunynghame, who had worked with Korda since the very first days of the company, confided to his diary: 'In the evening I received a copy of the Fox distribution agreement which Alex had signed in America. I do not think that he will fare even as well with it as he did with his UA distribution.'²

A month later a shock intervention from the British government made it even less likely that the agreement would work. In the midst of a currency crisis, the British chancellor of the exchequer announced a 75 per cent tax on the import of Hollywood films to stem the outward flow on sterling. 'Dalton's vicious anti-American film pronouncement in the House of Commons [is] making Alex wonder where on earth he now stands with regard to American distribution', noted Cunynghame on 7 August 1947, the day of the announcement. Worse was to follow when, in retaliation, the Motion Picture Export Association of America (MPEAA) placed an embargo on the export of Hollywood films to Britain.

Fox stood by the agreement to distribute the British-Lion films, but it was hardly surprising if in the circumstances Cunynghame's forebodings proved to be justified. Fox refused to accept some films under the agreement, such as *Mine Own Executioner* (1947) and *A Man About the House* (1947), while those it did accept made only poor returns at the American box office. 'Alex received Spyro Skouras's letter agreeing to a divorce from Twentieth Century-Fox', Cunynghame noted on 30 August 1948. 'I certainly never thought that the marriage would last.'³

But meanwhile, in the year since the government's original announcement of the new tax, negotiations between the British government and the MPEAA had resulted in an ambitious bilateral plan that encouraged Korda to try another kind of marriage. Concluded in March 1948, the Anglo-American Film Agreement was designed to address Britain's currency problems in a way that would encourage positive collaboration between the two sides. In return for the abolition of the import tax, the Hollywood film companies would lift their embargo and for 2 years, from June 1948, limit the amount of British box-office receipts that they remitted back to the United States. The balance of these earnings would

have to stay in Britain, but they could be re-invested in British film production.

Korda still needed an American partner as much as ever, but here was an incentive to experiment with a very different framework. Both United Artists and Twentieth Century-Fox had acted as American distributors of what were entirely British-made productions. Perhaps, if the American partner had a substantial share in the production too, it would create a vested interest and also lend the venture a certain Hollywood character that would make the difference at the American box office. There were two obvious suitors. Korda's former partners in United Artists Samuel Goldwyn and David Selznick had substantial earnings tied up in Britain under the new agreement, which they wanted to put to productive use if they could. Both turned to Korda as the producer in Britain most able to deliver the Hollywood-style prestige films they required, each concluding a separate production agreement with Korda on the same day, 14 May 1948.

Working with Goldwyn

In the case of Samuel Goldwyn, it was decided to launch a partnership with an initial one-off experiment. If this venture was successful, the understanding was that others would follow. The chosen vehicle was a remake of *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, which, starring Leslie Howard, had been a big box-office hit for Korda in 1934. Under the terms of their agreement, Goldwyn would provide the star David Niven, whom he had under contract, and invest £220,000 in the cost of the picture. They would divide the US box-office receipts 50–50. It would be directed by the British team Powell and Pressburger, whose most recent film *The Red Shoes* (1948) was enjoying enormous critical and commercial success.

As a former owner-member of United Artists, Goldwyn was well aware of Korda's frustration at the failure of his films to meet their box-office potential in America. He was convinced he knew why, and lost no time in letting his partner know. On 9 July 1948, as work on the film commenced, he wrote to Korda:

Some time ago I read an article – in *Harper's*, I think – which made a deep impression on me. The author (a Columbia University professor) made the point that many splendid British pictures did not receive their box-office due in America simply because the diction of actors was a little too British to be easily understood by American audiences.

I am calling this article to your attention for the reason that I hope *The Scarlet Pimpernel* will avoid the mistakes of some previous British pictures, which made the English more English than they really needed to be.

I am sure you know the American people as well as I do, but I hope you will keep this in mind in making the picture because after all I know you are as anxious as I am that it be very successful here.

(Samuel Goldwyn Papers 1948a)

Very soon afterwards, Goldwyn voiced another cause for concern (letter, 28 July 1948, file 4932, Goldwyn Papers). He felt that the first draft of the script had lost itself in over-complicated ideas and unnecessary attempts to evoke contemporary parallels, when all that was needed was to focus on the old-fashioned virtues of simple, suspenseful story-telling.

The audiences that will go to this film will want to get away completely from today and lose themselves in the past while seeing the picture [...]

[T]he Howard script should be closely studied and followed. There is no sense in changing just for the sake of change. This should be as nearly as possible a remake of *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, and we should retain in it the basic qualities which made that such a success instead of playing with elaborate fanciness that interferes with the progress of the story.

(Samuel Goldwyn Papers 1948b)

Goldwyn's worries about the script prompted him to send an employee, Max Wilkinson, to England to press his concerns directly with Powell and Pressburger, as well as Korda himself. All three gave repeated assurances to Wilkinson that Goldwyn's concerns would be addressed, but Goldwyn still felt uneasy enough to suggest that Powell and Pressburger should come out to Hollywood to discuss the script with him in person. Korda refused. While he expressed his appreciation and gratitude for Goldwyn's advice, he stressed that he retained the last word:

Our contract clearly states: a) that the final approval of the script rests solely with me and b) that the picture will be produced by myself. If you had disputed these conditions when we signed the contract, I would never have concluded the deal.

(Samuel Goldwyn Papers 1948c)

Although Goldwyn had to concede the point, he continued to cable Korda with regular bulletins of his concerns, declaring that the spirit of the agreement required that they should work together for their common good. As worrying to him as the script was the choice of female lead to play opposite David Niven. He suggested Susan Hayward, Alida Valli and Maureen O'Hara, but all to no avail. When he learned of Korda's intention to use his own contract player Margaret Leighton, Goldwyn fired off an alarmed cable begging him to change his mind:

She is completely unsuited for the part, is unknown here and will never be a star in this country. Using her can mean box office disaster and I trust you will abandon this idea and use an important actress who will add to the picture.

(Samuel Goldwyn Papers 1948d)

The opening of Korda's costume epic, *Bonnie Prince Charlie*, at the end of October 1948 must have reinforced Goldwyn's sense of watching an accident about to happen. The cuttings of the reviews, which were sent to him in Hollywood, confirmed his fears. 'Korda, as the boss of the enterprise, must bear the blame', wrote Stephen Watts in the *Sunday Express*. 'Most uncharacteristically, he has allowed a shapeless script, devoid of pattern or climax, to meander across the screen' (Watts 1948).

Bonnie Prince Charlie's poor reception encouraged Goldwyn to express his concerns over the story line of *The Elusive Pimpernel* with even more insistence than before. It seemed to him to distil a particular short-coming in his British partner. As he commented, in a letter to Korda:

There are times when you do not pay as much attention to stories as you should. I understand that you got very angry at the critics for their reviews of *Bonnie Prince Charlie*, but some people who have seen the picture have made the same comments to me.

(Samuel Goldwyn Papers 1948e)

Through the winter, Goldwyn was careful to follow the progress of the production closely. In February 1949, a member of his staff, Al Crown, reported on the 4-hour uncut assembly of the film. He did not think there was 'sufficient action', but he was pleased to be able to report that

this is not an English picture in the real sense of the word. I personally did not get the feeling, at any time, that this film might be looked upon with any disfavor because of it being an English production

and Mr Pressburger advised that certain scenes where the dialogue was extremely English will be altered, as many of the colloquialisms of that period would not be suitable for the United States.

(Samuel Goldwyn Papers 1948f)

In June 1949, Goldwyn saw the finished version in the presence of Powell and Pressburger, who had flown out for the occasion. He was bitterly disappointed. 'I think it is the worst picture I have ever seen in my life,' he told Korda, 'and I have just told Pressburger and Powell just that. It is simply beyond me how anybody can go out and do a job like that. There is no audience in the world [that] will understand the picture' (Samuel Goldwyn Papers 1949a). He refused to accept the picture and began legal proceedings against Korda for delivering an 'unmerchantable' film that was not what he had contracted for (Samuel Goldwyn Papers 1949b).

The failure of *The Elusive Pimpernel* not only sheds considerable light on the symbiotic if often troubled relationship between Hollywood and its impoverished British cousin, but it also provides an index of how much the film business had changed in Britain. One reason for the unhappy outcome of the Goldwyn-Korda partnership was because it was based on assumptions that were no longer valid. In the 1930s, Korda was a dominant figure in the British film industry who was able to impose his will on directors with the same authority of a Thalberg or a Mayer. But during the wartime years, when he was largely absent from Britain, the pattern of production had moved decisively away from the model of the Hollywood studio system. Although a large combine emerged in the form of the Rank Organisation, in practice it afforded considerable independence and creative freedom to its constituent companies.

Rank had bankrolled a new generation of British producers and directors to initiate and realize their own projects with a minimum of executive interference. Whether it was such companies as Two Cities, Cineguild or the Archers, prestige production in Britain had been in the hands of a number of small semi-autonomous units. After the war, the Rank Organisation's failure to break into the American market caused it to try to re-assert control, but by this time the leading British film-makers' expectations of creative freedom had become firmly entrenched. Rather than accept the new restrictions, they decamped to Korda at British-Lion, expecting to retain the same degree of independence they had known before.

The political circumstances of the time only served to encourage such expectations. The policy of the British government was to promote production in Britain, which it considered to be an important dollar-saver, and also – amid worries concerning the Rank Organisation's near-monopoly over the industry – to help independent producers who were finding it increasingly hard to attract finance. Its eventual solution was to turn towards British-Lion. On the understanding that the company would provide independent producers with finance, as well as production facilities and distribution, the government agreed to provide a substantial increase in its working capital. The first cheque, for £1,200,000, arrived in October 1948, just as Goldwyn was pressing Korda to impose his authority over Powell and Pressburger's script for *The Elusive Pimpernel*.

Goldwyn wrongly believed that Korda was in a position to issue orders to Powell and Pressburger as though they were contract directors. While it suited Korda, for the sake of his negotiating power, that Goldwyn should continue to live under this illusion, he had to give the opposite impression to his new paymasters – the British government. For Powell and Pressburger – presiding over their own production company the Archers – were just the kind of independent producers the government now expected British-Lion to support.

In practice, Korda had little authority over the writer/director team, who had in any case enjoyed near-total creative freedom since they made *The Forty-Ninth Parallel* in 1940. Korda could attempt only to persuade, not to command. In his dealings with Goldwyn, Korda presented the considerable commercial success of the Archers' last film *The Red Shoes* as a major asset, but in practice it only further compromised the harmony of the relationship. Powell and Pressburger naturally regarded the success of this hugely ambitious film as a vindication of their instincts to challenge the creative boundaries of the medium. While Goldwyn wanted them to respect the old-fashioned story-telling virtues, in bringing to the screen a tried and tested product, they wanted to take the cinema to a yet higher level. In a revealing note to Powell, Goldwyn expressed his confidence in the Archers as 'craftsmen' (Samuel Goldwyn Papers 1948g). The trouble was that the Archers themselves wanted to be not craftsmen but *artists*. Rather than fulfil Goldwyn's wish that they should repeat an old formula, they were determined to do everything they could to escape it. Inveigled by Korda into filming a story they would not naturally have chosen themselves, they were determined to enjoy a compensating freedom in the way they shot it. The result was a film that satisfied no one.

Working with Selznick

While *The Elusive Pimpernel* was a one-off venture, the agreement that Korda negotiated with David Selznick was a far more ambitious deal for four films. One of them turned out to be Powell and Pressburger's *Gone to Earth*, which went into production before the disaster of *The Elusive Pimpernel* could cause David Selznick to have second thoughts. In contrast to Goldwyn, Selznick insisted that final approval of the script should be written into the agreement, as well as approval of casting and key technicians. He then intervened heavily during the shooting of the film, which he regarded as an unusually important production because it starred his wife-to-be Jennifer Jones.

From the outset, Powell and Pressburger were as wary and suspicious as Selznick was interfering – a lack of trust that caused Selznick only to interfere even more. Before the production had begun he was already criticizing their 'high-handed' attitude and expressing his view that it was 'important that this team be stepped on' (Selznick Collection 1949a). When he came to England during the shooting of the film, his daily interference meant that the already strained relations quickly broke down, particularly with Pressburger, whom Selznick described as 'a pompous, stubborn man' (Selznick Collection 1949b). Powell and Pressburger found his demands so oppressive that although they were careful to meet their contractual obligations, in creative terms they effectively washed their hands of the film. In a note assuring Selznick that he would do his very best to implement the producer's latest suggestions for a scene, Powell observed: 'If you are right, it will be worth it. But I hope you will remember the words of Kim: "I will change my faith and my bedding but *thou* must pay for it" ' (Selznick Collection 1949c).

Selznick knew how unpopular he was making himself, but, echoing Goldwyn's comments on the elusive tendency of the Archers, he stressed to Korda that he had sound reasons:

You know my admiration for the work of these men, and for their talents. You also know that most of their pictures have failed, despite their technical brilliance and solely because of superficial scripts, unclear stories, assumption that the audience knew what they were trying to tell them when this was not the case.

(Selznick Collection 1949d)

If Selznick's heavy-handed interference must be considered partly responsible for the eventual commercial and critical failure of *Gone to*

Earth, it raises the more interesting question of why the first film to be made under his agreement with Korda, Carol Reed's *The Third Man* (1949), turned out to be such a success. Selznick had long regarded the British film industry as a rich source of talent. He had made the biggest film of his career, *Gone With the Wind* (1939), with a then little-known British actress, Vivien Leigh, and had launched Alfred Hitchcock's career in Hollywood with *Rebecca* (1940). Considering Carol Reed to be one of the finest directors in the world, he had unsuccessfully attempted to sign him to a contract as early as 1941, after the commercial success in America of Reed's films *The Stars Look Down* (1939) and *Night Train to Munich* (1940). Well aware of the wartime resurgence in the British cinema, in 1942 he instructed his representative in London, Jenia Reissar, to brief him on the most promising British directors with whom he might work.

However, his attitude to such partnerships might best be characterized as 'colonialist'. Whether the films that resulted were made in Britain or America, he was adamant that they should be geared to the Hollywood system of values and the dominant American market. Like Goldwyn, he believed that a major fault of British pictures was that they 'made the English more English than they really needed to be'. In a long memorandum briefing Reissar on Selznick's attitude, his assistant Daniel O'Shea warned that it would be 'desirable to have an American on the set of any pictures in which we interest ourselves [...] for the sole purpose of listening to the readings to make sure that the accent is not too English' (Selznick Collection 1942). This was a process that Selznick already applied rigorously on films that he made with foreign actors in America. O'Shea cited *Rebecca* as an outstanding example:

We found through our preview cards, which are very elaborate in form, and unlike those used by any other studio, that Olivier was not understandable through a large part of the picture. We kept re-dubbing and kept previewing until this criticism was eliminated entirely, even though it meant Olivier had to do hundreds of lines with a less British accent.

In his engagement with British cinema, Selznick was determined to fashion a commodity suitable for a market that was attuned to glamour and spectacle rather than realism. Working with a director like Carol Reed, who had a distinct taste for naturalism, it was perhaps inevitable that there would be some conflict. During the production of *The Third Man*, Selznick was his usual interventionist self. He demanded that Reed

and the writer of the film Graham Greene attend a lengthy script conference with him in Hollywood, and then during the making of the film in Vienna and Shepperton studios sent countless memoranda on virtually every aspect of the production.

Given his aggressive, overbearing manner, it is perhaps not surprising that both Reed and Greene would later characterize Selznick as a nightmare producer who had nothing positive to contribute to the film. But we should not allow the many nonsensical ideas he certainly did express blind us to the huge contribution he made to the project. Neither Reed nor Greene cared to give him due credit, but it was, for example, Selznick who suggested that the happy ending of Greene's original story treatment – in which 'the hero gets the girl' – was inappropriate, causing a re-think that would result in one of the most memorable endings in cinema history. He may have had little time for drab naturalism, but he possessed a huge respect for truth of character, story construction and logic.

It is difficult of course to be categorical about such an intangible element in the film-making process, but I would argue that as important as any interventions Selznick actually made were those that Reed knew Selznick most certainly would make if any aspect of the production fell short of his expectations. Reed came away from the script conference in Hollywood with a lot of silly suggestions from Selznick that he would quietly drop, but the visit gave him an extremely good general idea of the sort of qualities that Selznick looked for. Reed was on his mettle, knowing that Selznick would not hesitate to criticize him if he found occasion. Reed might have objected to the glamorous clothes that Selznick thought Alida Valli should wear, but none the less he made sure that she was at all times glamorously lit.

Reed was admired for his ability to flatter actors, to draw good performances out of them by putting them at their ease, but the same was true of his relationship with producers. He was reassuring and sensitive to their concerns without ever compromising his own vision of what was best for a film. During the shooting of *The Third Man* a great part of his skill lay in his ability, with Korda's canny support, to resist those ideas of Selznick that made no sense but to use those that did. Never at any stage of the production did he allow himself to be driven into abdicating responsibility in the way that the far more inflexible and impatient Archers did. The result of this continued, albeit extremely strained, cooperation was a unique fusion of British post-war realism and Hollywood style. Indeed, Carol Reed's open-mindedness was such that he was able to assimilate not only the best of Hollywood pace, scale and glamour, but

also the film's Viennese background. Thrown into the cultural melting-pot were such celebrated actors of the Viennese stage as Paul Hoerbiger or Hedwig Bleibtreu, the zither music of Anton Karas and the city of Vienna itself. The identities were so individually important yet multiple that it is misleading to think of *The Third Man* as a British or even an Anglo-American film. Finally, it hovers in some transnational space between Hollywood, London and Vienna.

The sharply contrasting fortunes that Reed and the Archers experienced working with their transatlantic partners lay in their very different approaches to the cinema. Reed had started out as a personal assistant to Edgar Wallace, helping the writer to stage adaptations of his thrillers and adventure stories. He then became an assistant director and dialogue coach at Basil Dean's Associated Talking Pictures. It was an apprenticeship that encouraged a no-nonsense relationship with the medium. He saw himself as much more a craftsman than artist, whose primary job was less to put forward his own point of view than to orchestrate and realize the ideas of others. In his relationship with Selznick, this attitude minimized the cultural divide, making it possible for him to draw positive benefit from a difficult collaboration.

By contrast, Powell and Pressburger represented a much more *auteurist* model of the cinema. They usually developed films from their own original scripts rather than adaptations, and the considerable creative freedom they had enjoyed over the best part of a decade had encouraged them to develop a strong artistic personality. Spectacularly visual, quirky and often leisurely in their pace, their films tended to subordinate narrative to character. Given the Hollywood need for clarity of storytelling, it meant that conflict with Selznick and Goldwyn was always likely. When it duly arrived, their artistic identity as film-makers was too rigid to allow a successful accommodation.

Conclusion

Close Anglo-American collaboration in the cinema was the inevitable result of a common language. But it required a figure of Alexander Korda's cosmopolitan nature to provide an effective bridge between the two cultures. Sustaining that bridge inevitably involved considerable tension, because, for all their shared values, the two cultures were different. Finally, as the contrasting cases of Carol Reed and Powell and Pressburger show, the film-makers who prospered were those who could most readily adapt to and respect the values of the dominant Hollywood model. Used to conceiving their own projects, writing, producing

and directing their own scripts, rather in the fashion of a European *auteur* – although that problematic word had yet to gain currency – Powell and Pressburger struggled to accommodate the conventional story values of entertainment aimed at a mass international audience. Reed, on the other hand, more *metteur en scène* than *auteur* – although he showed a brilliance that could often blur the distinction – possessed the craftsman’s approach best suited to take advantage of such a collaboration.

Notes

1. Then an executive for United Artists, Richard Norton persuaded the American distribution company to give Korda its backing. See his memoirs *Silver Spoon* (Norton 1954: 164).
2. Taken from the private collection of Sir Andrew Cunynghame, Sir David Cunynghame’s son.
3. Private collection of Sir Andrew Cunynghame.

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4

From Pirandello to MGM: When Classical Hollywood Reads European Literature

Catherine O'Rawe

As You Desire Me (George Fitzmaurice), a little-known Hollywood film from 1932, adapted from Luigi Pirandello's 1930 modernist play *Come tu mi vuoi*, is ripe for reassessment: situated in its historical and industrial context, it can be read as a site where multiple critical issues regarding the adaptation process itself intersect.¹ In doing so, it is possible to investigate the value of European literature to Hollywood at a particular moment in the Hollywood studio system – a value which is, of course, both commercial and cultural. The film has been dismissed by Pirandello criticism because of its failure as an adaptation (a failure generally attributed to its lack of fidelity).² However, moving away from a narrative of adaptation as infidelity, betrayal and decline can open up the question of how the cinematic apparatus itself (and the cinema industry) recasts the key tropes of Pirandello's play: performance, theatricality and identity. In this regard, I will also examine the film's casting of Greta Garbo, icon of 'European otherness' (McDonald 2000: 49) in the lead role of the Italian heroine, and how this casting, and Garbo's performance and persona, contribute towards a complex reworking of the Pirandellian idea of identity.

Furthermore, although discussions of literary adaptation have moved away from a model of 'fidelity criticism', there has been a missing element in critical literature about adaptation, which is the role of the theatre and of dramatic texts.³ From the foundational essay by Eisenstein, 'Dickens, Griffith and Ourselves' in 1942, in which Eisenstein argued for the development of Griffith's style from nineteenth-century narrative, especially the novels of Dickens, it is narrative which has been privileged by critical debate, a debate from which theatre has generally been excluded.⁴ At most, it has been presumed that the same theoretical

issues are raised by theatrical adaptations as by novelistic ones, a view which does not take into account the ideas of presence, repetition and improvisation and the performative element of drama, which problematize any simple idea of the 'original', in adaptations of dramatic texts. Consideration of the function of performance will be particularly important in assessing the star performance of Garbo and its relation to the ideas of performance expressed within the diegesis of Pirandello's text.

In examining the relationship between Pirandello and the cinema, Pirandello criticism has generally focused on two issues: first, on Pirandello's wavering theoretical stance towards the medium, his relationship of attraction and repulsion towards it, his anxiety that it will replace the theatre and his anti-adaptation stance.⁵

Secondly, Pirandello criticism has focused on specific, highbrow adaptations: for example, Marcel l'Herbier's 1925 adaptation of *The Late Mattia Pascal* (*Il fu Mattia Pascal*), entitled *Feu Mathias Pascal*, which provoked an admiring essay by the great Sicilian writer Leonardo Sciascia (Sciascia 2001: 1147–1166).⁶

Pirandello's *Come tu mi vuoi* was premiered in Milan in February 1930; the play was written by Pirandello for his muse, the actress Marta Abba. It was inspired by the real-life Bruneri-Canella case, a *cause célèbre* of 1927, involving a case of memory loss, contested identity and deliberate misrecognition. The play opens in Berlin, with l'Ignota ('The Unknown Woman'), a dancer, who is living a decadent life with Salter, a writer, and his daughter Mop, both of whom are infatuated with her. A man called Boffi arrives, claiming that l'Ignota is in fact Lucia or Cia, the wife of his close friend Bruno, who disappeared, abducted at the end of the First World War by soldiers. She initially refuses to believe the claim, but decides to return to Italy. Acts Two and Three are set near Udine, in the villa where Cia is preparing to meet her husband and family. She discovers that her reappearance will enable her husband to keep the property he received as part of her dowry, and which is shortly due to return to Cia's sister. The play's climax undercuts the supposed 'proof' which Cia offers of her identity, the 'legal proof' that she is who they think she is, a birthmark on her body, through the appearance of a mad woman produced by Salter as the real Cia, and l'Ignota's own admission that she is an empty sign, waiting to be filled by her husband's belief in her: 'I am here, I'm yours; there is no longer anything, anything at all, of me. Make me, as you desire me.' She leaves with Salter, to return to her old life (Pirandello 1962: 995).⁷

The Hollywood adaptation was directed by George Fitzmaurice (who had directed Rudolph Valentino in *Son of the Sheik* [1926], and Greta Garbo in *Mata Hari* [1931]) for MGM, and starred Garbo as Zara/Countess Maria Varelli, as well as Melvyn Douglas as Bruno (the matinée idol Douglas would later be reunited with Garbo in Ernst Lubitsch's *Ninotchka* [1939]) and Erich Von Stroheim as Salter. The film shifts the opening act to Budapest, instead of Berlin. The other substantive changes to the plot involve the removal of the sexually ambiguous figure of Mop, the gratuitous addition of a happy ending,⁸ and the addition of a hilariously conventional love scene, in which the hyperbolic mise-en-scène (use of props and back projection) and soundtrack (the playing of *Turna a Surriento* [*Come Back to Sorrento*]) perfectly stage the idea of melodrama as excess. These changes led to Italian criticism, both at the time and subsequently, declaring it in different ways a 'deviation' from the original,⁹ and suggesting that Hollywood in the era of the Motion Picture Production Code was unable to cope with the challenging European drama that it had appropriated.¹⁰ The most damning indictment of the film comes from Richard Corliss, who declares that 'the film had everything needed to be a success: it lacked only a good screenplay, good acting and good direction' (quoted in Genovese and Gesù 1990: 55).

Hollywood and Europe: Acquisition and audience

Such readings of the film, predicated implicitly on a fidelity analysis, rely also on a long-standing and rather crude dichotomy between European 'high' culture and the 'low' output of Hollywood: indeed, in the interwar period, there was a 'pervasive, pan-European discourse of anti-Americanism among European cultural elites' (Higson and Maltby 1999: 34).¹¹ Examining the relations between Hollywood and European texts in this period permits an understanding of the complex nature of cultural and economic exchange, and permits a reading of the play within this historical and cultural context.¹² Pirandello, who was at the height of his European fame in the early 1930s, sold the rights to the play, plus three others, to Lee Shubert, the Broadway theatre owner and producer, in July 1930, after its successful run in Paris (Ortolani 1994: 135–160). It premiered in Philadelphia in December, as a tryout for Broadway. The Broadway production, produced by the Shuberts, in an English translation by Dmitri Ostrov, opened in January 1931, with Judith Anderson in the lead role. The Broadway version kept Pirandello's ending. It ran for 142 performances, and was Pirandello's only hit US play.¹³ MGM acquired the rights to the play for \$40,000, of which

Pirandello would receive one-third. Pirandello noted with satisfaction that this fee was nearly double the normal price for acquiring a hit play (Ortolani 1994).¹⁴

Thus *As You Desire Me* fits neatly into Hollywood's preference by the 1930s in its acquisition of raw material, which was a preference for pre-sold and pre-tested literary properties, mainly best-selling novels and hit Broadway plays, and is important for reminding us of the role of the theatre as a key transitional stage in the adaptation process in this period, and of Broadway as a problematic area for Hollywood because of its lack of regulation (McLaughlin 1974: 88–131). For example, John Izod claims that by 1935 over 40 per cent of Hollywood features had a literary or theatrical source (Izod 1992: 100). The 'prestige pictures' produced by studios such as MGM in the early 1930s relied heavily upon literary and theatrical adaptations (Balio 1993: 179; Vasey 1997: 102; Berry 2000: 75). The coming of sound had meant a sharp increase in the demand for textual material from which to adapt films in Hollywood: one of Irving Thalberg's '10 Commandments to Studio Readers' at MGM was that they should learn a language and read more foreign literature, because 'the competition for good stories is so keen, that the supply written in English was long ago insufficient' (Schatz 1989: 106). It is, of course, no surprise to see how hard-nosed Hollywood was about 'using the economic capital of the studio to convert the cultural capital of the novel back into the economic capital of a successful picture' (Sconce 1995: 141). As well as its purchase of European texts, Hollywood had long pursued a policy of acquiring European talent, in the form of writers and of stars such as Garbo, 'in order to appropriate the attractions of Europe and sell them back to Europeans' (Higson and Maltby 1999: 13), an economic relationship which was to the benefit of writers such as Pirandello, and his letters of the period are full of approving references to the money to be made from Hollywood.

Hollywood was also supremely aware of the very different nature of the upmarket audiences of Broadway theatre and cinema's mass audience: Will Hays, president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, commented that while 'novelists and dramatists appealed to a more or less limited group of sophisticates, motion pictures had a following infinitely more numerous, made up of the vast majority of Americans, who do not fling defiance at customs and conventions' (quoted in Maltby 1992: 557).¹⁵ Richard Maltby speaks of Hollywood's 'recuperation' in this period of particular moral values in the process of adapting plays and novels (Maltby 1992: 578). The mass audience of the cinema, as opposed to the 'sophisticated' Broadway audience, therefore,

needed to be protected from un-American ideas and films (Vasey 1997: 102). The Production Code itself, which regulated the moral content of movies, was responsible for preventing the 'prevalent type of book and play from becoming the prevalent type of picture', and, as Ruth Vasey points out, throughout the 1930s all studios had to conform to 'an increasingly comprehensive set of narrational and representational guidelines' (Vasey 1997: 5).¹⁶

The play was adapted by the veteran Hollywood screenwriter Gene Markey for MGM, as a vehicle for Garbo, whose *Grand Hotel* (Edmund Goulding 1932) came out a few months later. I have already discussed the value of literature to the 'prestige pictures' which MGM was adept at, and of which *As You Desire Me* was one (Balio 1993: 179–180).¹⁷ However, both at the level of production and reception, the name of the great European dramatist Pirandello is almost overlooked: in terms of reception, only one contemporary reviewer, in the *New Yorker*, notes that the Pirandello idea 'lifts the film above the commonplace' (quoted in Conway 1991: 116).¹⁸ Uniformly, what reviews there are concentrate on Garbo's performance and persona: in fact, one review urges spectators not to let Pirandello's 'reputation for metaphysics' prevent them from going to see an 'engrossing story' (quoted in Nichols and Bazzoni 1995: 102).¹⁹ At the level of production and marketing, however, what sells the film is of course Garbo, as can be seen in the film's press-book, which each studio sent out to cinemas to encourage them to promote the film, with suggested promotional tools.

The concept of authorship is thus problematized by the collaborative input of the adaptor and by the studio system itself (and in particular by MGM, with the controlling figure of Irving Thalberg, the central producer who exercised near-total artistic control). Andrew Sarris has argued for a reading of auteurist poetics in the studio system which insists that the *mise-en-scène* at least will still bear the director's 'signature' (Sarris 1968); however, other historians of the studio system have argued convincingly that if there is a 'signature' left on the Hollywood film of this era, it is that of the studio and of the studio style (Wood 1973: 30–35; Buscombe 1981: 22–34; Cook 1996: 48–52). MGM's 'house style' was reflected in its *mise-en-scène*, its lighting and cinematography and it is no surprise that the same technical figures appear again and again in its films of this period, and especially in its Garbo films, the art director Cedric Gibbons, the costume designer Adrian, and Garbo's favourite cinematographer, William Daniels (Schatz 1989: 119). This team produced consistent styles of lighting, art design and *mise-en-scène*.

However, this reading of the multiple authorship of the film, while it counters the views of Pirandello critics who saw the film (when they bothered to see it at all) as a deformation of the original, does nothing to destabilize the other narrative of individual European genius meeting the Hollywood system, which I am aiming to problematize: of disinterested artistic creativity neutralized by the Hollywood visual pleasure machine, of 'cultural capital' becoming 'economic capital'. However, in examining the textual economies themselves of the play and film some interesting interpretative angles emerge regarding the way both texts manipulate genre and the way some key tropes of the play (and some key tropes of Pirandellian poetics) are recast by the language and apparatus of cinema.

Melodrama from stage to screen

MGM's partial neutralization of a problematic female identity and the idea of a simple reintegration of the protagonist into her family and class, the resolution of her geographical and social displacement, and the symbolic self-healing which it hints that Italian society has thus performed after the First World War, are interesting because of the generic conventions within which *As You Desire Me* is working: these are the conventions of film melodrama, with its links to what will become known as, by the 1940s, the 'women's picture'.²⁰ By the 1930s, melodrama was a staple genre of Hollywood, aimed squarely at its female consumers, and featuring female protagonists, in which concerns of female desire and identity were consistently rehearsed: it could be argued that *As You Desire Me's* plot, which revolves around a case of mistaken identity, is perfect for Hollywood melodrama, as it permits a rehearsal of transgression (in the decadent persona of Zara) only to erase this transgressive persona and overwrite it with the 'true' identity of Maria and thus allow for the traditional ending to melodrama, marriage (Mulvey 1994: 127).²¹ Peter Baxter argues that in melodrama the figure of the female 'attempts to reconcile the contradictory demands of economics, morality and desire' (Baxter 1993: 6). Such a reconciliation can never be, however, total, as melodramatic narratives are irrevocably marked by the struggle for resolution and integration.

There has been much recent scholarship on the history and generic conventions of film melodrama, most of which emphasizes its origins in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century stage and literature (Gledhill 1987: 14–24; Bordwell and Thompson 1988: 160; Barefoot 1994: 94–105). Furthermore, the work of Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs has demonstrated

the reliance of early cinema itself on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theatre and specifically on the melodrama (in terms of both acting style and *mise-en-scène*) thus reinstating theatre at the origins of the history of cinematic adaptation, and also posing some intriguing parallels with Pirandello's own exploitation of the conventions of nineteenth-century melodrama (Vardac 1987; Brewster and Jacobs 1997: 25–29). Pirandello's own theatrical praxis is largely based on a playing with the conventions of melodrama: the family secrets, scandals and failed revelations which occur in his claustrophobic domestic spaces form the base elements of plays such as the metatheatrical trilogy for which he is most widely known, *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (*Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* 1921), *Each in Their Own Way* (*Ciascuno a suo modo* 1925) and *Tonight we Improvise* (*Questa sera si recita a soggetto* 1929), not to mention the ambiguous revelation scene which concludes *Right You Are, if You Think You Are* (*Così è se vi pare* 1919).²² Peter Brooks, in his work on melodrama, has pointed out how melodrama is based on a dramatization of the process of recognition: recognition of identity, virtue or villainy, as well as a desire for the end, for a plenitude of meaning at the ending which will retrospectively illuminate preceding events (Brooks 1976).²³ In Pirandello's drama, this idea of recognition is habitually subverted, as the climactic recognition scene is either ambiguous or inconclusive, as in *Così è se vi pare* (*Right You Are, if You Think You Are*) and *Come tu mi vuoi*.

In *Come tu mi vuoi*, there is a parody of a recognition scene, in which the idea of the body itself as offering proof of identity (as a 'legal proof'), in the form of birthmarks or scars, which Brooks discusses as traditional devices of melodrama, is undercut by l'Ignota's birthmark which shifts from one part of her body to another, and so is useless as evidence (Brooks 1994: 20–22); Pirandello plays with the idea of the body as proof of identity: l'Ignota's body is described as a 'prova' (proof), yes, but Pirandello puns upon the double meaning of 'prova' as both 'proof' and 'test': her body is also a test for her husband, a challenge to him to recognize her.

Pirandello's plays therefore take what is typically thought of as a 'low' genre (and Terence Cave has discussed the idea of recognition as a 'low or unliterary device' [Cave 1988: 3]) and alchemically transform it into a high cultural form. Similarly, recent work on melodrama in Hollywood points to it as a low or popular genre, which explains its absence from critical debate until relatively recently (Gledhill 1987: 25–26). Whilst this passage from 'low' to high and back to low cultural expressions is interesting in and of itself, it is in the peculiar use of the trope of

recognition that the most significant convergences between Pirandellian reworking of melodrama and Hollywood's version are apparent.

The two master tropes in the textual economy of *Come tu mi vuoi* are those of theatricality and of the portrait. The idea of theatricality (and, specifically, that of female theatricality) is rendered through l'Ignota's repeated references to playing a part: her fluid identity is variously described as an 'impostura', a 'buffonata', or as acting a part, 'recitare'. This can be seen to intersect with the work of Judith Butler on the performative nature of female identity, as l'Ignota tries to impersonate Cia, who may or not be herself (Butler 1990). However, the idea of theatricality as an overt trope is minimized in the film version, the verbal references to 'playing a part' are excised, and the trope of impersonation or acting is turned into that of the makeover: in the film, Zara artfully 'becomes' Maria by dressing up like her, to resemble her portrait, while in the play physical likeness serves only to hint at a fundamental *unlikeness*. Whereas the idea of theatricality and impersonation in Pirandello always points to a slippage or hiatus between person and role, it is through Zara's makeover that she starts to feel like Maria, and so the final act of the play, the definitive 'proof' of her identity as Maria, can occur. Her transformation is a two-stage process, from the Marlene Dietrich lookalike of the first act, to the 'natural' look of Maria, to the stylized portrait version (Jacobs 1991: 59). In Hollywood's version of identity, physical likeness is near enough equivalent to identity. The film's press book, its epitext, reinforces this process by means of which the recessive *mise-en-abyme* of female identity in the play becomes assimilated to the trope of the makeover, showing advertisements advising customers on how to get Garbo's hairstyles in the films, and offering a fantasy of self-transformation for aspirational women consumers.²⁴

Garbo

However, there is another level of performance and of female identity to take into account in *As You Desire Me*: the level of star persona itself. The object of desire here is unequivocally Garbo: in contrast to the Broadway reviews, which commented upon the plot and the plausibility or otherwise of the original text, the reviews of the film concentrate exclusively on Garbo herself, her physical presence and star charisma. The press book declares that 'Only Garbo can make love as Garbo does in *As You Desire Me*', announcing a slippage between actress and role of the kind which Pirandello was to explore in his next play, 1932's *To*

Find Oneself (*Trovarsi*) about an actress who cannot distinguish between herself and her persona – an outline of the cinema screenplay he wrote for *To Find Onself* with Garbo in mind is reproduced in Francesco Cällari's book.²⁵ The enigmatic persona of Garbo and the nature of her stardom force a more nuanced reading of the film as a commentary on the play's diegetic construction of female identity as masquerade and performance.

Garbo's performance in *As You Desire Me* encounters the extradiegetic construction of her as enigma, the critical and journalistic trope of her unknowability. There are various texts that work together to construct the star persona of Garbo, from MGM publicity, to the vast amounts of criticism and biographical (one would almost say hagiographical) material on Garbo, all of which hyperbolically restates her as an unknowable enigma, as the 'Mysterious One', the 'Swedish Sphinx' to quote the titles of fan articles.²⁶

Feminist film theory has traditionally emphasized the fetishization of the female star by the cinematic apparatus, or the fetishization of woman into a part-object (Kühn 1994: 59–64; Mulvey 1988): with Garbo, her face is the bodily part that attracts both the camera's gaze and the (over)interpretation of observers. Roland Barthes, in his essay 'The Face of Garbo', included in *Mythologies*, describes her face as a mask, 'almost sexually undefined, without however leaving one in doubt' (Barthes 1993: 56). He refers only to her performance in *Queen Christina* (Rouben Mamoulian 1933) (whose last shot is of Garbo's famously blank face, a *tabula rasa* onto which the spectator can project whatever emotions he or she desires) and, interestingly, talks of how in that film, despite her physical transformations, 'Garbo is always herself and carries without pretence [...] the same snowy solitary face' (Barthes 1993: 56).²⁷ This idea of an essential Garbo which remains constant throughout her performances is a recurring one in criticism (Sarris, for example, states elliptically that 'Garbo is and always has been her own *mise-en-scène*' [Sarris 1988: 375]). The circulation of the critical trope of a tautologous Garbo who is felt to be always herself, à la Barthes, operates in tandem with that of a Garbo whose enigmatic 'self' is subject to so many misrecognitions and deliberate misreadings, who 'defies analysis'; both critical tropes should be studied alongside Garbo's function as industrial commodity and as icon of sexualized, androgynous and generic exoticism, in which she was bracketed with Dietrich (Vasey 1997: 218).

The interpretative effort Barthes expends on Garbo's face, its iconic and iconographic significance, is part of a general mythologizing of her

face. It is interesting that Laura Mulvey, in her seminal article 'Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema', cites Garbo's face as the paradigmatic example of what a close-up does: 'conventional close-ups [...] of a face (Garbo) integrate into the narrative a different mode of eroticism' (Mulvey 1988: 452), and *As You Desire Me's* process of concealment and revelation of female identity are played out most significantly in its use of the close-up.

Close-up is, of course, the privilege of the cinema over theatre and it is also the privilege of the star, framing the star alone. In the early part of the film, Garbo is photographed frequently alone in close-up (Dyer 1986: 11; Krützen 1992: 17). Close-up is traditionally regarded in film theory as both framing the star, and as giving an illusion of unmediated access to the character's emotions, an effect of transparency, of congruence between image and essence. Richard Dyer refers to it as 'disclosing for us the star's face, the intimate, transparent window to the soul' (Dyer 1986: 11). As I said, Garbo in the first act is always framed alone, yet as the film progresses, and as she transforms herself into Maria, the frequency of the close-ups slows, and by the end her medium close-ups are mainly shared with her co-star, Melvyn Douglas, where she is facing on to the camera and he is sideways on. The film's 'theatricality', in the sense of the theatrical, stagey *mise-en-scène* of the film (with its use of inclusive long shots, long takes, frontally positioned speakers, lack of cutting, lack of shot/reverse shot, which give the impression of a film constructed of scenes rather than shots) is punctuated and undercut in the first act by the star close-up. It is interesting that the close-up, the moment when the character's 'true' self is supposedly revealed, is reserved for Garbo at the stage when she is most 'unlike' herself, the mask-like tight close-up which led reviewers to liken her performance to an impersonation of Marlene Dietrich (presumably the Dietrich of *The Blue Angel* [*Der Blaue Engel*, Josef von Sternberg 1930]).²⁸ Although Garbo is synonymous with the close-up, it seems, in its unreadability, to function as another kind of screen.²⁹ William Daniels, the cinematographer on *As You Desire Me*, and Garbo's cinematographer on 19 films, famously (and apocryphally) commented of Garbo that 'she had something behind her eyes, that you couldn't see until you photographed it in close-up' (quoted in Krützen 1992: 25). This idea of a meaning which recedes behind the mask of her face, a revelation which is deferred, is indicative of how Garbo's appearance, especially in close-up, can be said to resist the diegetic pointing towards clarification, recognition and resolution. We expect the close-up in melodrama to constitute a revelation of innocence or evil, and we can contrast the mask-like close-ups of Garbo with the close-up (the

only one) awarded to Von Stroheim, in which his villainy is unambiguously revealed.³⁰ The cinematic apparatus itself, in its way of photographing Garbo, reinstates the idea of a multiple female identity against the attempted resolution of the film's ending; this intriguing idea of a slippage between actress and character instantiated in Garbo seems to have inspired Pirandello to write his next theatrical heroine, the actress of *To Find Oneself*, and turns Garbo into a figure of genuine cultural exchange.

Conclusion

If Garbo functions as a sign of cultural exchange, I have demonstrated that it is necessary to examine carefully the complexity and the overdetermined nature of this exchange. If, as Vasey says, it makes little sense to evaluate individual adaptations in this period without considering their relation to industry policy, as well as to the standardizing or normative effect of distribution and exhibition practices (Vasey 1997: 226), it is clear that the film then needs to be discussed from the point of view of a 'sociology of adaptation' (Andrew 2000: 28–37). This 'sociology of adaptation' includes consideration of the nature of adaptation policy in this period of Hollywood, especially as it relates to audiences, to the status of melodrama as a form in both cinema and theatre, and to the position of the star within the institution of cinema and beyond. In addition, to this 'sociology of adaptation' must be added a consideration of the intersemiotic reworking of Pirandello's tropes of the portrait (in the form of the makeover and commercial tie-in), and the female performance (inflected by Garbo's star persona and body), and both types of reading must be integrated into our analysis of the film text. I would argue for a reading of the film which insists not on the fidelity or otherwise of film to the play, but which interprets the discursive codes of both the Pirandellian text and the film text and reads them alongside the conventions of film melodrama, and of MGM in that period. In addition, a reading of *As You Desire Me*'s ending suggests that the ambiguous revelations characteristic of Pirandello *can* be contained by Hollywood: within a diegesis which seems to desire the unproblematic integration of protagonist, the already-inscribed ambiguity of Garbo's persona joins with the 'I don't know' of Maria's final lines. This acknowledgement of radical doubt may immediately be smothered by Bruno's embrace and by the swelling extradiegetic musical score, but, like Garbo's tautologous and paradoxical face, it leaves on the text a lasting mark.

Notes

1. The film is absent from most studies of MGM films of the period and of Garbo's *oeuvre*; it is briefly mentioned by Thomas Schatz, who calls it a 'typical MGM project' (Schatz 1989: 109).
2. Francesco Càllari, one of the few Pirandello scholars to address the film, says that it displays 'an approach to Pirandello's theme which reaches the limits of inaccuracy' (Càllari 1991: 324). Manuela Gieri comments that 'the film is far from being "faithful" to or, at least, "respectful" of the Pirandello text' (Gieri 1995: 24). Interestingly, Càllari also quotes Pirandello's own (apocryphal) comment on seeing the finished film, defending its faithfulness to the original: 'I was not just satisfied but really delighted with it. The adaptation is completely faithful to the spirit of my play' (Càllari 1991: 322).
3. For overviews of the history of adaptation and the history of adaptation criticism, see Naremore 2000a (see especially Robert Stam's chapter, 'Beyond Fidelity: the Dialogics of Adaptation' [Stam 2000: 54–78]); Cartmell and Whelehan 1999.
4. Brian McFarlane's study of the adaptation process, *Novel to Film: an Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* (McFarlane 1996), is exemplary in this respect; the book's title posits 'novel' as synonym (or synecdoche) for 'literature', while its inclusive subtitle suggests that 'adaptation' as a totality is unproblematically represented by the first part of the title. Naremore laments the excessive focus on the novel, although without mentioning theatrical adaptation (see Naremore 2000b: 10).
5. For an in-depth analysis of Pirandello's relation to the cinema, see, in particular, Càllari 1978; Gieri 1995; Gordon 1998.
6. In the recent collection of essays *Il cinema e Pirandello*, one of the few mentions of the film (apart from my own essay) is Chiara Simonigh's dismissal of the film, as she notes its 'simplification of Pirandello themes' and the addition of a happy ending, 'completely alien to the bitter tone of the original' (Simonigh 2003: 213).
7. All translations from Italian are mine.
8. The idea of the 'happy ending' mentioned by most critics and reviewers is, however, overstated: the dialogue at the end makes it clear that although the mad woman is revealed to be someone else altogether, Maria is still unsure of her own identity: 'I don't know . . . perhaps we'll never know.' Bruno asserts that it does not matter, that he will marry her whoever she is: 'I love you for yourself only.'
9. The idea of *As You Desire Me* as a 'deviation' from the original is expressed by Mario Milani in his review of the film in *La rivista del cinematografo* in April 1933, in which he talks of both 'deviation' from and 'alteration' of the play; Mario Gromo in 1957 referred to the film's 'incoherent script', compared to the original script; Fausto Montesanti speaks of Hollywood's 'violations to Pirandello's text' in *Cinema*, 1950 (both quoted in Genovese and Gesù 1990: 54 and 55 respectively).
10. See, in this regard, Jennifer Stone's analysis of *Come tu mi vuoi*, in which she mentions the film adaptation briefly and only to lament its elimination of the 'perversity' of the original (Stone 1989: 145).

11. Victoria De Grazia argues for a more nuanced understanding of the cultural status of US motion pictures in Europe (De Grazia 2005: 304).
12. Richard Maltby and Ruth Vasey also note that in this period Europe's cultural elite were worried about the effects on domestic audiences of Hollywood product (Maltby and Vasey 1999: 36–55).
13. Contemporary reviews of the play were mixed: *Variety* described it as 'pretty thin' and 'depressing' (26 November 1930), and the *New York Herald Tribune* interestingly called it 'cheaply melodramatic' and noted that 'had another writer's name been tacked to the piece, a very considerable part of it would have been dismissed as melodramatic claptrap' (28 January 1931). However, the *New York World-Telegram* called it 'excellent' and 'arresting', saying that it 'combin[es] most that is worthwhile in Signor Pirandello with most that is worthwhile in Mr. Samuel Shipman [the prolific middlebrow Broadway playwright]', 28 January 1931. I am grateful to Jennifer Lorch for these contemporary reviews.
14. On economic relations between Broadway and the Hollywood studios in the 1930s, see McLaughlin, 1974: 88–131.
15. Sconce refers to Hollywood's adaptation policy in this period as involving 'both a reading of the book and a reading of the audience, a weighing of two sets of narrative demands' (Sconce 1995: 160).
16. Vasey also notes the pressure exerted on studios by ethnic pressure groups, particularly Italians: in fact, MGM's Irving Thalberg was warned by Jason S. Joy of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (responsible for administering the Production Code) that *As You Desire Me's* excitable characters should be rendered 'not too obviously Italian' (Vasey 1997: 102).
17. *The Cinema Booking Guide Supplement*, which advised exhibitors which films to book, highlights *As You Desire Me's* sophisticated appeal: 'a "different" production [which] provides first-class entertainment for more discriminating audiences with pronounced appeal for women' (*The Cinema Booking Guide Supplement* 1932: 8).
18. In contrast, the reviews of the Broadway and other American theatre performances give great weight to Pirandello's name.
19. *Picturegoer's* review also highlights Garbo's performance: 'Greta Garbo gives one of her most glamorous and finely emotional portrayals', whilst the film is described merely as 'rather indefinite and fantastic' (*Picturegoer* 1932: 22).
20. For the historical and social significance of melodrama, see Mulvey 1994 and Brooks 1994; also Gledhill, 1987: 1–39; in particular, see pp. 33–36 on the problems of distinguishing between melodrama and the 'women's picture'. Jackie Byars makes an important distinction between the 'women's picture' in classical Hollywood and melodrama as 'one of Hollywood's fundamental aesthetic strategies' (Byars 1991: 14).
21. Lea Jacobs' work on the 'fallen woman' genre of the 1930s, which posits 1932 (the year of *As You Desire Me's* release) as the high water mark of the genre, has interesting implications for a reading of *As You Desire Me*: it fits quite neatly in some ways into that genre, but its structure (it charts the woman's rise back to economic and social status) inverts the 'fallen woman' paradigm in other ways (Jacobs 1997). (Garbo frequently played either prostitutes or women of dubious repute: see *Anna Christie* [Clarence Brown 1930], *Susan Lenox, her Fall and Rise* [Robert Z. Leonard 1931], *Mata*

- Hari* [George Fitzmaurice 1931], as well as her earlier 'vamp' roles in silent films.)
22. On these plays' exploitations of conventions of melodrama, see Squarotti 1977: 29–30.
 23. See also Simon Shepherd's comment that 'melodrama foregrounds moments of coming to knowledge' (Shepherd 1994: 27).
 24. On the commercial tie-ups between the 'woman's film' and the fashion industry in this period, see Herzog and Gaines 1991: 74–91; see also Eckert 1991: 30–39, and Jacobs on the glamour and self-transformation of the fallen woman (Jacobs 1991: 52–53).
 25. Càllari has unearthed outlines for *To Find Oneself* with a note from Pirandello who considers the film very suitable for Greta Garbo (Càllari 1991: 247).
 26. Garbo criticism seems to perform a startling elision of the distinction between serious analysis and hyperbolic restatement of the awed tone of fan articles: the notion of the 'enigma' of Garbo is a trope that passes comfortably from text to text (see Balio 1993: 149; Thomson 1995: 274–276); when Judith Mayne notes that Garbo was perceived as a 'contradictory entity about whom any safe and secure knowledge was impossible' (Mayne 1993: 162), she is only echoing Larry Carr's statement in his gushing *Four Fabulous Faces*, that 'writing about the Garbo [sic] is unsatisfactory. She eludes description, defies analysis' (Carr 1978: 153). These texts combine to create what Richard Dyer calls the 'star intertext' (Dyer 1986: 3).
 27. Von Stroheim is quoted in the press-book as saying: 'She thinks, breathes and lives the part she is playing. [...] She needs no direction.' Robert Sennett notes that Garbo 'never allowed herself to be photographed out of character' (Sennett 1998: 160). See Fischer (2003: 116) on the labour involved in transforming Garbo from Greta Gustafson into Garbo.
 28. Sarris and Walker both describe Garbo's performance as a 'parody of Dietrich'. See Sarris, '*You Ain't Heard Nothing Yet!*' (Sarris 1988: 383); Walker 1980: 126. The same term is used by Corliss, cited in Genovese and Gesù 1990: 56.
 29. 'The screen face, which comes to us most fully in the close-up, is rather like a screen within a screen, a second screen on which viewers can project their own impressions and fantasies – within, of course, the stylistic and cultural confines of that gigantic image.' (Gallagher 1997).
 30. Garbo is initially concealed in the film's opening sequence, an extraordinary scene with a long panning shot of Garbo's character 'performing' in her own absence (we hear her dubbed singing voice, and see her audience gazing at her). She is then revealed by close-ups in her 'true' identity (an identity which is itself a masquerade, a potentially parodic assumption of the identity of Dietrich).

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5

The Modernism of Frank Capra and European Ethical Thought

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For many, Frank Capra remains the quintessential American director. In numerous ways, America was a dramatically different place at the time of his death on 3 September 1991 than the America of his classic films from the 1930s to early 1950s. The differences between the America of small town values, railroads, the radio, and classic cars and the America of the computer, cell phone, instant media, and sex are nearly as great as the gap between his origins in Sicily on 18 May 1897 and the American icon he had become. His greatest and most successful films such as *It Happened One Night* (1934), *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936), *You Can't Take It With You* (1938), *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), and *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946) exude a quality of simplicity, honesty, and sentimentality that people termed 'Capracorn' but, nonetheless, many of them still consider the real America. While Capra's style and ideology of hope, optimism, and national identity run counter to current trends in popular and critical thinking and tastes, years of scholarship and criticism by outstanding film scholars such as Robert Sklar, Ray Carney, Robert Ray, Charles Maland, Joseph McBride, among many others, demonstrate how the depth and complexity of Capra's best work contradict simplistic and superficial understandings of his films (Maland 1980; Sklar 1981; Ray 1985; Carney 1986; McBride 1992; Poague 1994).

Indeed, Capra's most important and successful films incorporate within their artistic structure a complex dialogue and engagement with American culture. At the time of the emerging hegemony of American leadership in the world, Capra's cinematic dramatization of a changing America became part of the developing national dialogue about the direction and nature of American culture and consciousness. Not always as appreciated as this domestic dialogue in his works was the awareness in his films of the connection between the United States and the Europe

of his birth. Europe as an artistic force, as a history of cultural greatness, and as a centre of modern crisis loomed over many of his films. Furthermore, a dark consciousness of the ominous contrast between the democratic modernism of America and the deepening anti-democratic and totalitarian forces of Europe pervades his films. Capra knew the refugee directors from Europe, such as Ernst Lubitsch, and the America of his films stood as a counter-statement to the growing danger overseas. In America, modernism to Capra often meant opportunity, the challenge to tradition and authority, the advance of freedom. Modernism in Europe could mean de-humanization, restriction, the power of the state to repress and control. Thus, as an example of the artistic and intellectual complexity of Capra's work as well as his sensitivity to European artistic trends and movements, many have discussed how his films include the European influence of a bleaker vision of life and experience as expressed in the style of film noir (Maland 1980: 146. See also Naremore 1998).

The contest between the lightness and optimism of America and the uncertainty and insecurity that was coming to define Europe during the 1930s forms part of the exchange that shapes the cultural landscape of Capra's films. With this dialogue as part of the background, one of Capra's most important films helped to form the vocabulary and rhetoric for the broader cultural and political debate in America. This film, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, became part of American national consciousness, not as mere celebration of American uniqueness and 'superiority' but as a complex cinematic articulation of deep ambiguities and ambivalences in American culture and character (see Girgus 1998).

Levinas and Capra

A re-examination of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* from the perspective of current trends in philosophical thought about ethics, being, and time suggests the continuing relevance of this film to our own era. Such a re-examination may cause some Capra sceptics seriously to consider the intensity and perspicacity of Capra's filmic relationship to European Modernism, and specifically to a philosophical discourse that engaged some of Europe's most important thinkers of the twentieth century. Specifically, studying *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* in terms of the work of philosopher Emmanuel Levinas provides fresh insight into the moral significance and meaning of the film. As unlikely as the comparison may seem at first, the film enacts and pre-emptively dramatically, on different levels, some of the most complex ideas of Levinas's ethical metaphysics

as well as his debate over these issues with critical thinkers such as Jacques Derrida and Jean-Paul Sartre.

At the beginning of *Totality and Infinity* (1961), Levinas prophetically wonders if the idea of morality still obtains in the contemporary world. He says, 'Everyone will readily agree that it is of the highest importance to know whether we are not duped by morality' (Levinas 1961: 21). Levinas, of course, dedicated several decades of his life to articulating an original philosophy that answers his own question by affirming that morality and ethics not only remain relevant but inescapable in the human experience. Born in Jewish Lithuania in the first decade of the twentieth century, Levinas studied in France and Germany, fought for the French during the war, lost most of his family at Auschwitz in the Holocaust, married a French woman, and became a French citizen. The publication of *Totality and Infinity* marked a major sign of the potential permanence of his growing influence upon the philosophical world. From being a student of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger to becoming the source of Sartre's introduction to phenomenology, Levinas and his prolific writings steadily matured into a counterforce in European thought that required recognition and response. In his discourse with all of these thinkers, though perhaps most importantly with Derrida, Levinas challenged dominant intellectual trends and movements to propagate his own interpretation of the relationship of ethical experience to modernism. He insisted upon placing a priority upon ethics over ontology, pluralism over totality, transcendence over empirical investigation and conceptualization. While Sartre promoted a philosophy of freedom based on the idea that existence precedes essence, Levinas proclaimed that responsibility to the other takes precedence over one's self. After Levinas died during the early hours of 25 December 1995, the substance, tone, and emotion of Derrida's funeral oration on 28 December entitled 'Adieu' confirmed that Levinas's ethical argument and moral stance had become a structural cornerstone of modern philosophical debate (see Critchley 2002: xxix; Derrida 1999).

It could be argued that Capra spent much of his career anticipating and answering Levinas's question about the relevance of morality. Capra insists that not only are we *not* duped by morality but that the real duping occurs when trying to cheat morality and hoping to escape the consequences of such avoidance. Moreover, in giving priority to this moral theme in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and a number of his other major films, Capra exemplified the centrality of this idea which had also found expression in many other movies of this period, such as *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz 1942), *Body and Soul* (Robert Rossen 1947),

On the Waterfront (Elia Kazan 1954), and *The Hustler* (Robert Rossen 1961). While these films generally articulate an ideology and rhetoric of salvation and redemption, Capra's films become especially interesting due to his use of time, existence, and death to dramatize the argument for moral transcendence.

In a manner redolent of Henri Bergson's theory of duration, time occupies a key position in Levinas's program of otherness, difference, and transcendence as the basis for his ethical metaphysics. In 'Inside Heidegger: Bergson', part of Levinas's lecture courses that have been published as *God, Death, and Time*, Levinas distinguishes between 'linear time' or the ordinary time of daily life and 'a more profound, or originary, time behind linear time' (Levinas 2000: 54). Following Bergson, Levinas says, 'the idea that there are various levels of time is affirmed here' in a manner that follows 'the entire Western tradition' that 'approaches time through measurement'. He continues:

For Bergson, linear time is a spatialization of time in view of acting upon matter, which is the work of intelligence. Originary time he calls *duration*; this is a becoming in which each instant is heavy with all of the past and pregnant with the whole future. Duration is experienced by a descent into self. Each instant is there; nothing is definitive since each instant remakes the past.

(Levinas 2000: 55)

For Levinas this form of 'diachronic' as opposed to 'synchronic' time strives to break the bounds of spatialized time to gain access to a sense of the infinite. He says, 'Time is not the limitation of being but its relationship with infinity' (Levinas 2000: 19). While recognizing the necessity for the 'thread' and the '*always*' of synchronic time, Levinas maintains that such ordinary time nevertheless 'congeals into the abstraction of the synchronous' (Levinas 1987: 32). It becomes deadened forms of ontological accounting that 'constitute the rationality of an already derived order' (Levinas 1987: 104). Accordingly, synchronicity for Levinas becomes a kind of platform to achieve diachronic temporality, the time that surges toward transcendence, infinity, and regeneration, so the very opposite of synchronous deadness. In its inescapable importance, synchronicity serves the diachronic. To meet the ethical demand for 'recuperable temporalization,' Levinas says in 'Essence and Disinterestedness' that 'there must be signalled a lapse of time that does not return, a diachrony refractory to all synchronization, a transcending

diachrony' (Levinas 1996: 116). Ethical thinking requires a special temporal domain of transcendence.

Levinas proposes to achieve such ethical thinking at least in part through diachronic 'temporalization' that can culminate in transcendence. These efforts include attitudes toward individual relations, society, and the family that require further elucidation. They involve such concepts as alterity and the other, the face, the body, proximity, fecundity, the feminine, and sociality.

The transcendence of Mr Smith

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington begins with a hint of diachronicity, a call from another temporal order. A senator from a western state dies suddenly, leaving his seat vacant. Out of the blue, a young man gets picked by corrupt political bosses to fill the vacancy. The story follows a clear, classic narrative structure of adventure – specifically a journey from innocence to initiation. However, a vital teleological purpose also applies and complicates this allegory of good and evil in the nation's capital. The story powerfully suggests a moment of diachronic intervention in events. The continuity of linear time and the simplicity of the synchronic structure of the ordinary progress of everyday events encounter another temporal regime. The selection of Jefferson Smith (James Stewart) becomes an 'election'. Because of his moral character and through his interaction with others, Smith fulfils his role as the 'chosen' vessel for a mission of personal and cultural redemption. This aspect of the story dramatizes Levinas's conceptualization of election and chosenness. In *'Transcendence and Height,'* Levinas describes 'election' as 'the promotion to a privileged place on which all that is not-I depends'. He says, 'The election signifies the most radical possible engagement, namely, total altruism. The responsibility that empties the I of its imperialism and egoism, albeit the egoism of salvation, does not transform it into a moment of the universal order' (Levinas 1996: 18). For much of the film, Jefferson Smith must learn to accept the kind of responsibility that accompanies 'election' as Levinas describes it. Although, from the beginning, Smith feels the overwhelming weight of the expectations placed upon him as a newly appointed senator, the altruism and self-denial of responsibility must still be learned and then tested. Moreover, the lesson of 'election' will involve Smith's own moral and psychological maturation.

For nearly 70 years, people throughout the world regularly summon James Stewart to the screen as Jefferson Smith for what has become

something of a ritual of viewing *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* to witness the triumph of good over evil. The movie insinuates itself into the very structure and context of our deepest and most pervasive legends and myths of national self-identity. For many, it clearly provides reassurance that in the face of overwhelming odds, the youth and passion of an American David will defeat the evil and corruption of the Goliath in the service of greed and ambition. Over the years, narrative development, characterization, dialogue, cinematography, editing, and performance all have been analyzed assiduously to demonstrate how the film works so successfully to make Stewart's transformation from an innocent bumpkin to a cultural and political hero convincing (see Girgus 1998: 56–86). Melding together elements of a love story, romantic comedy, urban melodrama, and national epic, the film also enacts a basic religious metaphor of a journey through evil to gain redemption and salvation. Accordingly in many ways, the political, religious, and cultural rhetoric of the film dramatizes the basic ethical metaphysics that Levinas advocates. The film espouses an ethical ideology and programme with religious connotations that reflect and resonate with ordinary, everyday American values of fairness, honesty, justice, and morality.

However, what has perhaps been somewhat less appreciated in Capra's direction and work concerns the way in which film art and various uses of time create access in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* to a transcendent ethical dimension. This occurs simply and somewhat subtly during the early stages of the film in one of the most famous montage sequences not just in this particular film, but in classic Hollywood film in general. As in the entire film, Capra's montage editor, Slavko Vorkapich, deserves considerable credit for his creative influence and technical expertise. In the scene, Stewart has just arrived at the Washington train station from the hinterland – most likely Montana since the film was based on an original Lewis R. Foster story called *The Gentleman From Montana*. After seeing the Capitol Dome framed through the doors of the train station, he eludes the greeting party at the station to go on his own tour of the city.

The montage sequence operates on several different time levels and compresses different time frames. First, it compresses into a matter of minutes the hours that Stewart's tour would take. While he visits the various sites throughout the city, others anxiously wonder and wait to learn where he has gone. The montage of sites on his tour intercuts to Jean Arthur as Clarissa Saunders and Thomas Mitchell as Diz Moore idling their time away in the senator's office while awaiting news of Smith's whereabouts. Ostensibly, the new senator's secretary

and administrative assistant, Saunders, personifies a Washington insider and operative. Personally involved with Moore, the venerable poet and dean of the Washington press corps, Saunders will become romantically involved with Smith to work as the instrument for the film's multiple meanings and their fulfilment. By both loving and advising him, she will serve as the brains behind his actions that move the film to its melodramatic conclusion. Meanwhile, the dialogue and dramatic action between Arthur and Mitchell during their wait in the senator's office add depth to Smith's character as a figure whose roots in the West and in old frontier values and ideals make him an anachronism in modern Washington.

Along with the montage editing that presents the day's events for Smith, Saunders, and Moore, the film also achieves an editing and cinematic milestone in the way it contrives another montage of national history to insert into the original story of the events of the day. The film expertly intermixes national history with the montage of Smith's day. Familiar non-diegetic music of a patriotic and nationalistic nature provides a provocative background and emotional cue for the overlapping images of historic sites that illustrate the nation's history from the time of the founding fathers to a rendering of the Civil War.

The sequence ends at the Lincoln Memorial. Stewart observes and listens to a young boy reading the end of the Gettysburg Address to his grandfather, an elderly man with a distinctive profile. A cut shows a humble black man enter the monument with his hat in his hand. When the boy states the word 'freedom' from the address, the film cuts immediately to the black man, thereby allowing the boy to speak for and ventriloquize the idea of emancipation for the grown man of colour. Nevertheless, in spite of the squeamish and tentative nature of the liberalism and inclusion of the scene, this moment at the Lincoln Memorial intends to make the monument into a kind of national cathedral of democracy. Lincoln looms over the scene like a national deity. Smith's face shines in key light that turns him into a supplicant who espouses and embodies a secular religion of democracy, freedom, and equality.

In terms of tone, timing, cultural, and political significance, this moment at the Lincoln Memorial provides a strong conclusion to the montage. It summarizes the significance of the historic images that precede it and punctuates all the activity and energy of the montage with an attitude of solemnity regarding the ultimate importance of the serious themes of the movie that underlie its comedic overtones. Also, the scene anticipates, sets up, and foreshadows a crucial later scene of

ultimate significance at the Lincoln Memorial upon which the whole film will turn.

From beginning to end, the montage of Smith's tour of Washington dramatizes how classic montage operates as a movement-image that subordinates time to movement in film construction and editing. The relationship of Capra's montage technique to his development of diachronicity and transcendence can be clarified by examining D. N. Rodowick's elucidation and interpretation of Gilles Deleuze's complex theory of the movement-image and time-image (see Deleuze 1986; Deleuze 1989; Rodowick 1997). As Deleuze and Rodowick describe it, montage tends to show time indirectly as it relates to movement. Montage links different movements and intervals. Time in montage, and therefore in most film editing, involves connecting the intervals between movements. As Rodowick says, 'The movement-image provides only an indirect image of time because time is reduced to intervals defined by movement and the linkage of movements through montage' (Rodowick 1997: 11). Regardless of the source of the montage, whether the intellectual montage of Sergei Eisenstein or the analytical montage of Dziga Vertov, he insists that 'the idea of montage is in every case founded on managing the number of rational segmentations of movement per unit of time' (Rodowick 1997: 12). Rodowick continues to describe this aspect of montage as an 'organic movement-image' of 'relatively determined and predictable relations' within a 'deterministic universe' (Rodowick 1997: 15). Since for Rodowick time in the movement-image 'serves here as the *measure* of space and movement', time becomes subordinate to and defined by movement and 'can only be "seen" through the intermediaries of space and movement' (Rodowick 1997: 9–10).

Accordingly, even with the fluidity of constant framing and deframing of montage, such movement-images of montage constrict imagination by imposing spatial and physical boundaries. In contrast to the organicism of the movement-image, the time-image becomes 'probabilistic' as opposed to determined. In the time-image, filmic elements form 'incommensurable' relations of inexorable divisions that make absolute certainty and predictable direction impossible. Instead of the ordered and regulated time of the movement-image, the time-image suggests a different time order. Rodowick writes, 'the chronological time of the movement-image fragments into an image of uncertain becoming' (Rodowick 1997: 15). Rodowick explains how even thinking and knowing vary between movement-images and time-images. He says,

Where the movement-image ideally conceives the relation between image and thought in the forms of identity and totality – an ever-expanding ontology – the time-image imagines the same relation as non-identity: thought as a deterritorialized and nomadic becoming, a creative act.

(Rodowick 1997: 17)

With all of its volatility and fluidity between shots, images, and frames and even with its diversity of time frames, the Capra montage of Jefferson Smith's tour of Washington typifies the linkages of movement-images in montage in general.

However, one aspect of the montage seems to operate somewhat differently from the usual movement-image. This element suggests a different temporal order. In the sequence of shots of historic landmarks and sites, founding documents, and statues of the founding fathers, we see the famously enlarged signature of John Hancock on the Declaration of Independence take shape and form in front of us. Perhaps the physical action and process of writing the signature at this point in the montage can be dismissed as a mere visual conceit in keeping with the grandly patriotic and celebratory rhetoric of the whole sequence. Nevertheless, the re-enactment of the signature signing without the dramatic context of the historic moment itself suggests a different kind of temporal regime, one closer to the idea of the time-image or thought-image that so impresses Rodowick and Deleuze. Indeed, without the representation of the actual historic event, the action of the signing would seem to derive from a different order of time than the linearity, coherence, chronology, and continuity of what Rodowick terms the movement-image and what Levinas calls synchronicity.

Moreover, considered in the context of the American religion of democracy that the Lincoln Memorial represents in this film, the act of signing here can be compared to other renditions of insinuations of transcendence or diachronic time into the traditional temporal order. Thus, in his extended tribute to Levinas, Derrida recalls in a footnote a Talmudic story that emphasizes the presence of transcendent time in the ordinary temporal regime. Derrida quotes, 'According to a Talmudic parable, all Jews, past, present, and future, were there at the foot of Sinai; in a certain sense, all were present at Auschwitz' (Derrida 1999: 151, n. 130). Similarly, the enactment of the Hancock signing, seemingly out of nowhere, can be seen as a sign of transcendence, a kind of summons or call to the spectator of a temporal world with a meaning and significance that exceed historical time and accuracy. In this light, the writing of the

signature constitutes a form of Deleuzian time-image, which for Levinas would signify the diachronic time of transcendence beyond ordinary linear time, synchronicity or chronological order.

In contrast, the movement-image of conventional montage characterizes the tour sequence itself and provides the basic structure for much of the rest of the film. Also, the montage sequences and parallel editing during the latter part of the film gain much of their impetus and power by operating from a base of brilliant performance and solid mise-en-scène. Given the energetic force of the montage, balance and stability come from the extraordinary acting and detailed settings in scenes involving Arthur and Mitchell as well as scenes with Claude Rains, the fallen Senator Joseph Paine who betrays Smith, and Edward Arnold as Boss Jim Taylor, the quintessential corrupt political power broker (Girgus 1998: 56–86).

Ironically, the influence today on public affairs and events of 24-hour media and instant communications makes the montage and editing of the political battles in the film more accurate than in its own day of slower reporting. In the current public sphere, times have changed so that time also has been freed from the restraints once placed on it by distance and movement. Interestingly, the increasing relevance of the time-image in modern media relates to the fictional liberties Capra took with documentary style and technique in order to render political conflict in the film; in the interest of dramatic intensity, Capra grossly exaggerated the possibility of manipulating time and events in the political sequences. However, his fiction has become today's reality.

In spite of the predominance of montage and the movement-image through much of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, time in the form of Levinasian diachronicity and transcendence persists as a crucial part of the film's significance. At least one indispensable scene arguably constitutes an extended form of time-image in itself. This scene finds Stewart in acute depression and dejection after his demoralizing humiliation at the hands of Paine and Taylor and their cronies. He returns to the Lincoln Memorial as a gesture of defeat before his emotional and guilt-ridden flight from Washington. What earlier had been filmed and edited as a temple for celebrating the promise of American democracy and the fulfilment of Lincoln as the 'Redeemer President' is now cast in darkness and shadow and functions as a tomb of lost ideals and hopes. He sits in darkness and weeps, totally abandoned. Emerging from the shadows of the monument, Jean Arthur appears to save him and salvage his spirit. Barely acknowledging the extreme unlikelihood of being at the monument at the same time as Smith, she simply indicates that she figured

she could find him returning to what once had been a symbol and source of his highest ideals and dreams.

The emotion and power of the scene, for some, successfully disguise the fact that it is utterly inconceivable and unrealistic. Other than her simple comment, the scene offers no explanation as to how Saunders could possibly have found Smith at that particular moment. The film does not even pretend to explain or rationalize the possibility of this meeting. In fact, the mystery and uncertainty of the scene actually serve its deeper purpose and intention to suggest that it occurs in a different temporal dimension, one that involves spiritual and ethical connection. Indeed her words of encouragement and inspiration sustain and advance this idea of a transcendent realm of meaning. In an earlier scene with Diz, Saunders wistfully gains an insight into Smith by seeing him as a classic idealist and dreamer. She says, 'I wonder Diz, if this Don Quixote hasn't got the jump on all of us.' She asks 'if it isn't a curse to go through life wised up like you and me?'. However, in the second Lincoln Memorial scene, her language acquires a religious tone and resonance. To Smith's deep bitterness and disillusionment about the reality of the lies behind the ideals and dreams 'carved in stone' on all the monuments, she responds with her own version of his profound beliefs. She recalls the power of belief of all the men Smith had idealized and calls them 'fools with faith' who had the courage to act on their hopes. So, in her eyes, Smith has graduated from simply being a naïve idealist to a religious figure, a 'fool with faith'.

After she has inspired Smith to act, Saunders and Smith leave the memorial together, fired up by mutual enthusiasm and motivated at his suggestion to get a drink. As they leave a strange thing occurs. A security guard with a police cap on his head stands with his back to the film audience at the corner of the screen and casts a shadow across the floor that connects to the couple. Perhaps this shadow involves a rather gratuitous act of artistic design, intended merely to tighten the sense of connection of the couple. However, given the importance of transcendence to the scene, the shadow of a stranger who is also a security guard suggests the notion of the human soul, a spiritual figure without an actual physical body, a third man whose significance derives in part from Luke 24:13–15: 'And behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about three score furlongs./ And they talked together of all these things which Happened./ And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself

drew near, and went with them.' T. S. Eliot develops the theme in *The Waste Land*:

Who is the third who walks always beside you?
When I count, there are only you and I together
But when I look ahead up the white road
There is always another one walking beside you
Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
I do not know whether a man or a woman
—But who is that on the other side of you?
(Eliot 1971: 48)¹

For Levinas, throughout his writings, the third man achieves ultimate transcendent importance as the sign of religious recognition and witness of the infinite responsibility of the same for the other, the force that ruptures the narcissistic bond of the individual or the couple to form a figure of spiritual significance (see Levinas 1996: 61–62; 75; 94–95; 122–123; 163; 170–171).

While not always diachronic or a time-image, time as a theme in general retains its importance as the film progresses. Significantly, a rhetorical and political mechanism based on time actually structures and governs the concluding section of the film – the filibuster. After saying a prayer for Smith, Saunders helps guide his attempt to filibuster control of the Senate floor from the gallery above. Because Smith has to talk without interruption for as long as he can his enemy becomes the enormous clock on the Senate wall. In one shot when Smith leans over and appeals to Senator Paine, the clock literally rests on him, like a stone to Smith's Sisyphus. A famous radio broadcaster, H. V. Kaltenborn broadcasts to the nation the minute by minute effort by the young senator, noting how he has spoken for an amazing 23 hours and 16 minutes. Several shots of Smith position him between intersecting lines of the Senate walls, thus suggesting a form of crucifixion. Close-ups of Stewart's suffering face, a visage that epitomizes the humanity of Levinas's repeated conception of the face as the ultimate sign of human sanctity, not only emphasize his martyrdom but also provide a contrast with the de-humanized face of the clock that he battles. While many critics have detailed the masochism, martyrdom, and the male hysteria ingrained in Stewart's portrayal, the prominence of time and spirituality in the film also suggests a portrayal of ethical transcendence.²

In this conflict of contrasting forms of time, Stewart's amazing performance achieves what Rodowick describes as one of Kant's great

successes. Rodowick writes that 'Kant discovers a way of defining the subject through his "unhinging" of time from movement' (Rodowick 1997: 128). Stewart performs a Kantian action in the film by also 'unhinging' time as he battles oppressively ordered time with his own transcendent time. Stewart accomplishes this in part by enacting what Rodowick terms 'the cinema of the body'. According to Rodowick, 'The cinema of the body is not a picturing of the literal body. Rather, its goal is to give expression to forces of becoming that are immanent in bodies, as well as the body's receptivity to external forces through which it can transform itself' (Rodowick 1997: 154). Stewart's performance turns his body into the centre for the intersection of all the ethical, political, spiritual, and cultural forces in contention in the film. His body expresses the power of these forces as he leans toward Senator Paine with the burden of his many hours of talking, fighting, and filibustering weighing down upon him. His words articulate in their simplest form Levinas's strongest message of accepting ultimate responsibility for the other by treating the neighbour and the other as more important than one's self. He begs Paine to consider the Biblical command to 'love thy neighbour'.

Smith's battle with the clock during his attempt to filibuster the Senate floor encapsulates the paradox and dilemma of the struggle with time, being, and death. In his fight, he uses time to engage his opponents and structure life, but he must also recognize time's message of his own impending defeat and loss. Levinas thinks Heidegger makes this dilemma of time and being the crucial concern for defining and understanding the meaning of life. In contrast, Levinas determines to go beyond this dilemma, going beyond being to a realm of transcendent moral responsibility. As Levinas says in *God, Death, and Time*:

For Heidegger, death signifies *my* death in the sense of my *annihilation*. For him, the inquiry into the relationship between death and time is motivated by the effort to assure oneself that, in the analytic of *Dasein* in which being is in question, being-there is grasped and described in its authenticity or its integrity. Because death marks from the start the end of being-there, it is through death itself that being-there—or man, who, in the form of a being, is the event of that being-there—is the totality of what it is, or is properly there.

(Levinas 2000: 50–51)

For Smith, the time-scale of the filibuster, the relentless stare of the Senate clock, the ambiguous facial expressions and gestures of both

support and benignly impartial detachment of the awesome and deific President of the Senate (Harry Carey), all force the junior senator to confront destruction and the idea of life as heading inescapably to its end. The situation compels him to make the move beyond himself and his own needs, views, ambitions, and purpose to consider ideas that exceed politics and a history that presages historical chronology to touch infinity.

Smith thus moves existentially, ethically, and emotionally toward a position that Levinas elucidates in his ethical metaphysics. As opposed to understanding life in terms of being and the anxiety and determination imposed by time in the face of death, Levinas reads Kant's 'transcendental ideal' to proffer another possibility of rethinking life and death. Rather than focusing on death as the end that structures thinking about life, Levinas interprets the transcendental ideal as organizing and understanding experience as going beyond death to possibility and promise (Levinas 2000: 60). He says that it becomes 'necessary to appeal to the *whole* of reality, to the whole that is a transcendental ideal that is never given'. In this understanding, death becomes a question and a 'problem' rather than an absolute end. He writes, 'So the death included in the finitude of being becomes a *problem*. Time reveals itself to be a relative concept.' Accordingly, Levinas argues for a sphere of meaning and significance of 'hope' that goes beyond being and the certainty of death. He writes,

Kant certainly does not think that we must think of an extension of time beyond limited time; he does not want a 'prolongation of life'. But there is a *hope*, a world accessible to a hope; there is a motivation proper to a hope that signifies. In an existence determined by death, in this epic of being, there are things that do not enter into the epic, significations that cannot be reduced to being.

(Levinas 2000: 60–61)

Conclusion

Exhausted and defeated on the Senate floor, Stewart portrays his character as finally drained of his egoism and self-centeredness, incapable of acting on his promise to keep fighting. Instead, he must appeal to the realm of hope and significance that Levinas describes. Capra and Stewart ostensibly grasp intuitively and convey artistically what Levinas spent decades proposing through his philosophy and ethical metaphysics. Facing the end of his battle and the loss of all his efforts, Smith finally

finds what he has been searching for throughout the film, a transcendent realm of belief that goes beyond the existence he sees and experiences everyday. He undergoes a kind of religious epiphany and conversion to a realm beyond even the political ideals that originally motivated him.

Time and transcendence, diachronicity, and ethical discussion place the concern and focus of the film on ideas as opposed to religious doctrine, sectarian creed, or rigid orthodoxy. Ultimately, the Christian imagery of crucifixion and martyrdom becomes less important than the psychology of transformation and the importance of appreciating people in terms of absolute responsibility and the sanctity of each human as seen primarily in the humanity of the face. Interestingly, the film probably has lasted for so many decades and audiences less because of a desire to believe in the viability of the political system than in *Mr. Smith's* confirmation of a world of ideas and belief that goes beyond the visual and operative reality of the system. The film's argument that 'fools with faith' can change the world and remake reality no doubt continues to fail to convince some while persuading others. It also helps explain why a scholar such as John Wild links Levinas to William James (Wild 1969: 11–20). This comparison associates Levinas politically with pluralism, pragmatism, democracy, and humanitarianism – a language of ideas and values that could help Senator Smith write his next speech.

Thus, to conclude, across the divide between American and European modernistic sensibilities, Capra and Levinas overcome the separation of decades and generations to achieve in effect a dialogue on ethics and values. That dialogue not only brings together America and Europe, it also frames and interconnects different levels of discourse. Levinas speaks through a dense and difficult European philosophical tradition that finds resonance in the passion and hope of Capra's language of everyday experience.

In our own era of extraordinary cultural difference and dissonance, this dialogue constitutes a major achievement. On such different paths in life, perhaps Capra and Levinas ultimately come together in moving toward a common ideal of the ineffable sanctity and uniqueness of each human being.

Notes

1. For an interesting discussion of this theme, see also White 2003: 53–54.
2. For an excellent psychoanalytical discussion of Smith's martyrdom and male hysteria, see Bingham 1994: 1–96; Wolfe 1990: 318.

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6

The Transnational Journey of the Celluloid *Baiana*: Round-Trip Rio-LA

Lisa Shaw

This chapter will consider how a form of regional dress favoured by Afro-Brazilian women from the city of Salvador in Brazil's North East was adopted by both Brazilian film-makers and Hollywood in the 1930–1960 period as a signifier of national and pan-Latin American identity, respectively. It will begin by tracing the cultural origins of the *baiana* costume and how it was first transformed for the screen in Brazil. It will then examine how Hollywood employed the stylized *baiana* costume of tutti-frutti turbans and frilly skirts, which would become Carmen Miranda's cultural straightjacket. Miranda as the archetypal screen *baiana* came to personify Latin America in the context of President Roosevelt's 'Good Neighbour Policy'. Projected back to Brazil, Hollywood's representation of Brazil/latino identity began to dialogue with Brazilian attempts at national self-definition. Finally, this chapter will turn its attention to the Brazilian film industry's vernacular variant of the musical comedy, the low-budget *chanchada*, which re-worked the *baiana* persona, and just as Carmen Miranda had done in Hollywood, whitened her skin. The white Brazilian actress Eliana Macedo starred in countless *chanchadas* as the *mocinha* or girl-next-door, and often donned an ornate version of the *baiana* costume in the musical sequences, such as in *Atlântida Carnival* (*Carnaval Atlântida*, José Carlos Burle 1952). This chapter will argue that the re-appropriation of the white *baiana* in the *chanchadas* of the 1950s signified a creative challenge to Hollywood's hegemony.

***Baianas* and bananas**

In the 1920s and 1930s real-life *baianas* could be found not only selling food on the streets of the cities of Rio de Janeiro and Salvador, but

also leading the rituals of the Afro-Brazilian religion, *candomblé*. *Baianas* equally formed a central wing of all Rio's so-called samba schools, the city's neighbourhood carnival groups, paying homage to the black Bahian women responsible for bringing samba from the North East to the capital and subsequently the rest of the nation in the first decades of the twentieth century (Mendonça 1999: 18). Furthermore, the *baiana* costume was a popular choice for the fancy dress balls and parades of carnival among both men and women, and the *baiana* was a well-known character in the revues of the low-brow *teatro de revista*, Brazil's version of vaudeville.

It was in the musical comedy film *Banana of the Land* (*Banana da Terra*, Rui Costa 1939) that the popular singer Carmen Miranda first appeared dressed as a *baiana* to complement the lyrics of Dorival Caymmi's 'What has the *baiana* got?', a song that she performed in the film.¹ Taking her cue from the song's lyrics, Miranda (who had previously trained as an apprentice milliner at the 'La Femme Chic' shop in Rio) went with Caymmi to the dressmakers to choose the fabric for her outfit. Having selected an Argentine fabric of red, green and yellow stripes, the pair then set off for Rio's Avenida Passos in search of *balangandãs* (the metal, ornamental amulets worn by real-life *baianas*). Her costume incorporated all the other key aspects of this traditional Afro-Brazilian dress (including a turban, necklace, embroidered blouse, gold bracelet, starched skirt and decorated sandals) – in line with the song's self-conscious lyrics. But the addition of fruit to the turban was Miranda's inspired initiative, transforming the baskets of produce that the female street vendors of Salvador, Bahia, carried on their heads into what would become the first of many exuberant, edible turbans. This was to be Miranda's last contribution to a Brazilian film, although this sequence was re-used in the Sonofilmes studio's follow-up musical *Orange from China* (*Laranja da China*, Rui Costa 1940) – clear evidence of Miranda's star status and box-office appeal.

Carmen Miranda and Afro-Brazilian culture

Miranda was 'epidermically white',² having been born in Portugal to Portuguese parents just a few short years before the family's arrival as immigrants in Rio de Janeiro. She nevertheless embraced Afro-Rio from the start, frequenting the samba circles of the then capital's poorer quarters and shantytowns, rubbing shoulders with the emerging genre's Afro-Brazilian creators. In her repertoire she favoured compositions written by black or mixed-race artists such as Assis Valente, Pixinguinha

and Dorival Caymmi, recording countless sambas whose lyrics asserted the music's ethnic background (Coelho 1998: 48–53).³ In spite of its popularity as a carnival costume among white Brazilians, not least men, Miranda's new screen look was a controversial move. Indeed, she once referred in interview to being warned off adopting this racialized persona: '“You can't put theez dress . . . because theez dress only Negroes put”. Bah! I put gold an' silk an' velvet, an' I seeng song in movie' (Zeitlin 1941).⁴ As Darién J. Davis argues, Miranda was clearly conscious of the power dynamics in her appropriation of the *baiana* costume when singing, never performing the music in a straightforward manner, rather injecting into it 'sensuality, wit, playfulness, humour, and satire' (Davis 2000: 187).

The Afro-Brazilian elements of Miranda's screen costumes, gestures and dance moves have been analyzed in detail by José Ligiero Coelho (Coelho 1998). The dance she performed while singing the duet 'Pirolito' in *Banana of the Land* has been kept for posterity only in the form of a series of five snapshots, which reveal that she 'did not assume the character of a black girl as a parody or caricature, but rather as another aspect of her own expression. Her behaviour is very far from the glamour girl she showed off in the beginning of her career' (Coelho 1998: 77).⁵ She wore large hoop earrings when performing 'What has the *baiana* got?' in the film, a typical adornment for women of African descent in Brazil. The amulets that she wore do not have a particular symbolic or religious intent, but the majority of the fruits displayed on her head-dress feature in the *penca de balangandãs* (bunch of amulets) traditionally worn by *baianas* on their waist (Coelho 1998: 105). In *Banana of the Land* (and in her first Hollywood role in *Down Argentine Way*, Irving Cummings 1940), Miranda used her arms and hands to emphasize the meaning of the lyrics, pointing to the items referred to in the following verse from 'What has the *baiana* got?' as if she were a street vendor:

What has the *baiana* got?
 She's got a silk turban
 A golden necklace
 A *pano da costa* (shawl)⁶
 An embroidered blouse
 A gold bracelet
 A starched skirt
 Decorated sandals

Some of the poses and movements that Miranda adopts are of her invention, but others can be traced to the Bantu tradition taken to Brazil by African slaves. The result is a stylized samba dance inspired by Afro-Brazilian performers in Rio's carnival parades or informal musical gatherings that the singer attended with her Afro-Brazilian composer friends (Coelho 1998: 136–140).

Miranda catapulted the ethnically loaded persona of the *baiana* to the Urca casino in Rio, where Afro-Brazilians were seen on stage but not permitted in the audience. In doing so she was confirming her identification with an underdog, Afro-Brazilian culture that was nevertheless being moulded into an expression of national identity by the regime of President Getúlio Vargas (1930–1945). For the upscale context of the Urca casino, and its elite and high-class tourist patrons, a more sophisticated version of the costume was required. In her appearance there she wore a white dress, with a wide black band across it, embellished with an image of Sugar Loaf Mountain, designed by the artist Gilberto Trompowski, accessorized with necklaces and a turban decorated with tiny baskets of fruit (Mendonça 1999: 18–19). The look was born, and it soon caught on. It was Miranda's performance of 'What has the *baiana* got?' at the Urca casino which attracted the attention of US show business impresario Lee Shubert. Shortly after she had signed a contract with Shubert to star on Broadway, Josephine Baker arrived in Rio and performed her own version of 'What has the *baiana* got?' at the same venue (Mendonça 1999: 19–20).

The 'Good Neighbour Policy' and Hollywood images of Latin America

The year 1933 saw the release of *Flying Down to Rio* (Thornton Freeland 1933), a film intended 'to create an impression of *latinidad* ["Latin-ness"] that would be acceptable to both North and Latin American audiences while loosely enacting the diplomatic gestures towards Latin Americans mandated by the new foreign policy' (Benamou 1997: 326). The fascination with Latin America evidenced in *Flying Down to Rio* heightened during the late 1930s and the 1940s, and between 1939 and 1947 Hollywood films featuring Latin American stars, music, locations and stories flooded US and international markets. By 1943, for example, 30 films with Latin American themes or locales had been released and 25 more were in production, and by 1945 84 films with Latin American subjects had been produced (López 1993: 70). The dominance of a Latin American thematic within Hollywood movies during these years

was a direct consequence of the vigorous implementation of the 'Good Neighbour Policy'.

During the Second World War, Latin America was the only market available for exploitation, and thus became a key focus for the exporting of US consumer goods and for the importing of cheaper raw materials. Many South American countries, however, held dubious political positions with regard to the Axis powers. Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay and Brazil had all revealed enthusiasm for the recently emerged fascist regimes in Europe. Their significant Italian and German immigrant populations added to concerns over the political allegiances of these nations. Brazil was a focus for US interest in the light of both the economic and the political contexts, and the 'Good Neighbour Policy' was implemented just three years after the coup that brought Getúlio Vargas to power in 1930. The Vargas regime (1930–1945) strengthened Brazil's commercial potential via rapid industrialization and the re-organization of the agricultural economy. In the run-up to the Second World War, Vargas openly sided with the fascist dictators of Germany and Italy, maintaining strong links with Germany in particular. With the outbreak of the war in Europe, the State Department focused its sights on Brazil, with its fascist-style *Estado Novo* or New State, established in 1937, its trade links with Germany, its Italian and German populations in the south of the country and its strategic location.

Central to Franklin D. Roosevelt's 'Good Neighbour Policy' were ideas of harmony, hemispheric unity and co-operation with Latin America, summed up in one word, Pan-Americanism. Film was central in fostering a spirit of Pan-Americanism that worked towards bridging the distance between the United States and Latin America. Indeed, film titles from the period (such as *Down Argentine Way*, and *Weekend in Havana*, Walter Lang 1941) emphasize proximity rather than distance, and the accessibility of the new neighbours. To implement this policy the US government established the Office of the Co-ordinator of Inter-American Affairs (CIAA) in 1940. Headed by Nelson Rockefeller, the CIAA sponsored newsreels and documentaries for Latin American distribution and, along with the Hays Office, encouraged the studios to make films with Latin American themes. It also set up a motion picture section, with John Hay Whitney as its director, designed to ensure that North Americans developed a better understanding of Latin America and to avoid causing any offence to the neighbours to the south. Hollywood thus began exercising more care when depicting the continent's cultural and geographical characteristics, incorporating authentic location shots, iconographic sites (especially Rio's Corcovado and Sugar Loaf

Mountains) and explanations of the cultural practices of the inhabitants. Consequently, when the film *Down Argentine Way*, in which Carmen Miranda appeared and which featured 'Argentineans' dancing and singing the Mexican mariachi, was deemed offensive to Argentine audiences, the CIAA gave Darryl Zanuck \$40,000 to re-shoot portions of the film. In order to avoid similar episodes in 1941 the CIAA appointed Addison Durland as its Latin American advisor. Hollywood was now conscious of avoiding the distortions and misrepresentations that had previously characterized the portrayal of Spanish America and Brazil on the big screen. With this in mind, Durland employed native Latin Americans to advise on the cinematic representation of their own countries. Ronald Smondak and Dr. Assis Figueiredo assisted Durland in projects involving Brazil.

Carmen Miranda: The Hollywood *baiana*

Ana M. López identifies three categories of 'Good Neighbour Policy' film:

First, there were a number of standard, classic Hollywood genre films, with American protagonists set in Latin America with some location shooting, for example, Irving Rapper's *Now Voyager* (1942), with extensive footage shot in Rio de Janeiro; Edward Dmytryk's *Cornered* (1945), shot totally on location in Buenos Aires; and Alfred Hitchcock's *Notorious* (1946), with second-unit location shots of Rio de Janeiro. Then there were B-productions set and often shot in Latin America that featured mediocre US actors and Latin entertainers in either musicals or pseudo-musical formats [...] Finally, the most successful and most self-consciously good-neighbourly films were the mid-to-big-budget musical comedies set either in Latin America or in the USA but featuring, in addition to recognizable US stars, fairly well-known Latin American actors and entertainers.

(López 1993: 70)

Almost every Hollywood studio produced one or more of these types of movies during this period. It was Twentieth Century-Fox, however, that specialized in the mid-to-big-budget musical comedies. For these films Fox used well-known Latin American artists, the most famous being Carmen Miranda, and it was the *baiana* costume that would launch Miranda's international career as the embodiment of a generic Latin American identity, first on Broadway and subsequently in these



Carmen Miranda in *That Night in Rio* (Irving Cummings 1941)

Hollywood musicals.⁷ Under contract with Twentieth Century-Fox, Miranda appeared as a *baiana* in *Down Argentine Way*, *That Night in Rio* (Irving Cummings 1941) and *The Gang's All Here* (Busby Berkeley 1943), and became Hollywood's highest paid female star. Her screen persona was parodied by the likes of Bob Hope and Mickey Rooney, and incorporated into Walt Disney's feature-length animations about Latin America, *Saludos Amigos* (1943) and *The Three Caballeros* (1945). Miranda's personification of Brazil as 'fertile land of plenty/banana republic' in Hollywood was seen by many Brazilians as patronizing and even offensive. More recently, however, critics have identified a knowing parodic element in her screen persona that betrays a creative use of some of the empty clichés of Hollywood's stereotypical *Latinidad*. Her increasingly farcical costumes, heavily accented English and frequent malapropisms can be interpreted as 'a nod to the requirements of a conception of foreignness and "otherness" necessary to maintain the validity of the text in question as well as her persona as a gesture of good neighbourliness' (López 1993: 77).

There is plenty of evidence to suggest that Hollywood's vision of Brazil was exploited by the regime of Brazil's President Getúlio Vargas to promote the nation's economic riches and commercial potential abroad. Carmen Miranda's success in the Broadway show *The Streets of Paris* in 1939 was proudly reported in the Brazilian press. A review of the show in the Brazilian newspaper *Correio da manhã* (1 July 1939) described how she appeared at the top of a flight of stairs resplendent in an exaggerated and embellished version of the *baiana* costume and proceeded to perform the samba 'O que é que a *baiana* tem?' ('What has the *Baiana* got?'), albeit to a modified rhythm. It added: 'And other songs follow to the delight of the audience. And the act ends with the Brazilian totally winning over Broadway.' It is no coincidence that white Brazilian women dressed as *baianas* worked as hatcheck girls at the Brazilian restaurant at the World's Fair in New York in 1939, or that at the Golden Gate Exposition in San Francisco the following year a pale-skinned *baiana* performed in the Brazilian pavilion, while the real Miranda was photographed next to a display of Brazilian cotton. The creations that Miranda wore in *That Night in Rio*, designed by Travis Banton, were so widely commented on in the Brazilian press that the organizers of the Rio carnival parade requested replicas from the Twentieth Century-Fox wardrobe department, to serve as inspiration for carnival revellers back in Brazil.⁸ Miranda's version of the *baiana* became the template for Brazil's national costume in international beauty pageants and even the clothes worn by souvenir dolls.

Chanchadas, ethnicity and stars

The *chanchada* or musical comedy emerged in Brazil in the mid-1930s out of a tradition of documentaries about the annual carnival celebrations held in Rio de Janeiro. These low-budget films reached the height of their popularity in the late 1940s and 1950s, when the Atlântida studio dominated film production in Brazil.⁹ From their earliest days these films engaged with their Hollywood counterparts, taking their lead in particular from the backstage musicals of the 1930s. The first commercially successful Brazilian talkie, *Our Things* (*Coisas nossas* 1931), for example, produced and directed by the American Wallace Downey, was directly inspired by the Hollywood musical *Broadway Melody* (Harry Beaumont 1929, the first talkie from the United States to be screened in Brazil). Brazil's film press was similarly modelled on North American publications like *Photoplay* or *The Moving Picture World*. By the 1950s *Cinelândia* magazine was the main vehicle for creating star texts in Brazil, taking over the baton from *Cinearte*, published between 1926 and 1942. *Cinelândia* used identical techniques to the US magazines for constructing star discourse, such as reviews of Brazilian and Hollywood films, film stills and publicity shots of stars supposedly in their real home environment, and gossip columns direct from Hollywood, such as that of the infamous Hedda Hopper (which was printed in Portuguese in the Brazilian magazine).

Brazil's star system also adopted Hollywood's privileging of white skin and European features. Although the *chanchada* featured samba (music of Afro-Brazilian origin) in its soundtrack, the tradition was characterized by the structuring absence of black performers. As Robert Stam writes, 'the musicals do manifest the strong presence of black cultural forms, as if Brazilian producers, not unlike their Hollywood counterparts, wanted to have black culture without dealing with the people who produced it' (Stam 1997: 102). Afro-Brazilians, with the notable exception of the prodigiously talented male actor Grande Otelo, only appeared as extras or in bit parts, stereotyped as comic domestic staff or musical performers. Stam has argued that their presence was primarily designed to support the white stars and 'to visually "set off" the beauty and elegance of the white elite' (Stam 1997: 102–103). The most blatant indication of the structuring absence of the Afro-Brazilian in these films is the ubiquitous presence of the ivory-skinned *baiana*. There were, on average, between 10 and 12 musical/dance sequences in a *chanchada*, and most examples of the tradition feature at least one show number in which a female

performer appears dressed in a *baiana* costume. More often than not this performer was Eliana Macedo.

Eliana Macedo: The quintessential white-skinned *baiana* of the *chanchadas*

Eliana Macedo (1925–1990), born Ely de Souza Macedo, but known throughout Brazil simply as Eliana, starred in over 20 films and was the first Brazilian female screen star who had not previously established a career in popular theater, on the radio or in the music industry. On her death in 1990, Luiz Carlos Merten wrote in the newspaper *Estado de São Paulo*: ‘For a long time – throughout the 1950s – she was the biggest and perhaps the only female star in Brazilian cinema’ (Merten 1990: 3). Eliana was typically cast as the *mocinha* or girl-next-door in the Atlântida *chanchadas* of the late 1940s and 1950s, the clean-cut heroine and chaste love interest, who nevertheless also appeared in revealing *baiana* costumes in the song and dance numbers that temporarily interrupted the narrative. The figure of the *mocinha* managed to marry the conflicting requirements of modern but decent women in that she took her rightful place in the public sphere in these films, for example chasing through Rio’s streets and nightclubs in pursuit of the villain of the piece, but retained the traditional qualities of innocence and respectability (Dias 1993: 91). Although the *mocinha* was not blessed with domestic talents, she more than made up for this lack with her artistic skills. Singing and dancing were her fortes, and the fact that she wore skimpy and revealing adaptations of the *baiana* costume for this purpose was excused by the fact that the world of the *chanchada* was one of carnivalesque inversion of the norm. As Rosângela de Oliveira Dias writes, ‘Since the world is turned on its head in the *chanchada*, the *mocinhas* can be associated more closely with pleasure and fun rather than with rigid moral codes’ (Dias 1993: 92).¹⁰

Cinelândia magazine continually emphasized that Eliana was as important as any Hollywood star, and her star text was clearly based on those of her North American rivals. She is referred to, for example, as the Brazilian ‘pin-up’ or the Brazilian ‘Miss Sweater’ (the English terms are used). The magazine also assures its readers that she is an equal match for Betty Grable or Jane Russell. Her similarity to US star Debbie Reynolds, in particular, as commented on by João Luiz Vieira (Vieira 1977: 36) and Robert Stam (Stam 1997: 103),¹¹ can clearly be seen in two of the front covers of *Cinelândia* (May 1955 and November 1957, respectively), in which both young women have

similar hairstyles, and virtually identical pearl earrings and matching necklaces.¹² Both Eliana and Debbie were their respective nation's sweethearts, epitomizing youth, vitality, prettiness, sweetness, and whiteness. In film stills and publicity shots both are dressed to appear younger than their years, often with their hair in ponytails. Their promotion in *Cinelândia* also stressed their childlike/adolescent qualities, even when both were married women in their mid- to late 20s.¹³

Whiteness and lighting

Eliana's youthful, 'to-be-looked-at' good looks are clearly evaluated by the standards set in Hollywood, and Brazilian cinema followed Hollywood's lead in terms of the foregrounding of whiteness and the concurrent marginalization of dark skin. Eliana's whiteness is emphasized by the lighting of her face both on screen and in stills that were used to advertise films in display windows of cinemas. Her extremely well-lit face in movie roles is also a reflection of her star status, and together with her pale makeup results in a bleaching effect in these black-and-white films. In contrast, the Afro-Brazilian actor Grande Otelo, alongside whom she frequently appeared, is plunged into shadow.¹⁴ It is as if her inherent purity and goodness literally radiates from her face. According to Richard Dyer, in his book *White*, which analyses the role of lighting in artistic and especially cinematic representation: 'Idealised white women are bathed in and permeated by light. It streams through them and falls on to them from above. In short, they glow. They glow rather than shine. The light within or from above appears to suffuse the body. Shine, on the other hand, is light bouncing back off the surface of the skin. It is the mirror effect of sweat, itself connoting physicality, the emissions of the body and unladylike labour, in the sense of both work and parturition' (Dyer 1997: 122).

Eliana's frequent appearances in the song and dance sequences of the *chanchadas* wearing a sexy *baiana* costume revealing her bare midriff apparently contradict her epidermis and innocent, homely roles in the narrative. Her 'whitening' of this ethnically marked persona should also be considered within the context of her often ludicrous 'racial' casting, such as in *Samba in Brasília* (*Samba em Brasília*, Watson Macedo, 1960), where she plays a humble shantytown inhabitant well versed in *macumba*, who claims to be a priestess or *filha de santo* of this Afro-Brazilian religion. In her first film, *And the World Has Fun* (*E o mundo se diverte*, Watson Macedo 1948), Eliana sings the well-known samba, 'On the *Baiana's* Tray', a performance that is strikingly reminiscent of

Aurora Miranda's rendition of another of Ari Barroso's sambas ('Missy's Coconut Cakes') in Walt Disney's partially animated feature film, *The Three Caballeros*. Eliana's celluloid *baianas* clearly owe a debt of gratitude to such Hollywood images, not least those of Aurora's famous sister, Carmen.

Interpreting the *baianas* of the Brazilian *chanchadas*

The recurrent motif of the white *baiana* in the *chanchadas* of the 1950s is perhaps surprising, given that Carmen Miranda became such a controversial figure in Brazil, where she was accused of having sold out to Hollywood and of becoming 'Americanized'. The *baianas* played by Eliana and scores of backing dancers in the show numbers of these Brazilian musicals are clearly based on Miranda's Hollywood persona, however palely reproduced. Miranda's over-the-top footwear and tutti-frutti headdresses, for example, are replaced by much less extravagant but equally stylized costumes, and in many ways the *baianas* of the *chanchadas* are more akin to the B-movie Miranda mimics in the USA, such as Maria Montez, than to the so-called 'Brazilian Bombshell' herself. At first sight this recreation of the figure could be interpreted as part of the *chanchada's* affectionate pastiche of Hollywood. The tradition relied heavily on the Brazilian audience's familiarity with the Hollywood product, and certain *chanchadas* were modelled on particular Hollywood movies popular in Brazil. A second possibility is that these *baianas* are incorporated to provide pure performative spectacle and perhaps mild titillation for the adult males in the audience, who were encouraged to watch these home-grown musicals with their wives and children. A third interpretation is that these Miranda clones were part of the *chanchada's* tongue-in-cheek parody of Hollywood, the most obvious example of which was the comic film *Kill or Run Away* (*Matar ou Correr*, Carlos Manga 1954), a spoof of the critically acclaimed western *High Noon* (Fred Zinnemann 1952), released in Brazil under the title *Kill or Die* (*Matar ou Morrer*).

All three possible interpretations seem an inadequate explanation for the omnipresence of the watered-down versions of Miranda's Hollywood *baiana* that we see in countless examples of the *chanchada* tradition in the 1950s. These films may use her star text to poke fun at the Hollywood clichés but the Miranda clones are not obviously parodic or self-deprecating. In order to shed light on the cultural meaning of the white *baiana* figure in the *chanchada* Néstor García Canclini's work on intercultural hybridization is particularly useful. Although his work is

based on contemporary Latin America, he admits that 'hybridity has a long trajectory in Latin America' (Canclini 1995: 241). The *chanchada* is clearly an example of what Canclini calls a hybrid genre in that it is a composite of Brazilian and US cultural traditions, and more importantly is not simply an example of cultural imitation that can be attributed to dependency on the first-world Hollywood model. Canclini argues that hybridity is the ongoing condition of all cultures, which are involved in continuous processes of transculturation. The *chanchada* can be viewed as a transcultural medium involved in a two-way movement of borrowing and lending between Hollywood and the Brazilian film industry. In this respect, it is an example of what Canclini calls 'impure genres', which have expanded in Latin America upon contact with modernity, in this case in the form of Hollywood. The *baiana* clones of the *chanchada* are the product of a multi-directional cultural migration. To use Canclini's terms, the *baiana* persona was 'deterritorialized' upon its arrival in Hollywood with Carmen Miranda. He describes this process as 'the loss of the "natural" relation of culture to geographical and social territories' (Canclini 1995: 229). Projected back to Brazil in Hollywood movies, and subsequently re-appropriated by the *chanchadas* of the 1950s, the white-skinned *baiana* is 'reterritorialized', in a process of what Canclini terms 'certain relative, partial territorial relocalizations of old and new symbolic productions' (Canclini 1995: 229). The *baiana* that appears on screen in these Brazilian films in the 1950s has new symbolic meaning. She is herself an intercultural hybrid, whose historical identity and memory in the Brazilian context are drowned out by the figure's reworking in Hollywood. The dependency theory model of cultural imperialism versus national popular cultures is, as Canclini argues, inadequate to understand current power relations in Latin America (Canclini 1995: 229). This was equally true of 1950s Brazil, as the country intensified its entry into modernity. By re-appropriating the Hollywood persona of Carmen Miranda, the *chanchadas* of the 1950s 'dehierarchize' the established asymmetry between the centre (Hollywood) and the periphery (Brazilian film). To render the asymmetrical power relationship more complex, Brazilian film made its borders more flexible allowing for the 'delocalization' of the symbolic product of the *baiana* figure.

Canclini's work on 'deterritorialization' and intercultural movements across the US-Mexican border is also enlightening in this context. He analyses hybrid and simulated cultural products in the context of the border experience in cities like Tijuana, and argues that the simulacrum or obvious illusion becomes a resource for defining identity, whereby the

'authentic' becomes relativized. Tijuana-based periodicals, for example, rework definitions of identity and culture from the starting point of the border experience, becoming a voice for a generation who grew up exposed to both Mexican and US culture. Metaphorically, the border experience applies to the Brazilian audiences of the *chanchadas* of the 1950s, who were exposed to both home-grown movies and the Hollywood imports, most significantly the 'Good Neighbour Policy' musicals starring their own Carmen Miranda as a stylized *baiana*. These audiences, like the inhabitants of the physical frontier land with the USA, live in the interval between two worlds and thus they assume all possible identities (Canclini 1995: 238). Canclini argues that popular sectors in Latin America deal with ideological oppression today by 'incorporating and positively valuing elements produced outside of their own group (criteria of prestige, hierarchies, designs, and functions of objects)' (Canclini 1995: 260). Unable to construct a different order, they establish covert challenges to hegemony within popular culture. In the same way, the re-appropriation of the white Hollywood *baiana* in the *chanchadas* of the 1950s signified a creative challenge to Hollywood's hegemony.

If we accept that non-narrative interludes allow for negotiated or subversive readings by spectators, it is important to note that the *baianas* of these Brazilian films of the 1950s always appear in the musical/dance sequences, when the narrative simply pauses. Thus they are instantly marked as synthetic constructs, totally separated from the 'reality' of the story line. The screen audiences within the *chanchadas* do not identify with the *baianas* on stage, who perform for diegetic members of the elite and tourists. They are a mere diversion, to be looked at by both the screen audience and its real-life counterpart. No intimacy is permitted between the *baiana* and the diegetic or extra-diegetic spectator, whereas Brazilian audiences were clearly intended to identify with the characters of the narrative proper, particularly the lowly *caipiras* (hillbillies), migrants and marginalized urban dwellers. Ana M. López has argued that Miranda's inclusion as a performer similarly freezes the narrative of the 'Good Neighbour Policy' films that she starred in at Twentieth Century-Fox, openly displaying her as an object of a voyeuristic gaze. However, Miranda herself undermines the passivity inherent in this role by aggressively returning the gaze of the camera and the spectator, and as a result, she is seen to acknowledge and openly participate in her representation as 'tropical other' (López 1993). In the same vein, Shari Roberts contends that Miranda's appeal and fame resided in her audience's perception of her as a producer of her star text and as being in control of her own self-parody (Roberts 1993).

Conclusion

Carmen Miranda adopted the *baiana* as her alter-ego in Brazil in the late 1930s in order to give credibility to her performances of sambas with Afro-Brazilian themes. In Hollywood in the early 1940s, in the context of the 'Good Neighbour Policy', the *baiana* was stripped of her ethnic markers, and Miranda became the perfect embodiment of the non-threatening, exotic 'other', her white European complexion sufficiently sanitizing the Afro-Brazilian origins of her costumes. Miranda's homogenization of Latin American identity in Hollywood received a mixed reception in Brazil, but her version of the *baiana* persona began to dictate how Brazilians depicted themselves, not least for international audiences, such as those who attended the World's Fair in New York in 1939 or the Golden Gate Exposition in San Francisco the following year. In Brazil in the late 1940s and 1950s the Hollywood-style *baiana* became synonymous with the leading lady Eliana in the *chanchadas*, in the ultimate example of the stylization and ethnic cleansing of symbols of black Brazil. Paradoxically, Eliana's whiter-than-white face became the acceptable face of Afro-Brazilian culture in these films. The *chanchada*'s re-hashing of the *baiana* persona formed part of Brazilian cinema's compliance with Hollywood ideals of beauty. But, more importantly, the Brazilian *chanchada* celebrates the migration of the *baiana* and the intercultural crossings that she has made, and Brazilian audiences were content to assume her hybrid identity, the 'authenticity' of which is immaterial. The Miranda look-alikes that we see in the low-budget, black-and-white *chanchadas* of the 1950s similarly reveal Brazil's acknowledgement of its stereotypical Hollywood representation and can therefore be interpreted as an ironic comment on the falsification and homogenization of Latin identity in the US film industry in the 'Good Neighbour' years and beyond.

Notes

1. Three years earlier the actress Heloísa Helena had already adopted the *baiana* persona on screen in the proto-*chanchada* *Hello, Hello, Carnival!* (*Alô, alô, carnaval!*, Adhemar Gonzaga 1936), but it was the rising star Miranda who would transform this outfit into her trademark.
2. A term coined by Robert Stam (Stam 1997: 84).
3. On 4 January 1939 she performed Ari Barroso and Luís Iglesias's composition 'Boneca de Piche' ('Tar Doll') in the official 'Popular Music Day' celebrations organized by President Getúlio Vargas's authoritarian New State, a song that she had recorded on disc the previous year. She sang: 'Jet black, the

colour of berries/I'm a tar doll', and in a photograph taken during this performance, she can be seen on stage with the singer and radio presenter Almirante, her face clearly darkened with make-up, as was the tradition when performing this particular samba. Miranda often appeared in blackface when performing songs featuring Afro-Brazilian characters. In *Banana of the Land* she was originally due to perform 'Boneca de Pixe' in duet with Almirante, but the song was replaced with 'Pirolito' due to a dispute over copyright payments. In the film, she and Almirante perform the new song, which contains no references to black culture, wearing the same costumes and blackened faces that had been planned for the performance of 'Tar Doll'. Coelho (1998: 76–77) explains that 'Boneca de Pixe' was first performed in a theatrical revue in 1930 by Aracy Cortes and João Martins, who appeared in blackface. Although Brazil had no tradition of minstrelsy, the show's co-writer, Oduvaldo Vianna, had travelled to the United States the previous year and brought back this idea from the Broadway shows that he had seen.

4. For a detailed analysis of Miranda's representation of ethnicity in Hollywood, see Roberts 1993: 3–23.
5. Here there is a direct contrast with her ultra-modern, masculine costume of lamé trouser suit and top hat that she wore when performing 'Cantoras do Rádio' ('Radio Singers') in duet with her sister Aurora in *Hello, Hello, Carnival!* (1936).
6. The *pano da costa* is a type of shawl typically worn by the *baianas*. In the beginning of the colonial period these garments were imported from Africa, but were later woven by African slaves and their descendants on Brazilian soil. They were hand woven and featured particular colours and designs with symbolic meanings. The name comes from the shawl's geographical origins in the Ivory Coast (Costa do Marfim in Portuguese) and from the fact that it is worn across a woman's back (*costas* in Portuguese).
7. Although it is commonly believed that Miranda took this unofficial 'national costume' to Hollywood in 1939, where it was reproduced in various musicals, versions of the same characteristic outfit are worn by the resident dancers in a Rio casino in RKO's *Flying Down to Rio* (1933), several years before the Brazilian star arrived in the United States.
8. Similarly, the film magazine *Cinelândia* (February 1956, first fortnight, p. 38) contained a feature entitled 'Suggestions from Hollywood for Carnival'.
9. The Atlântida *chanchadas* hit on a winning formula by targeting a popular audience, by appealing to that audience's shared experiences of life, and by employing actors and actresses, many from humble origins themselves, and many of whom had established careers in popular theater, the circus or the radio. In addition, the largely unsophisticated viewers could closely identify with the behaviour and predicaments of the familiar faces on the screen which spoke in a language of slang and colloquialisms that they understood. The characters that appeared in the *chanchadas*, from the lazy civil servant to the alienated newcomer to the city, trying to make a living as best he could, were equally recognizable, particularly to urban migrants.
10. The star system in Brazil was clearly moulded on Hollywood's version but there were some important differences that reflected the norms of a patriarchal, Catholic society in Brazil in the 1950s. Thus Brazilian female stars like Eliana are always depicted in the film press as being closely linked to

- their families and homes, nurturing girls who turned their back on luxuries and nightlife (unlike their Hollywood counterparts).
11. The popular composer Hermínio Bello de Carvalho also referred to Eliana as 'our Debbie Reynolds', as quoted in two of her obituaries in the national press (see Merten 1990: 3 and *Jornal do Brasil* 19 June 1990).
 12. This phenomenon of 'parallel stars' was not unique to Brazil, of course. The star of 1930s Mexican melodrama, Andrea Palma (1903–1987), was described as the Marlene Dietrich from Vera Cruz. Such 'parallel stardom' provides an interesting commentary on cinematic relations between two countries, one of which is invariably the United States. As Andrea Noble has argued, Palma embodied modernity and 'universal' (i.e. Hollywood) beauty, and was thus deemed a worthy leading lady of 'international' standing. She deliberately modelled herself on Dietrich, adopting her characteristic sultry poses, and openly rejecting the home-grown beauty of the Mexican peasant woman. Ironically, however, she was later eclipsed by Dolores Del Rio, who came to personify this ideal of Mexican beauty, proving that Mexican cinema could never free itself from the local/national (Noble 2005). Similarly, the *chanchada* could not adopt 'universal' female stars wholesale, and thus tempered Eliana's Hollywood sweetheart text in the films' narratives with her musical/dance performances as a *baiana*, albeit borrowed from Carmen Miranda's incarnations at Twentieth Century-Fox.
 13. An article entitled 'Assim é Eliana' – 'This is what Eliana is like' (*Cinelândia*, December 1955, 2nd fortnight) supposedly catches her unawares, thus revealing the 'truth' behind her star text. It focuses on her recent weight loss, which makes her look and act even more like a teenager. She is described as 'the blond, radiant, youthful star of Brazilian cinema', and is photographed playing with a teddy bear and cuddly toy dog, part of her collection of soft toys. Unlike Debbie Reynolds's celebrity union with Eddie Fischer (the same issue of the magazine dedicates two pages to their wedding), Eliana's marriage to radio star Renato Murce was downplayed (although a rare, and admittedly small, photo of them together appears here). Murce was much older, previously married, and thus not seen as a fitting enhancement of her youthful image. Instead, she was often pictured in film stills, reproduced by *Cinelândia*, with the heartthrob of the *chanchada*, Cyl Farney, equally chosen for his Hollywood-style good looks. A publicity still of them smiling and gazing into each other eyes bears the caption: 'Cyl Farney and Eliana are together again. Brazil's most adored romantic couple.'
 14. As Dyer writes, 'Movie lighting focuses on the individual. Each person has lighting tailored to his or her personality (character, star image, actorly attributes). Each important person, that is. At a minimum, in a culture in which whites are the important people, in which those who have, rather than are, servants, occupy centre stage, one would expect movie lighting to discriminate against non-white people in terms of visibility, individualisation and centrality. I want however to push the argument a bit further. Movie lighting valorises the notion of the unique and special character of the individual, or the individuality of the individual. It is at the least arguable that white society has found it hard to see non-white people as individuals; the very notion of the individual, of the freely developing, autonomous human person, is only applicable to those who are seen to be free and autonomous,

who are not slaves or subject peoples. Movie lighting discriminates against non-white people because it is used in a cinema and a culture that finds it hard to recognise them as appropriate subjects for such lighting, that is, as individuals' (Dyer 1997: 102).

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7

The American Dream in Post-War Italy

Geoffrey Nowell-Smith

For millions of people in Italy in the 1930s, America was a dream. Sometimes it was a dream so vague they could not really assign a place to it. But for others it was geographically precise. In an interview with Gilles Lambert in the 1970s, Sergio Leone recalled:

For me America was a veritable religion. Throughout all my childhood and adolescence [. . .] I dreamt of the wide-open spaces of America. The lost, empty spaces. The incredible 'melting pot', the first nation built by people of every nation in the world. Those long straight roads, muddy or dusty, which begin nowhere, since their function is to cross the whole continent.

(quoted in Lambert 1976: 7, also in Frayling 1981: 45.
See Frayling 2000: 23–24)

For others again the image of America was formed closer to home. In the years before the First World War thousands of Italians had joined the poor and huddled masses emigrating to the New World and the United States of America in particular. This mass emigration was cut off by Italy's Fascist government in the 1920s, but the émigrés stayed in touch with their families, regaling them with tales of unimagined freedom, modernity and prosperity. The fact that those left behind could not follow their relatives to the promised land only increased the power of the fantasy.

In almost all cases, however, the main vehicle for the imagined image of America was the movies. Italy's own film industry had been almost wiped out in the early 1920s and the place of Italian films on the screen was largely taken up with imports. Some imports were from France, some from Germany, and some from other European countries, but the vast

majority were American. It was American films, with their wide-open spaces, their automobiles, their small-town folk and shopgirls rising up the fluid social scale, which provided the greatest enchantment to people back in Mussolini's Italy where horizons opened up, if at all, only to be restricted.

The reaction of the Fascists to the Americophilia of much of the population was initially to deplore it rhetorically but to do nothing about it in practice. The film industry was allowed to languish throughout the 1920s before the government really woke up to the implications, cultural or financial, of Italy's dependence on imported American product. When the government did eventually intervene, however, its principal objective was to make Italian films industrially competitive, with the inevitable cost of ideological compromise. Producers and directors fell over themselves to capture the Hollywood spirit, its overall modernity, the brightness of its comedy, the pathos of its drama, the sheen of its spectacles – everything, in fact, except its democratic values.

One of the most enthusiastic admirers of American films and American culture generally was Vittorio Mussolini, son of the Duce. An amiable dilettante, Mussolini junior was made editor of the journal *Cinema*, most of whose board and contributors, unbeknownst to him, were either already secret opponents of his father's regime or in the process of moving to oppositional positions (Rohdie 1990: 9–11).

The oppositionists on *Cinema* did not share the uncritical admiration for American popular culture prevalent among some modernisers in and around the film industry. Increasingly, their tastes inclined towards realism, a commodity in relatively short supply in Hollywood and more to be found in contemporary American literature. In this they found themselves at one with young writers such as Cesare Pavese who were finding models for their own writing in the earthy style of John Steinbeck, William Faulkner or John Dos Passos. The result of all this, when liberation came in 1943–1945, was the film movement known as neo-realism.

Neo-realism

In the confused immediate post-war situation, with the main film studios either bombed or in temporary use as a transit camp for refugees, Italian film-makers were able (or forced) to set up small-scale productions which dealt with the war and its aftermath in a straightforward realistic mode. Often left-wing in their political stance, these films, by the likes of Luchino Visconti, Roberto Rossellini and the director/scriptwriter team

of Cesare Zavattini and Vittorio De Sica, made if anything a bigger impact abroad than they did at home.

The other result of liberation was the return of Hollywood films to Italian screens. They had more or less disappeared in 1938 when the major studios pulled out of the Italian market in protest against protectionist measures introduced by a new law controlling the film trade. Then in 1940, all imports from America ceased. Almost immediately after the war ended, they were back again with a vengeance, swamping Italian screens just as they had done after the previous world war. But the Italian government had learnt its lesson, and although the old protectionist law of 1938 had been repealed, it was soon replaced by new legislation, similar to that which followed the Blum-Byrnes Agreement in France, giving the indigenous industry breathing space in the form of screen quotas. Although unpopular with exhibitors, the quotas enabled the industry to regroup and production rose steadily from 1948 onwards.

Where did this leave neo-realism? According to the standard account, neo-realism, although popular in intention, was never popular at the box office and soon found itself squeezed out of the marketplace by Hollywood imports on the one side and the resurgent commercial industry on the other. This is true up to a point, but only if neo-realism is defined very narrowly. The films which failed at the box office were those which pushed to extremes the most unsparing aspects of the neo-realist aesthetic, and in so doing deprived audiences of such basic commodities as love-interest or action-adventure. Thus De Sica and Zavattini's *Umberto D* (1952) about a retired civil servant living on an inadequate pension with no real friend other than his dog, and Rossellini's *Francis, God's Jester* (*Francesco giullare di Dio* 1950) about a group of monks pledged (and adhering) to vows of chastity, poverty and non-violence were box-office catastrophes. By contrast films which followed in the wake of Rossellini's earlier *Rome Open City* (*Roma città aperta* 1945) and allowed in elements of sex, adventure or melodrama did perfectly well at the box office. Although such films – directed by the likes of Alberto Lattuada, Giuseppe De Santis, Pietro Germi or Antonio Pietrangeli – might not pass a modern purist's test of what constitutes a neo-realist film, they were certainly regarded as neo-realist at the time. It is only recently that an unduly narrow focus has taken over and they have tended, wrongly, to be excluded from the neo-realist panorama.¹

According (again) to the standard account, the impure features of the films by Lattuada, Germi, De Santis, Pietrangeli and so on were the product of a compromise between neo-realist values and those of the Hollywood cinema with which their films had to compete. This is also

true up to a point. There is no doubt that the industry in general was acutely aware, just as it had been in the 1930s, of the need to compete with the Americans, to script films tightly, to create home-grown stars with sex-appeal, and generally to do as successfully as possible all the things that made Hollywood films popular with the audience. An obvious example of this is De Santis's *Bitter Rice* (*Riso amaro*), produced by Carlo Ponti in 1949, which mixes socially conscious drama with a noirish sub-plot, and illustrates the harshness of life in the rice-growing industry with frequent shots of Silvana Mangano's exposed thighs as she wades through the paddy-fields.

On the other hand, although competition with Hollywood played its part in shaping Italian popular films (including neo-realist ones) in the 1940s and 1950s, things would not necessarily have been that different if that competition had not existed. Sex, crime and adventure had been major components of European cinema since the earliest times and although Fascism cleaned up the cinema somewhat in the 1930s, much as the Production Code Administration (PCA) did in America, there is no reason to suppose that Italian films would have gone all ascetic and anti-dramatic if American competition had been removed. There is equally no reason to believe, conversely, that it was simply in reaction to American films that film-makers such as Rossellini or De Sica/Zavattini chose a deliberately de-dramatised style for their films in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Although modern viewers may choose to *read* these films in the light of their differences from Hollywood, this again is an unhistorical aberration. The differences are real, and were visible at the time. But in a complex and fluctuating situation, it is not possible to single out the idea of being different from Hollywood as the principal or only cause.

Cinema and the Cold War

It is also worth noting that the popularity of the United States in general, as opposed to the audience appeal of its movies, experienced many ups and downs in the post-war period. When the Allied troops landed in Italy in 1943, capturing Rome in the following year and finally reaching the northern industrial centres in 1945, they were at first greeted as liberators. But much of the liberation had been carried out by resistance groups, for which the Communists provided the backbone. There were tensions between the resistance and the Allies during the liberation period and even greater tensions between the post-resistance left and the Americans in the years that followed. The Communist and Socialist

resistance had been fought not just to drive out the Germans but for the sake of a new non-Fascist Italy, which in the imagination of many on the left would take its cue from the Soviet Union rather than from America. It took some time for the fact to sink in that the Americans were there to stay and that, whatever kind of democracy arose under American tutelage, it would have to be one of which the United States approved. The left political parties knew this, of course, and acted skilfully to ensure that the post-war constitution would not merely prevent the return of Fascism but provide a platform on which they could fight for a broader concept of democracy than many on the right would have liked.

In the event, most of the political battles from 1947 onwards were won by the right. This included a battle over neo-realism, which became a political football. It was attacked by the right and not only defended by the left but appropriated, with the perverse result that Rossellini, who was not a leftist, was, so to speak, more or less excommunicated from the neo-realist church. But what the left sensibly abstained from doing was engaging in a cultural Cold War against the American cinema of the kind practised by the French Communist Party at the same time. Many left-wing Italian intellectuals, like those in other European countries, continued to look on Hollywood with a deep suspicion which the Cold War and the anti-Communist witch hunts in Hollywood could only intensify. There were also many people working in the industry who were afraid for their jobs if too many American films were imported. Put those two sets of attitudes together, and you had a recipe for an all-out onslaught on the American cinema and all that it stood for. But the Italian Communist Party (PCI) realised that if its friends were to implant themselves into film culture and the film industry, they had to take that culture and that industry as they were, transform them indeed if that were possible, but not engage in too much loud and empty denunciation of everything that came out of America.

It was not only the Communist Party but also the Socialists (PSI) who were opposed to the Atlantic alliance and Italian membership of NATO. The issue had in fact split the Socialists, with a minority group – the Social Democrats or PSDI – breaking away to support the pro-American Christian Democrats. But political anti-Americanism remained strong in Italy throughout the 1950s, with 40 per cent of the electorate voting for anti-Atlanticist parties. Meanwhile cultural anti-Americanism was never as strong in Italy as in France. There were no public protests against Coca Cola or rock 'n' roll, either from the traditionalist right or the anti-Atlanticist left. Regardless of political affiliation, most Italians continued to regard America as a land of opportunity, if not necessarily freedom,

and American films remained popular for the reasons they had always been popular: they were energetic, democratic, and not just fun to watch but the embodiment of values which appealed in fantasy if not in reality. The American share of the box office, however, steadily declined throughout the 1950s, and by the end of the decade had dropped below 50 per cent. The Italian films that were taking an increasing share of the box office were a mixed bag, with comedies and melodramas very much to the fore in the early part of the decade and an unexpected boom in 'art cinema' towards the end. But all in some way represented a reaffirmation of national values against an Americanisation to which the public felt not so much hostile as lukewarm.

Coexistence and co-operation in the 1950s

One factor that Italian film-makers soon realised they had to contend with was the enormous popularity of American actors, which had a life of its own, almost independent of the films in which they appeared. To Italian producers the idea of being able to use an American star seemed a sure-fire recipe for box-office success – not only at home but as a way of breaking into the American market itself. When De Sica and Zavattini were trying to raise money for *Bicycle Thieves* (*Ladri di biciclette*, De Sica) in 1948, they found one producer ready to put up the money if he could get Cary Grant to play the role of the unemployed hero. 'It shows how desperate we were', scriptwriter Suso Cecchi D'Amico commented later, 'that we even considered the idea for a minute' (quoted in Faldini and Fofi 1979: 135). But in other cases directors and writers were happy to go along with producers' ideas for increasing the appeal of their films. Visconti eagerly took on Farley Granger to play opposite Alida Valli in *Senso* in 1954 – encouraged, no doubt, by the homoerotic undertones of his performances in Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948) and *Strangers on a Train* (1951). Also in 1954 Fellini used Anthony Quinn and Richard Basehart in *La strada* and Basehart again in *The Swindle* (*Il bidone*) the following year, this time alongside Broderick Crawford. And Antonioni chose Steve Cochran for his unemployed hero in *The Cry* (*Il grido*) in 1957, with the blacklisted American actress Betsy Blair as a former flame whose affection he attempts to re-ignite. Using well-known foreigners with high recognition value might seem a distinctly non-realist procedure, but it was often the neo-realist, or post-neo-realist, directors themselves who chose the actors and took responsibility for making them blend into the texture of the film, aided by the fact their acting style was

less theatrical than that of many Italian actors and blended well with non-professionals.²

The most spectacular deployment of a Hollywood star in post-war Italian cinema was, however, Rossellini's use of Ingrid Bergman in a series of films beginning with *Stromboli* in 1950 and continuing with *Europe '51* (*Europa '51* 1952) and *Journey to Italy* (*Viaggio in Italia* 1954), in all of which she plays a Northern European or American woman stranded in an alien Mediterranean environment. Here there was no risk of compromising realist values, since the roles Rossellini constructed for Bergman all involved her playing, to some extent, herself.

The story of how Rossellini and Bergman came together for the making of *Stromboli* and their subsequent romance has been told many times, most recently by Stephen Gundle, so I shall only give the briefest summary here (see Gundle 2000: 64–79). Suffice it to say that it began with a letter sent by Bergman to Rossellini in 1947 or 1948 offering her services as a possible actress.³ Rossellini then rewrote for her a part he had intended for his then companion, Anna Magnani, and persuaded her to play it and David Selznick to finance the film. Rossellini's calculation was that Bergman's involvement would win him audiences both in America and in Europe, since he could trade on both her Hollywood stardom and her European origins. By making her character that of a northern European, he could also rationalise making the film with an English-language soundtrack, another crucial factor if he was to break into the American and British markets.

In the event, these plans misfired. *Stromboli*, in its initial edit, was too austere to appeal in America. It also fell foul of the moralism of the Hays Code by appearing to condone the heroine's presumed adultery and desertion of her lawful husband. Rossellini's much-publicised affair with his star brought him into conflict with the Church as well as the tut-tutting sections of the public. The film was re-edited twice and possibly more for release in different markets.⁴ The American version, which Rossellini repudiated, softened the story and made it appear as if the heroine is going back to her husband after all. An Italian version, retitled *Stromboli, terra di Dio* ('Stromboli, land of God'), put a new emphasis on her religious illumination: she may be leaving her husband, but she most definitely finds God en route. Neither the American nor the international version did at all well either commercially or critically, though the young Eric Rohmer raved about the film in *La Gazette du cinéma*, setting in train a minority cult of the film among the future critics of *Cahiers du cinéma* (Schérer 1950; reprinted in Rohmer 1989: 124–127). The Italian version did respectably enough, however, with box-office

takings in line with those for films by other neo-realist directors. With a gross of 313 million lire (approximately £200,000 in the values of the time) it actually did twice as well as Visconti's *Bellissima*, which was released the following year. It also did better than *Vulcano*, a film hastily put together to feature Anna Magnani in (more or less) the role she did not get to play because of Rossellini's desertion.⁵

After the embarrassment of *Stromboli*, Rossellini scaled down his hopes for a major American breakthrough and turned his attention more closely to Europe. Hedging his bets somewhat, he chose mid-Atlantic actors to play opposite Bergman in the next two films of the cycle – the Canadian-born Alexander Knox for *Europe '51* in 1952, and George Sanders for *Journey to Italy* in 1954. (Born in St Petersburg to British parents, Sanders never lost his British accent, even during his long period in Hollywood.) But he had even less success with these films than he had had with *Stromboli*. *Europe '51* was produced by Carlo Ponti and Dino De Laurentiis, then in partnership at Lux Film, with high expectations of international success. But it did only moderately at the box office in Italy and even less well abroad. It never got a British release and was rejected by Selznick in the United States because of its appalling post-synchronisation. Finally released there as *The Greatest Love* in 1954, it attracted very little attention, and that was unfavourable. *Journey to Italy* did, if anything, even worse. Its box-office takings in Italy were dismal.⁶ Outside Italy no major distributor was interested. In France, *Cahiers du cinéma* were alone in defending it. In Britain it was taken on by a company called Orb films which released it in 1958, cut down to 70 minutes and retitled *The Lonely Woman* (Dagrada 2005: 289). In the United States it appears not to have been cut, but again it had only a limited release and a new title, *Strangers*. Rossellini's grand design was effectively in tatters.

As shown by Selznick's reaction to *Europe '51*, the biggest single problem facing Italian (and European) producers generally in approaching the American market was American audiences' intolerance of dubbing – or at any rate of dubbing with anything less than perfect lip-synch. This applied as much to bad post-synchronisation of lines spoken in English as it did to the synching of foreign dialogue. This problem did not exist in reverse, since European audiences had become accustomed to dubbed films (American or other European) in the 1930s and had become tolerant of the practice, and even of the curious mixture of songs in the original and dubbed dialogue when watching American musicals. But European producers were faced with a hard choice, either to export films with the original soundtrack to be subtitled, in which case

they would only reach the art-cinema and 16 mm markets, or attempt a dubbed version which, if at all clumsy or with the wrong accents, would at best appeal only in America or only in Britain, and probably in neither. Rossellini got round this in *Stromboli* with the aid of the fiction that most of the inhabitants on the small island on which the film was set were returning émigrés who could converse with Ingrid Bergman in English. *Europe '51* and *Journey to Italy* were both set in a mainly English-speaking milieu, had in the first instance English soundtracks, and were dubbed for release in Italy and France. But Visconti's *Senso*, which was shot in English and lip-synched by the stars Alida Valli and Farley Granger in order to be acceptable in Britain and America, never acquired the international distribution the producers had hoped for. It did make it to Britain (a print survives in the National Film Archive), but only in a cut down version titled *The Wanton Countess*, and was only released in the United States many years later, and then as a subtitled art movie. It was not until 1963, with *The Leopard* (*Il Gattopardo*, Visconti), that a post-synched Italian film really made it big in the American market.

It was not only the Italian producers and directors who were disappointed at their failure to make the big breakthrough into the American market. American producers were disappointed too, none more than David O. Selznick. Whereas the Hollywood industry in general, as represented by the Motion Picture Association of America, was mainly interested in maximising the exports of American production, independent producers such as Selznick or Goldwyn had a contrary interest. They wanted product of whatever origin which they could market in the United States. Looking enviously at the prestige, if not the sales, of Italian directors such as Rossellini or De Sica, they were eager to sign them up for production for the world market. This might involve bringing them to America, rather as Sjöström and Murnau had been brought to America in the 1920s, or it might entail setting up productions abroad to be launched in America as quality European product, although always with an American slant and of course an English-language soundtrack. This is what Selznick had done successfully with *The Third Man* and what he hoped to do with *Stromboli*. The Rossellini-Selznick saga begins in fact before Bergman enters the picture. Rossellini's initial target for someone to star in his first American-produced picture was not Bergman but Jennifer Jones, Selznick's protégée, mistress, and soon-to-be-wife. For his part, Selznick was happy to be courted by this esteemed European director, particularly if it meant a good role for Jones, for whom he had unrealistic ambitions. He therefore encouraged Rossellini's overtures and

his main concern seems to have been to prevent Goldwyn getting there first. In the event Goldwyn lost interest, Rossellini got to make *Stromboli* with Bergman, which generated more scandal than profit, and Selznick found European employment for Jones first with Michael Powell (*Gone to Earth*, 1950) and then with De Sica (*Indiscretions of an American Wife* [Stazione Termini 1953]).

The interest shown by Goldwyn and Selznick in Italian directors raises a wider question. It was obvious what Italian audiences saw in American cinema, but what underlay the interest of American producers in Italian directors? Did they seriously hope they could interest American audiences in Italian and/or neo-realist-type films, or did they simply think that directors such as Rossellini had talent and originality with the aid of which they could somehow attract audiences to a product which was slightly out of the ordinary? *Rome Open City* had done very well in America for a subtitled film. *Paisà* (1946) did even better, but it only needed subtitling in part, since much of the dialogue takes place in English between Allied soldiers. De Sica's *Shoeshine* (*Sciusià* 1946) won a special award for best foreign film at the Oscars in 1947. It was clear that the neo-realist directors had something going for them. The question was: how much and for how long?



The MP and the Boy, *Paisà* (Roberto Rossellini 1946)

While it would be wrong to regard the vogue for neo-realism as a mere flash in the pan, its spectacular impact was short-lived due to the exceptional circumstances of the immediate post-war years. During most of the war itself, Americans had been shielded from its reality. American war films, shot in the studio, were completely unrealistic, and actual ground fighting for American troops did not begin in either the Pacific or the European theatre until 1943, and then at first on a small scale. By 1945, however, millions of Americans were involved in the fighting and discovered to their horror how utterly unlike the movies the reality was. And when the fighting was over they were also witness to the devastation and misery of Japan, Germany and Italy. Film-makers as well as combat troops returned home with a changed consciousness of what the world was like and how the cinema could or should represent it. Neo-realism profited enormously from the new consciousness, but only briefly. By 1950, if not earlier, the war-related vogue for neo-realism was over. If Italian films and directors were to remain bankable, it had to be on some other basis.

Another possible selling point of Italian films in America was sex, but this applied only in minority markets, since mainstream releases had to conform to the Production Code, to which all major companies, including exhibitors, subscribed. This was good news for independent exhibitors, but not for producers in search of mainstream markets. The PCA was so prudish it even objected to two scenes in *Bicycle Thieves* – one when the father and his little boy wander into what turns out to be a brothel and one when the boy starts undoing his fly to pee against a wall. *Bicycle Thieves* did in the end get a mainstream release, but only because distributor Joseph Burstyn subjected the PCA to such ridicule that it was forced to beat a shamefaced retreat. Without the scandal it is doubtful if the film would have got out of the art house ghetto. And as for its sex content, a licensed brothel during the lunch break can hardly be described as titillating.

It is difficult to see, therefore, what Selznick and Goldwyn were looking for. Rossellini was aware of the difficulties and even touted around the idea of a film on Mary Magdalene, to be made in either Italy or in America, as a suitable offering. This had the advantage of being sexy but religious, and not tainted with the leftism which American critics had detected as infecting Italian films as early as *Rome Open City* and which had become more of an issue now that Hollywood was under investigation from the House Un-American Affairs Committee. But it came to nothing, as of course many film projects did and do.

The truth is, there was little room for manoeuvre. The ways of the American film industry were very deep set. European directors, writers and technicians who came to Hollywood brought distinctly European ideas and attitudes with them, but these ideas and attitudes were soon homogenised and what the Europeans or ex-Europeans produced were American films in every significant respect. They followed the known customary rules of how to script, shoot and edit a film but they also followed unspoken and probably unconscious norms about how the world and the groups of its human inhabitants should be represented.

The problem with America

Unlike most other cinemas, which tended to set their films at home (or in colonial possessions), American cinema was not afraid to set films abroad. But except in literary adaptations, ancient world epics and the like, the most common pattern was for films set abroad to revolve around the lives of American characters in the story. This was the pattern settled on by Selznick and Korda for *The Third Man* and again by Selznick for *Stazione Termini*, as the American title *Indiscretions of an American Wife* indicates. It is possible that this is what Rossellini was trying to do with *Europe '51*, though Bergman's nationality in that film is never clearly specified. In this respect at least, 'European' films could be made for the American market which fitted in with mainstream audience expectations and stopped the film looking too egregiously foreign.

The real oddity with American films, however, lay in their representation of the United States itself. The United States, in American films, was peopled with Americans. Not, one hastens to say, with *native* Americans, since that phrase had not come into use to designate the original inhabitants of the North American continent, but with white Americans of various ethnicities, though with Anglo-Saxons predominating.⁷ Blacks, Chinese and 'Indians' are present, but tend to represent the Other. To avoid a similar othering of the white ethnics, however, a *cordon sanitaire* is thrown up around them. It is very rare indeed, in American films prior to *The Godfather* in 1972, for the white ethnics to have any other belonging than to the neighbourhood in which they reside or the military unit to which they have been assigned. They may have funny accents or eat funny food, but the idea that this is a residue of some other belonging in a country from where they or their parents originated is firmly excluded.

All this tended to promote, or was part of, a kind of American exceptionalism which Europeans found deeply puzzling. It set the parameters for American culture in a way which left Europeans feeling excluded.

American inclusiveness towards immigrants from Europe came over as an exclusiveness towards the countries these immigrants came from. Much of the content of American movies tended to wash over European audiences, who were (and remain) ignorant of their sociological complexities. But it nourished covert anti-American sentiment among European film-makers throughout the 1950s, which was to break out later.

During the late 1950s bridges were built between the American industry and Hollywood, but more because the American side was interested in using Italian studio space and facilities than for artistic reasons. Then in the 1960s the big Italian producers such as Goffredo Lombardo at Titanus and Carlo Ponti, formerly of Lux and now independent, got their big breaks. European films and film-makers suddenly seemed attractive again to a Hollywood threatened with declining popularity of its own product at home and abroad. Lombardo struck a deal with Twentieth Century-Fox for the making of Visconti's *The Leopard* and shortly afterwards Ponti signed a deal with MGM for three English-language films to be directed by the doyen of art-house cinema, Michelangelo Antonioni.

The most surprising development, however, came from a different quarter entirely, in the world of the genre film. In France in the mid-1960s Jean-Luc Godard, radicalised by the Vietnam war, had started to turn the American crime film against itself. But a bitterer twist came from Italy, with the 'Western Italian-style', or more popularly 'Spaghetti Western', a form which systematically subverts the values of one of America's most popular and symbolically powerful film genres. Not all Italian Westerns can be considered subversive by any means, but all of them, even the most inane, share a mixture of contempt and indifference towards the pieties of the genre, especially the myth of the building of a new (Anglo-Saxon) civilisation in the savage West. Many of them, however, are quite explicit in their rejection of precisely those American values which had represented the enchantment of the American movie for Italian audiences from the 1920s onwards.

There is no simple explanation for this ideological volte-face, and even a complicated one would be speculative at best. It could have to do, as in Godard's case, with the growing impact of the Vietnam War. But the reaction had been fomenting for some time. It was never purely, or crudely, anti-American, but shot through with ambivalence. The last word should go to Sergio Leone in his interview with Gilles Lambert. After describing his childhood love-affair with imaginary America, he continues:

Then [in 1944] the real Americans barged into my life, in their jeeps, and turned my dreams upside down. I found them full of energy, but

terribly disappointing. These were no longer the Americans of the West. They were soldiers like any other, and different only in being victorious. Materialist, possessive, eager for pleasure and worldly goods. In the GIs who chased our girls and sold their cigarettes on the black market, I recognised neither Hemingway, nor Dos Passos, nor Chandler. Not even Mandrake, the great-hearted magician, or Flash Gordon. Not a breath, or hardly a breath, of the great prairies, the demigods of my childhood.

(quoted in Lambert 1976: 8; Frayling 1981, 2000)

Then, on a visit to the United States in 1963, he says, he found New York 'a society corrupted by the dollar, protected against itself by two kinds of pests, lawyers and shrinks' (Lambert 1976: 8).

But all was not lost. He hired a jeep and went West, where he found the America of his dreams alive after all. This America, he says, the rest of America had simply lost sight of. Americans today

have invented a system which denies their origins. The West and the Frontier have been turned into a rose-water legend, a myth for soppy children, or conformist adults. Perhaps you had to be European, to come from outside, to see what was genuine that was still there in Hollywood's fabrications. Anyhow, what I learnt on my journey was that I hadn't been wrong and that I would be able to realise my childhood dreams: to see the West, and also – since this is my job – to make it visible.

(Lambert 1976: 8–9)

Notes

1. The view at the time is best expressed in the article by Pietrangeli, 'Panoramique du cinéma italien', *La Revue du cinéma*, 14 May 1948. A slightly different approach was taken by the great French film critic André Bazin, who tried to distil an essence of neo-realism specifically out of the most innovative work of Rossellini and to a lesser extent De Sica. Bazin had a sophisticated attitude to post-war Italian cinema, to which he gave the general title 'école italienne de la Libération' in recognition of its roots in contemporary political struggles. Generically, he treats most films of this 'Italian school' as also 'neo-realist', but in his 'Defence of Rossellini' (1955) he sees the true uniqueness of neo-realism and its difference from what he calls 'classic realism' as lying in the relationship established between the film-maker and the bits of external

reality accessible to the camera (see Bazin 2000: 157–161). Recent approaches to neo-realism rely heavily on Bazin, but on a rather selective reading which misses out on the fact that he also appreciated the films of directors other than Rossellini and De Sica.

2. In the case of Broderick Crawford in *Il bidone* it is inappropriate to speak of a performance, since he stumbled drunkenly through the set during most of the shooting, with a single facial expression of sullen bewilderment. Lighting and dubbing took care of the rest (see the interview with Dominique Delouche issued as an extra on the recent DVD of the film from BFI Video). Richard Basehart, by contrast, is magnificent in both films.
3. Various dates are given for this letter, which seems to have been undated. Elena Dagrada thinks it was written in 1947 (Dagrada 2005: 289), but Tag Gallagher in his biography of the director – *The Adventures of Roberto Rossellini* – puts it in 1948, after the commercial release of *Paisà* in the United States (Gallagher 1997: 257).
4. The fascinating story of the different versions of Stromboli and the other Rossellini/Bergman films is told in Elena Dagrada's *Le varianti trasparenti: I film con Ingrid Bergman di Roberto Rossellini* (Dagrada 2005).
5. *Vulcano*, directed by William Dieterle and also starring returning émigré Rossano Brazzi, made 248 million lire. *Bellissima* (also with Magnani) made a disappointing 160 million. Box-office figures are derived from Chiti and Poppi (1991).
6. 62.5 million lire, according to Chiti and Poppi. By contrast *Europe '51*, according to the same source, made the relatively impressive 223 million.
7. One of the few Westerns to recognise the nativeness of the native population is Raoul Walsh's *They Died with Their Boots On* (1941), in which General Custer (Errol Flynn), about to be defeated by Sitting Bull, sends away a British-born officer, Lieut. 'Queens Own' Butler (George P. Huntley Jr), on the grounds that, not being an American, he has no duty to be massacred. To which the officer replies that, in his opinion, 'The only real Americans in this merry old parish are on the other side of the hill with feathers in their hair.'

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8

Colonising the European Utopia: Hollywood Musicals in Europe

Fiona Handyside

‘I’ve never seen so many Americans in Paris. The Champs Elysées looks just like Main Street’. Milo Roberts (Nina Foch) to Jerry Mulligan (Gene Kelly) in *An American in Paris*.

— (Vincente Minnelli 1951)

In *Exporting Entertainment: America in the World Film Market 1907–1934*, Kristin Thompson argues that aside from the invention of cinema itself, two events have fundamentally shaped cinema’s history. The first of these is Hollywood’s rise to the dominant position in world markets during the First World War, which means that the majority of films screened in most countries are Hollywood classical narrative films in the continuity style. Most other styles are constructed as *alternatives* to this style. The second event is the dissemination of television, which forced the cinema industry to adjust to a shrinking market and develop such technological changes as CinemaScope but also encouraged aggressive marketing of Hollywood product abroad. Furthermore, Thompson suggests, the American takeover during the First World War was not only because American studios were able to export more films during the war itself, but because they instituted new distribution procedures abroad: rather than selling primarily through agents in London, they opened their own offices in a variety of countries. Key markets in the wartime takeover were Australia and South America. This consequently had the effect of eroding the European film industry’s base of support abroad, and American competition permanently weakened the strong pre-war European producing countries (Thompson 1985). Moreover, the American takeover of world markets means most national cinemas we might study consist not only of domestic tendencies, but also of the influences film-makers and audiences pick up from the

presence of American films. The most familiar genres tend to originate there.

Film history traditionally concentrates on production at the expense of exhibition and distribution. Yet this brief précis of Thompson's argument amply illustrates how the way in which films circulate frees them from their point of origin and creates new power relations between filmic cultures. Filmic culture is formed in the crucible of distribution and exhibition as much as production. In order to understand the complex relationship negotiated between Hollywood and Europe, we need to pay attention not only to the production origin of a film, but also its multiple destinations. In other words, a European reaction to Hollywood product does not begin with film-makers incorporating or critiquing aspects of Hollywood genre film-making into their work, such as Jacques Demy (*The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* [*Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* 1964]) or Jean-Luc Godard (*A Woman Is a Woman* [*Une Femme est une femme* 1964]) with the musical. It begins with European audiences and film critics watching and commenting on films that are being exported to, or expressed more polemically 'colonising', the national cinematic space. This chapter explores the complex and yet under-explored relationship between Hollywood films and the European filmic space. The inter-relationships between cinema, tourism and 'nationalised' looking form its methodological background, considering the differing ways in which Hollywood uses the European filmic space, here meaning both Europe as sight to be filmed and Europe as site for the export of films.

Classic feminist film theory, exemplified by Laura Mulvey's 1975 article 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', has tended to argue that the spectator, posited as a monolithic entity, assumes a male gaze and creates the female star on the screen as the fetishised, idealised object of his desire (Mulvey 1975). Although more recent work has emphasised the ambiguity of spectatorial identification with on-screen characters (i.e. a man in the audience could potentially identify with a woman on screen and vice-versa), theories of cinematic looking still overwhelmingly posit the gaze as inflected by issues of sexual and gender difference. Yet, as Thompson's arguments illustrate, audiences fragment around differences other than solely that of gender. Indeed, Hollywood in the 1950s created a series of musicals set in Paris that provide a particularly fruitful insight into the ways in which we can theorise difference in nationality as a key way in which spectators react to films. By writing large the problematic of national difference and looking, these films allow us to investigate a new politics of the gaze – that of the American tourist in Europe.

This problematic of difference is one that is especially important in genre criticism of the musical. Jane Feuer argues that the Hollywood studio musical is a form structured through and by difference. It gains its pleasures and specificities from the varying categories of difference it employs: the difference between speech and song; the difference between walking and dancing; the difference between dreaming and waking; the difference between performing and practising. The drive of the musical is towards synthesis, to overcome all these differences. This can be seen, for example, in the 'back-stage' musical which features performers practising their numbers for a show and confuses and conflates performing and practising (the fictional rehearsal becomes a performance for the film spectator). The multiple differences of the musical are cancelled out by the resolution of gender difference through marriage, celebrated at the end of virtually every single Hollywood studio musical. The spectacle of entertainment is a spectacle of containment in which difference is finally tamed: 'A Utopian, liberating vision lies at the heart of the musical genre [...] But the musical presents its vision of the unfettered human spirit in a way that forecloses a desire to translate that vision into reality' (Feuer 1993: 84).

Genre criticism of the musical and feminist theories of the gaze, then, both concentrate on the classical musical as a form which acts to contain the female. Indeed, the question of integration of 'spectacular' song-and-dance routines and coherent narrative exemplifies a problem for all classical film, according to feminist film theory; the split between the desire to gaze at the female as spectacle, the object of the gaze, and the desire for pacy narrative identified with the active male subject and hero. This split is foregrounded in the musical where frequently the woman will take on a role that highlights her 'to-be-looked-at-ness', such as that of a showgirl (pun intended). However, when the Hollywood musical places its protagonists onto European streets, new orders of difference are constituted: differences of nationality. An audience is constituted in space and time as 'European', by Hollywood modes of production, marketing, distribution and exhibition with films that are designed both to appeal to a European audience and to showcase Europe for a domestic audience.

In the 1950s, just as the Hollywood studios were embarking on aggressive marketing strategies in Europe to try and counterbalance the weakening of the home market due to the rise of television and the weakening of the vertical system, so there emerged musicals that placed their stars in Paris as tourists, such as *An American in Paris* (Minnelli 1951), *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (Howard Hawks 1953) and *Funny Face*

(Stanley Donen 1957). Each of these films created their protagonists as Americans experiencing Paris, and the narratives and aesthetics of all of them concentrate on the impact Paris has on their lives. The studios countered changes in *American* viewing patterns by deliberately appealing to *Europe* as an integrated market, using European locales such as Paris and even European stars such as Audrey Hepburn and Leslie Caron, in a genre that aims to elide and overcome positions of difference.¹

Americans in Paris

The power balance of the gaze is thus shifted in these films on two quite distinct levels. First, Americans in Paris are tourists and have a relationship to the city based not on gender but on nationality. Furthermore, they are the subjects rather than the objects of the gaze. In all of these films, the protagonists are shown gazing over Paris, regardless of their own gender. In *An American in Paris*, Jerry Mulligan's dream ballet sequence through Paris begins while he is standing on a balcony, the whole city of Paris stretched out at his feet. Lorelei Lee's (Marilyn Monroe) performances in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* physically place her above her French audience, whether on a raised stage in the theatre for 'Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend' or standing in car waving as she glides down the street in 'When Love Goes Wrong'. Most paradigmatically, Jo Stockton (Audrey Hepburn) in *Funny Face* visits the Eiffel Tower and sings and dances on its viewing platform during the performance of 'Bonjour Páree'. The American floats above Paris, making the entire cityscape available for his or her gaze. The objects of the gaze in these films become 'the French', and by extension, 'the European', who are exoticised and objectified. I have argued elsewhere that the distinction between the cinema screen and the screen of the tourist gaze (that is to say, the gaze through the aeroplane or taxi window on the foreign city) is elided in key sequences in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *Funny Face*. At these moments Marilyn Monroe and Audrey Hepburn are freed up from signifying passive to-be-looked-at-ness as they revel in the delights of seeing. However, their gaze acts to objectify, control and fetishise the French 'other' and I conclude that 'the view from the other side of the screen just isn't as pleasant' (Handyside 2004: 87).

Now I turn to the way in which the Hollywood musical constructs Paris as a very specific site catering to American needs through the concept of utopia. This utopia is shot through with imperialist assumptions, illustrated especially by the prevalence of the colour white in

the mise-en-scène at the conclusion of each of these films. Musicals present a takeover of space through the singing and dancing of white American bodies that take for granted their right to exist in this space. The whiteness of these musicals emblematises the way in which the white American also assumes the right to exist in the European space, a metaphor for the filmic relationship between European and Hollywood film culture.

The musical may seem initially an odd choice to illustrate the political and cultural relationship between Hollywood and European cinema, given that it is the most dreamlike and artificial of all the major Hollywood genres. It is Richard Dyer's work on the musical, however, which brings out the fact that it is marketed as 'escapist entertainment' that makes it all the more important to attend to its ideological underpinnings. Dyer takes seriously the usual dismissal of entertainment as 'escape' and 'wish-fulfilment' to suggest that entertainment responds to real needs in society and claims that the musical offers a non-specific utopian vision – 'what utopia would feel like rather than how it would be organized' (Dyer 1992: 18). The musical combats felt social inadequacies like scarcity, exhaustion, dreariness, manipulation and fragmentation by offering utopian visions of abundance, energy, intensity, transparency and community.

In these films, Paris is clearly marked as this ideal space. We can hence label it the 'European Utopia'. The opening words of *An American in Paris* have Jerry Mulligan tell us that 'Brother, if you can't paint in Paris, you should give up and marry the boss's daughter'; Paris is the idealised space here of artistic abundance and a supportive community (further on in the same voiceover, Jerry says that he knows nearly everyone in his neighbourhood). It is in Paris that Jo Stockton from *Funny Face* believes she will encounter the Empathacalists (the film's parody of Existentialists) and get to 'see the den of thinking men/like Jean-Paul Sartre/I must philosophise/with all the guys/around Montmartre', a utopian vision of intensity and community.² Finally, it is Paris's site as location of abundant luxury goods that takes up Lorelei Lee and Dorothy Shaw's (Jane Russell) time on their arrival in Paris as they indulge in excessive consumption, comically underlined by their taxi being filled with parcels.

These fictional journeys to Paris thus create it as a utopian space of energy, intensity, abundance and community. However, this is a utopia clearly marked by national difference. Paris does not provide these utopian characteristics of its own volition; rather, the American acts as a transformative presence. This is made especially clear by a close

reading of two song-and-dance sequences from *An American in Paris* and *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. Both songs use remarkably similar iconography in the way that they create a transparent community around the figure of the American. In 'When Love Goes Wrong', performed in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, Lorelei Lee dances with two young (presumably) French boys. Both are considerably darker in skin tone than Lorelei, played by Marilyn Monroe in a film whose very title celebrates the extreme blonde colour of her hair. Monroe wears a dark beret that draws attention to her glowing blonde hair whereas the two boys wear ethnically charged fezzes. Monroe and one of the boys are shot in reverse shot smiling at each other in complicity, and the young boy's one line of dialogue, 'Crazy, Mademoiselle', suggests a moment of linguistic hybridity in which American English becomes a language on the French street. Thus, the American forges the transparent community necessary to the functioning of the musical utopia through the sheer force of her charismatic presence, but this is a community that is identified as 'other', darker, younger, easily controlled and pliable.

The song-and-dance number 'I Got Rhythm' from *An American in Paris* performs the same function in that film. Jerry Mulligan, popular with the children in his street because he supplies them with 'le bubblegum américain', decides to give them an English lesson. 'Je suis le professeur', he declares and introduces a whole gaggle of children to the English language by naming items such as the door, the street, the lady, the window and the flowers. Thus Jerry names the street and turns the Parisian locale into a transparent text for his international audience off-screen and his Parisian one on-screen. Once again, the 'otherness' of the French is rendered linguistically irrelevant and reduced to infant form. Once again, it is the presence of the American who creates the community – here the group of children participating in the singing/English lesson.

Furthermore, both these songs conform to another myth of the musical. In her essay, 'The Self-Reflective Musical and the Myth of Entertainment', Feuer points out how self-reflexive MGM musicals of the 1950s promote their own value as entertainment. On the one hand, they demystify bad, often non-musical, entertainment and, on the other, they mystify musical entertainment by associating the musical with the myths of spontaneity, integration and audience. The myth of spontaneity obscures the work involved in performance to suggest that musical performance emerges out of a joyous and responsive attitude toward life, and is available to all (see Feuer 1981: 159–174). The happy, open performances on the street we witness thus clearly play

into the musicals' myths of entertainment and spontaneity. Spontaneity depends upon a person being open and responsive to experience. The musical thus holds the contradictory idea that spontaneous performance is available to all and that some people are more spontaneous or open than others. Such open happy performances on the street suggest a lack of hierarchy – anyone can access the performance, which emerges naturally from the surroundings, without the need for rehearsal or even forethought. However, the organising role of the American tourist in the proceedings, at the centre of the admiring crowd and performing for them, sets up the American as the catalyst for the creation of this contented non-hierarchical community. Ironically, then, this display of spontaneity, harmony and exuberance depends on powerful dominance of the French street and appropriation of its codes by an alien culture.

A love of looking: Tourism, art, cinema

The American tourist in these films is involved in an intimate way with Art – Jerry Mulligan is an American artist living in Paris and Milo Roberts is his patron; Lorelei Lee has close connections to the art of couture and jewellery design; Jo Stockton is an international model who is interested in (French) philosophy but falls in love with an (American) photographer (Fred Astaire) while working on an assignment in Paris. Tourism in itself is a kind of Art – a love of looking.³ This emphasis on looking and images that characterises the tourist points to the tautology one can create between art, cinema and tourism. It is precisely in this realm of a love of looking that the European utopia suggests the anxiety that underpins each cinematic culture and responds to them.

First the tourist gaze is heralded as a sign and symptom of modernity and its appeal to mass culture in the forms of both cinema and travel. Edgar Morin, writing almost contemporaneously with the release of these films in France, comments that leisure time is itself a sign of modernity. This leisure time is filled with activities that orient the individual towards a sense of discovery of himself or herself and the world (to the extent that leisure and holidays are valorised over work as expressions of the self). This connection to the world is above all provided by the screen.

Tourism becomes a journey – spectacle to the heart of a universe of landscapes, monuments and museums. The tourist is only interested in the world of guidebooks and flees everyday life, unless it is characterised as 'picturesque', that is to say, worthy of being made into an *image*. He wears his camera around his neck and is almost

more interested in snapping than seeing. In its obsession with the image, both at an immediate level (seeing in order to remember) and at a removed level (photographing in order to see your memories), modern tourism presents striking analogies to the cinema. The relationship between cinema and tourism is affirmed by tour groups in coaches: spectators, sat in comfy seats, watch through Plexiglas, a membrane similar to that of the television screen, the cinema screen, the newspaper photograph and the large bay window that characterises the modern home; an increasingly cinematoscopic window onto the world and at the same time an invisible barrier.

(Morin 1983: 82)

Morin's comments gesture towards the similarity between the cinema viewer and the tourist. These films that feature the activity of tourism in Paris thus make a self-reflexive comment on the status of the American cinema in Europe. Indeed, as Morin makes clear, they offer Europeans (and most precisely Parisians) the uncanny experience of becoming tourists in their own culture as they provide a screened view of Paris. These films articulate the politics of nationalised looking even as they construct a tourist object for our viewing pleasure. While Hollywood was threatened in its home territories by the growth of television, so European cinema was equally undermined by the aggressive marketing, technological advances and glamorous star system of Hollywood cinema (all of which were a response also to the power of television). Hollywood frets over the status of the American tourist/artist/image maker in Europe (all three activities are intrinsically linked, as Morin demonstrates), in films which question the relationship between art, philosophy and commerce; the French critics, on the other hand, fret over the status of European cultural values in American images in reviews that discuss the reduction of Paris to 'picture-postcard' prettiness, such as those of Eric Rohmer in *Arts* and R-M Arlaud in *Combat*.

In the Hollywood culture of the 1950s, the anxiety over the status of the American artist/tourist arises from the problematic fit between the 'inspired auteur' and the demands of the studio system, especially felt in the Minnelli musical made within the confines of MGM's Freed unit. The director of the musical set in Paris finds himself cast as both tourist and artist filming a series of Parisian sites/sights that reduce the city to a clichéd montage while simultaneously seeking to reanimate and revivify its spaces. He objectifies Paris as a sequence of commodified sites while seeking to depict the community, abundance and energy of the utopian space all Hollywood musicals construct. This is a task especially

illustrated by *An American in Paris*'s famous final ballet sequence, which places Gene Kelly in paintings of Paris, animating Toulouse-Lautrec's Moulin Rouge in a way the painter himself could never have hoped to. As Rick Altman comments when discussing the opening of the film, '*An American in Paris* shows us no human beings until it has characterised Paris as a series of statues, beautiful, but inanimate, lacking the energy that Kelly and Caron will provide' (Altman 1987: 78).

The European utopia provides a space for 'high art' and looking lacking in America. However, a love of looking, beyond any other activity, is simultaneously constructed as suspicious and threatening the American project with collapse, as the film also implicitly suggests the inability of either the tourist or the artist to create this animated world. Both lack the dedication to commerce associated with the Hollywood system. The tourist gives themselves over to the pure pleasure of looking, rejecting work and rationality. The artist also gives themselves over to the pure pleasure of looking, and sometimes appears on the point of mental collapse: 'artistic creativity [...] was] out of touch with the conservative America of the 1950s, where Robert Lindners's best-seller *Must You Conform* (1956) gave final expression to male anxieties about social integration [...] whereas] [the famous artist Jackson] Pollock refused to sell out to middle-class normality' (Vacche 1996: 36).

The tourist, the twentieth-century equivalent of the flâneur, constructs the city space as site of enjoyment and wonder rather than work. Rather than the body being the object of controlled Taylorised movements, it is the focus of a rush of differing sensations. *Funny Face*'s song and dance sequence 'Bonjour Paree' explicitly plays into this dualistic idea of the tourist in Europe and the worker in America when it is precisely the shift from New York to Paris that lures the photographer, the editor and the model into all becoming undifferentiated – shopping, strolling, singing, dancing tourists. They had been intending to go straight to work; when offered a tour of the city, Jo responds, 'do we look like those people who run around gaping all day?' However, they soon give into the pleasure of 'gaping', looking simply for sheer pleasure. For a moment, the city escapes the commercial urge of all three to turn it into commodified images for American consumption via *Quality* magazine and becomes a place of exuberant joy, an energy communicated directly to the spectator through a dizzying array of locations; pan, aerial and crane shots; closely choreographed dance routines; and split screen presentation.

While superficially the American image-maker wins out over the European philosopher, who is revealed to be a sleazy fraud, the film

does not easily reconcile the paradox of the American tourist attempting to locate philosophical authenticity in Paris (it should also be noted that the quest for authenticity typifies the tourist as theorised by Dean MacCannell [see MacCannell 1999]). Jo fails in her attempt to understand 'Empathacalism' because of her nationality and her gender (the French philosopher cannot speak to her and just wants to have sex with her). The pleasures of Paris will only be experienced through the artifice of tourism, not the 'truth' Jo believed could be located in the dingy smoky Empathacalist hangout. Paris can only be offered as a temporary respite from the pressures of American work. After their romantic idyll, both Jo (the model) and Dick (the photographer) will return to work in New York. Yet this will surely restrict the harmony between love and work and aesthetic unity they discover in Paris. This smooth harmony is captured especially in the film's closing moments where Jo, modelling a bridal dress for a photo shoot, dances with her photographer, and two white swans drift past. The romantic scene created through the labour of the model and the photographer for the readership of *Quality* magazine becomes a romantic scene between Jo and Dick both within their fictional relationship in the film and for viewers of the film, a use of art that hides the sexist myths that subtend its construction: 'the existentialist freedom embodied in Hepburn's image is [...] also an ideologically driven [Pygmalion] myth [...] serving to subordinate younger women to older men in the guise of liberation' (Smith 2005: 48).

In *An American in Paris*, high art is explicitly constructed as psychological upheaval. In the scene where Jerry's best friend, Adam Cook (Oscar Levant), imagines his performance at a concert, we cut from a close-up of his anxious face, chain-smoking, to intercut scenes of himself playing the piano with great gusto, himself calmly conducting, five of him playing the violins, another one of him beating the drums and finally of him forming a rapturous audience. This is art as schizophrenia. Angela Della Vacche suggests the schizophrenia attributed to art in the film may in fact express the pressures felt by the director Minnelli within the Hollywood studio system. She then goes on to locate precisely this splintering of the artistic personality demanded by the Hollywood studio as the motive for the homogenising, reifying takeover of Paris as object for the tourist gaze:

For Minnelli the auteur, painting means creativity and art, whereas for Minnelli the MGM employee, painting means neurosis and an unsettling indulgence in the senses, in the image. In order to achieve a compromise between Pollock and Hollywood, Minnelli turns the

Paris of nineteenth century painters into a Disneyland attraction – a Parisland – so that the quintessentially American institution, the theme park, contains the staging of French culture.

(Vacche 1996: 16)

If we can read the American anxiety as one of how art can be both rebellious, individualistic, dedicated to pleasure and yet still made to function within a commodified, industrialised studio system, the French anxiety being articulated in responses to these musicals also coalesces around the figure of the tourist/artist. For the French critic, the American tourist/artist is the one who through the power of the gaze turns the city into a theme park, a cleansing of Paris's difference.

Particularly revealing here is a review of *Funny Face* that appeared in *Combat* on 22 November 1957. Its headline, 'But That's How They See Us', clearly articulates a fear that the French/European audience is being constructed as a homogenous, and above all national, unit (the 'us'). It also illustrates how the audience reaction is one that attempts to reverse the gaze and critique the ways in which Paris is constructed in this homogenising Hollywood view. The review itself goes on to draw links between *An American in Paris* and *Funny Face* and is worth quoting at length.

There's no way this can be taken for a documentary of Paris and there's no way to think of this [film] as anything more than a re-hash of *An American in Paris* because there they like 'Périsse' a lot and that must encourage them to go to the cinema [...] This transcription of images that they take away with them relieves this film of any joy. We should note in passing that they laugh at themselves as well and their ability to think that they're at home wherever they go.

(Arlaud 1957)

It should perhaps first be stated that this review is unusual in its animosity towards *Funny Face* and even here Hepburn draws great praise for her performance. What is particularly noticeable about this review, however, alongside its remarkably acidic tone, is the way in which it draws our attention to the construction of 'Périsse' as the construction of another American site – somewhere the Americans 'feel at home'. This despite the fact that, in contrast to *An American in Paris*'s elaborate and expensive sets, Donen filmed *Funny Face* on location.⁴ In an altogether more sympathetic review, Jacques Doniol-Valcroze comments on the irony of the fact that Donen shot on location and still managed to create

'a Saint-Germain-des-Prés made in Hollywood' which he comments 'will undoubtedly irritate the superior sort of Parisian who hates the American vision of Paris' but 'will enchant farmers in Wisconsin'. Doniol-Valcroze highlights the essentially false, if aesthetically justifiable, cleansing beautification of Paris. 'If Donen wants to add a newspaper stand to the Champs Elysées [...] that's his business [...] everyone remembers the story of Corot who added a small birch to the canvas of one of his pupils, simply "to make it prettier" ' (Doniol-Valcroze 1957).

Funny Face is unusual in being shot on location and several reviewers draw attention precisely to the mix of fantasy and reality performed by the film, and, above all, its desire to 'prettify' Paris. Eric Rohmer, praising the film, justifies its picture-postcard view of Paris saying, '[it's] neither that false, nor that ugly, because what is most beautiful and most justly famous in Paris is on the postcards' (Rohmer 1957). Paris, rather like Jo Stockton herself, then, undergoes a transformation under Dick Avery's lens and becomes worthy of an admiring gaze in this film. Both Paris and Hepburn are bathed in fairy-tale white by the end of the film, Hepburn in a bridal dress and the *mise-en-scène* featuring white flowers and swans by a French chateau. This whiteness represents the pinnacle of the film's aesthetic project, the culmination of Jo's photo shoot. As a fashionable bride and an American tourist in Paris, Jo occupies the position of both object and subject of the cinematic and artistic gaze. The colour white reconciles Jo's conflicting desires for intellectual stimulation and heterosexual love. It also has further connotations which I will discuss below.

The colour of the European Utopia

A predominance of the colour white also marks the end of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *An American in Paris*. Clearly, the colour white symbolises an actual marriage in the case of the former film, and an implied one in *An American in Paris*. However, referring back to Feuer's comments that the marriage at the end of the musical symbolises the overcoming of *all* the orders of difference, the colour white here refers not just to the marriage of the principal characters, but also to the Hollywood white-washing of the originally French filmic space.

The black origins of the Hollywood musical and their appropriation by the institutionally white Hollywood has been commented upon by Richard Dyer, who makes the point that 'musicals typically show us space entirely occupied by white people, dancing wherever they want, singing as loudly or as intimately as they need'. While black performers

could be used in a performance or entertainment context, when musicals began to expand into 'singing in the rain and dancing in the street [...] it began to be more difficult to make better use of black performers', as the presence of black performers in the street behaving in the same way as their white counterparts would seem a 'terrifying takeover' in the white imagination. Dyer concludes that 'even the utopian imagination has its boundaries of impossibility' (Dyer 2000: 26). The musical in its very form colonises space under the white American gaze.

This colonial invasion of French space is made most evident in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, which may well account for the hostility the film provoked in the mainstream French press upon its release. The film's narrative highlights the theme of imperialist expansion and profit at the expense of others, with Lorelei Lee's 'gold-digging' being presented as the feminine equivalent of the activities of Sir Francis 'Piggy' Beekman (Charles Coburn) digging for diamonds in mines: both exploit male labour for their own profit. Discussing the film as part of Hawks's production, *L'Express* concludes that 'Hawks is constructing a varied, multiform but ordered oeuvre around the theme of conquest (showing both the power of man and his failings). It is an oeuvre that one can take as an exaltation, or violent accusation, of the American way of life' (Anon. 1954).

All three films discussed here finish in a blur of whiteness that asserts white American superiority. *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* concludes with a double marriage following the successful manipulation of the French legal system by Dorothy that establishes Lorelei's innocence (she has been accused of stealing a tiara). This contrasts with the film's opening colour palette of red, white and blue, symbolising the affinities rather than the differences between the two nations. *Funny Face* rescues Jo Stockton from the dark-clothed Empathacalists in order to enable her to marry her American photographer. In *An American in Paris*, colour is similarly crucial to the final denouement. The film stages a conflict between American commerce, represented by Milo Roberts, and French Art, represented by Lise Bouvier (Leslie Caron). Its final reconciliation of Jerry and Lise suggests that the American man can achieve success in painting without sacrificing his integrity. Furthermore, this integrity is linked to masculinity. Jerry feels that Milo's patronage risks turning him into a (prostituted) male escort and when Jerry appears to be in a relationship with Milo, Adam asks him, 'when you marry, will you be keeping your maiden name?' Lise rejects her more fey suitor, the French Henri Borel (Georges Guétary) – notably the only character who performs a song on the stage in *An American in Paris*, making him the potentially feminised object of the gaze – in favour of the

masculine American Jerry, whose dancing is on the street and associated with athleticism, power and heterosexual seduction. While Jerry as an American is an athletic, heterosexual dancer, his love of art suggests a more complex, unstable and vulnerable personality, by analogy with the general view of painters associated with Pollock in 1950s America. However, his own coded difference is not expressed in racial terms. Rather, when performing the role of Chocolat in the Toulouse-Lautrec sequence, Kelly performs the same operation of whitewashing carried out by the musical, being a white man acting out a black man and black dance for the entertainment of white audiences.⁵ In all three of these films, blackness and foreignness are conflated. The French are presented as 'other' in their stark contrast to the whiteness of the Americans, whether in costume, skin colour or mise-en-scène. The white American draws energy from this blackness and through this energy radically transforms the European space from a place of 'otherness' into a transparent 'cleansed' American community. The European utopia thus functions as a colonised space, expressing American values, ignoring the original values of the sites depicted.

Yet these American values are in themselves interrogated as Paris offers a space where art, money, leisure and love are perfectly reconciled, a balance that cannot be attained in 1950s America. Lorelei Lee persuades her prospective father-in-law that her love for Gus Esmond (Tommy Noonan) may be helped because he is rich, but is no less genuine for that. In an inspired moment, she tells him, 'it's like a girl being pretty [...] It's not absolutely necessary, but goodness, doesn't it help?' Jo falls in love with her professional mentor. 'Jo never explicitly renounces her intellectual pursuits, and although she is eager to get married in the end, she does not in fact have to make a difficult choice like [...] so many '50s women: between work and marriage' (Krämer 2000: 67). Jerry continues to live in Paris and paint with Lise by his side, managing to reconcile the social conformity of marriage with his love of art – he does not have to give up and 'marry the boss's daughter'. Hollywood's Europe, then, is one that responds to Hollywood's dreams. Compromise may be necessary upon return to America, as I implied above when discussing *Funny Face*; in Paris the resolution of these conflicts is possible.

Conclusion

Utopia, as Dyer tells us, offers imaginative solutions to really felt problems and anxieties. The pleasures of the musical, and the meanings of the 'utopias' they create, cannot be undone from the wider dialogues

that were taking place between Hollywood and European cinema at this time. For if Hollywood was expressing anxiety that art cannot be produced in the studio system, it was precisely at this time that French critics such as Jean Domarchi and Jean Douchet argued that Hollywood cinema was the cinema of highly original artists. In retrospect, we can read the so-called 'auteur theory' as a desire to claim Hollywood cinema as art whereas previously it had been dismissed as 'entertainment'. This polemic also acted to re-invigorate domestic cinema in France and paved the way for European cinema to construct a different kind of film-making that did not need to imitate Hollywood but that rather strove to critique as well as celebrate it. The anxieties crystallised by reactions to Hollywood's Paris are anxieties that run throughout both filmic cultures concerning the status of cinema as either art or entertainment. For just a utopian moment, in these musicals, it manages to be both.

Notes

1. It is worth noting that each of these musicals was produced by a different studio (MGM, Fox and Paramount respectively), demonstrating that these aesthetics operated across the entire studio system.
2. Geographical accuracy was clearly sacrificed for a delightful rhyme here. Sartre and his fellow existentialists were primarily identified with Saint-Germain-des-Prés and the Sorbonne in the Left Bank area of Paris.
3. The links between tourism and art were explored in great detail in the recent exhibition *Universal Experience: Art, Life and The Tourist's Eye*, Hayward Gallery, 6 October–11 December 2005. See also the catalogue Bonami (2005).
4. Although Kelly was initially keen to film in Paris, the set was finally constructed under the supervision of the art director Preston Ames on the back lot at MGM. One of the exteriors necessary was a quai on the Seine. The view of Notre Dame and the bridge was painted on a 100-foot cyclorama merging with construction in the foreground and a tank was filled to emulate the Seine. Extra lighting was used for depth and perspective. Production details from Fordin (1999: 306–333).
5. Chocolat was a black man from Bilbao who appeared at the Nouveau Cirque and was depicted by Toulouse-Lautrec in *Chocolat Dancing at the Achilles Bar* (1896).

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9

Sex, Gender and Auteurism: The French New Wave and Hollywood

Diana Holmes

The French New Wave was a short-lived movement, its peak years normally dated as 1958–1962, but it had a lasting and dramatic influence not only on subsequent French film but on cinemas across the world. It is a well-known fact that the young directors who formed the *Nouvelle Vague* drew energy and inspiration from a passionate enthusiasm for those Hollywood films that poured across the Atlantic from 1945, when the ending of the Second World War re-opened European frontiers and cultures to US imports. In both the United States and France, the post-war period from 1945 to (at least) the early 1960s was characterised by a strong social conservatism – ideological emphasis on home and family, fear of difference in all its forms – while at the same time the post-war baby boom and the imperatives of an increasingly consumer-based economy combined to foster a new youth culture that would form the enabling context for the New Wave itself, and to offer women new and emancipatory opportunities in education and, potentially, employment. Both US and French societies remained strongly and traditionally gendered (albeit according to historically different conceptions of precisely what gender meant), but rapid social change was also opening up new ways of experiencing male and female identity, later to be articulated in second-wave feminism. Cinema was central to the production of both youth and gender identities: the cinema-going public was – in both societies – predominantly young, and the stories and dreams absorbed in darkened auditoria shaped the spectators’ sense of what it was to be young, and to be male or female, in the affluent democracies of the Cold-War West. In this chapter, I want to ask how the young critics of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, the crucible from which New Wave cinema would emerge, responded to Hollywood’s representations of gender, and how far these shaped their own portrayals of masculinity, femininity

and relations between the sexes. In turn, films of the French New Wave made their way across the Atlantic to a mixed, sometimes enthusiastic, reception: in both directions, reception abroad differed from that in the home culture. To what extent did US and French representations of gendered identity in the 1950s differ or coincide, conflict with or reinforce each other?

Gender in the 1950s

In both the United States and France, perhaps the most familiar popular image of the 1950s is that of a neatly housed nuclear family ruled by a working father, managed by a housewife mother, with (probably two) safe, obedient children and a modern consumer lifestyle. This has some basis in truth. Strongly marked gender roles were central to social organisation and national self-image in both societies. In the United States, educational opportunities for women were good, but the post-war backlash ousted two million women from their wartime jobs and returned them (in most cases reluctantly) to the home,¹ and a powerful consensus on the importance of marriage, home-making and a strong birth rate also dramatically decreased the numbers of women in higher education (Friedan 1963: 14). Cold War politics meant a defensive spirit of nationalism and an aggressive suspicion of anything that smacked of left-wing or oppositional values – most apparent in the witch hunts practised by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC, founded 1937) during the early 1950s, when the influence of McCarthy was at its height. In the cinema, the industry's self-regulation body, the Production Code Administration (established 1934) responded to pressure from HUAC, and from powerful right-wing pressure groups such as the Legion of Decency, by firmly censoring the representation of sexual or violent scenes and upholding the sanctity of home and family.

Within a general tableau of comfortable conservatism, hindsight nonetheless allows us to pick out the threads of resistance that would crystallise into open opposition in the following decade. Betty Friedan, writing in 1963, traced the signs of dissatisfaction among young American housewives of the 1950s in the massive use of tranquillisers, the plethora of press articles exhorting women to enjoy and make the most of their domestic lot, in the testimonies of the many women with whom she corresponded (Friedan 1963). Through the writers, artists and musicians of the 'Beat' movement, an alternative voice could sometimes be heard even in mainstream America, and rock'n'roll provided young men and women with a sensual, enjoyably rebellious music of their

own. Cinema depended for its survival on mass appeal, to an audience that was predominantly young as well as more than 50 per cent female (Izod 1988: 146). Despite the many layers of self-imposed and official censorship in place, a new 'teen' cinema made its first appearance with the rapid rise to stardom of angry, sexy young actors Marlon Brando (*The Wild One* [László Benedek 1953], *On the Waterfront* [Elia Kazan 1954]) and James Dean (*East of Eden* [Elia Kazan] and *Rebel Without a Cause* [Nicholas Ray], both 1955). The masculine ideal embodied in older stars like Gregory Peck or James Stewart was a traditional one: successful masculinity was, as Peter Kramer puts it, 'mature, active, efficient, graceful and stoic' (Kramer 2000: 64). Brando and Dean slouched onto the screen with a sulky, unbiddable grace that seduced spectators of both sexes, and suggested that to be authentically young required self-definition against one's elders, not imitation of their models.

In French society too, the end of the war meant a reassertion of firm gender divisions. Although French women finally gained the right to vote under the new Fourth Republic as well as benefiting from the expansion of secondary and higher education, the combination of a practical need to reconstruct the nation, and a desire to reaffirm a French virility humiliated by defeat and Occupation led to strongly pro-natalist policies, so that women found themselves returned to the home and exhorted to be good wives and mothers. The influx of new consumer goods and accompanying advertising also tended to situate women firmly in the home, indeed in the kitchen, while male identity was associated more with the outside world of work in the growing economy and 'virile' products such as cars. France was also engaged in wars against her colonial subjects, in Indo-China (1946–1954) and Algeria (1954–1962), which encouraged a traditionally patriarchal, military image of the nation.

Here too, though, there were signs of alternative and dissenting visions of self and society. Women writers, from Simone de Beauvoir (*The Second Sex* 1949) to best-selling novelists Christiane Rochefort and Françoise Sagan, articulated the conflicts between women's theoretical equality and their real relegation to second-class status. There was a pervasive sense of a new generation contesting the values of its elders, to the extent that de Gaulle as incoming President of the new Fifth Republic set up a special commission to deal with the 'problem' of young people (de Baecque 1998: 49). The press was full of articles on contemporary youth, of which perhaps the most influential was the 1957 survey conducted for and published in *L'Express*. It was there that Françoise Giroud first coined the phrase 'nouvelle vague' to designate the new and *different* generation

of young people revealed by the survey. Giroud found that responses revealed major differences between the sexes: while male respondents remained loyal to a very traditional concept of gender, young women were intensely aware of living in an age of female emancipation, and of the contradictions between the opportunities this offered and the real constraints of marriage and motherhood (Giroud 1958).² As in the United States, cinema attendance was an important element of youth culture,³ and in France as elsewhere in Europe the medium prospered throughout the 1950s, beginning its decline only around 1958. Films played an important role in the construction of gender identity, especially for the young.

***Cahiers du Cinéma*: Gender and film theory**

The term 'New Wave', then, first referred to a whole generation, before it was narrowed down to designate a new and polemically oppositional form of cinema, made by young men who were (for the most part) in their twenties. The vision of cinema that would inform New Wave films was largely elaborated in the pages of the journal *Cahiers du Cinéma* in the 1950s by a uniquely male group of *cinéphiles* (film enthusiasts), most of whom would go on to become film directors. The *Cahiers* critics⁴ were ambivalent about their status as representatives of a generation: on the one hand they were willing to praise a film for its capacity to 'breathe the air of our times' (Godard on Roger Vadim's *No Sun in Venice* [*Sait-on jamais?* 1957])⁵ or to be 'typical of our generation' (Truffaut on Vadim's *And God Created Woman* [*Dieu créa la femme* 1956]);⁶ on the other, their way of viewing and evaluating films resolutely privileged form over content and thus refused to make social relevance a criterion of quality. Their polemical attacks on the 'cinéma de papa' ('Dad's cinema') that still dominated French screens excoriated, in particular, the tendency of directors such as Claude Autant-Lara and Yves Allegret to privilege themes that were deemed to be topical and relevant to a wide audience. If cinema was to be an authentic 'seventh art', each film must be the expression of an artist/director's personal vision, and this would be expressed not so much through theme and narrative as through aesthetic form. Political or social commitment, or the role of spokesman for a generation, were incompatible with creative freedom.

As feminist film historian Geneviève Sellier has argued, New Wave film theory is unconsciously but unmistakably gendered masculine.⁷ The film director is imagined as a solitary hero, in Oedipal revolt against his filmic fathers, scornful of the latter's appeal for a mass market which

is represented, implicitly, as feminine. Rohmer, for example, writing in praise of Hollywood film and against the French cinema of the day, finds that the latter, with its 'perpetual drivel about love crossed by some religious or social conformism', reduces the potentially 'profound and courageous' theme of conflict between the individual and the social to the level of 'trashy women's magazines'. The Hollywood Western, on the other hand – a genre that (with few exceptions) foregrounds male stories – elevates the same theme to the level of the universal (Rohmer 1985: 91). As Sellier points out, resistance to the vulgarisation of art by commercial forces in France traditionally adopts the strategy of feminising – and hence demeaning – what is popular, and conversely defining authentic, demanding, innovative art as inherently masculine (as in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*). The 'auteur' imagined and lauded by the ambitious young *Cahiers* critics was no mere skilled director working as part of a team, but a heroic figure whose singular vision found innovative formal expression regardless of the constraints of the film industry and the market: the unity of his style and 'voice' transcended any differences of genre, technique and even quality that might occur between individual films, since these could be attributed to mere 'external factors' such as funding (Truffaut, quoted in Sellier 2005: 24). To make films as the representative of a collectivity (generation, social or political grouping), or to attempt to please a wide (and to a significant extent female) public were both incompatible with this image of the creator driven by inner inspiration.

It was thus a very provocative move to assign the status of 'auteur' to precisely those directors who worked within the entertainment industry of Hollywood. But having learnt their passion for cinema in a post-war France inundated with the best of a decade of US films – for the Occupation had, of course, meant the temporary loss of all American imports – the young *cinéphiles* were anxious to proclaim their inheritance and use it as a stick to beat their legitimate 'fathers', the preceding generation of French film-makers. Thus selected Hollywood directors were argued to have transcended the context of production, that is, the commercially driven studio system, through the expressive quality of their *mise-en-scène*, which could transform the popular genres of Western or thriller into works at once highly personal and expressive of a universal mythology. Not without self-contradiction, *Cahiers* argued that directors working within the wholly market-led context of Hollywood studios were among the finest creators of films as uniquely personal works of art, and that it was the singularity of their vision that produced Hollywood's

apparently limitless power to capture imaginations across continents and cultures.

Cahiers' interpretation of Hollywood's mythologies was of course selective and partial, and on the whole what they favoured were films that viewed the world from a very male perspective. Howard Hawks Westerns, Hitchcock thrillers, Sam Fuller Westerns and war films, Robert Aldrich's stylish films noirs and Nicholas Ray's stories of troubled, fragile, violent men were among the favourites. Douglas Sirk, whose melodramas were tremendously popular with female spectators, was also viewed positively, but only once his films were purged of their content and social relevance to reveal the original aesthetics of an *auteur*. Praising Sirk's technique in *Imitation of Life* (1959), Luc Moullet nonetheless rejects the film's themes of 'racial questions and relations between mother and child' as 'a poor subject', and dismisses Sirk's 'sentimentality so dear to Yankee women' as likely to fail with a French public *other* than those in 'the suburbs [...] and the backward, prudish populations of Brittany and Alsace' (Moullet 1960: 57). In French, Moullet's terminology makes it clear that these despised spectators are female.⁸ Most of the *Cahiers* critics simply assumed that the spectator to and for whom they wrote was male (and needless to say heterosexual), so that a 1955 article on eroticism in cinema and theatre focuses solely on female nudity and extols the capacity of film to deliver 'dream women who are also present in the flesh, and who can belong to each of us without belonging to all' (Amengual 1955: 59). One of Truffaut's definitions of cinema, cheerfully cited and endorsed by Claude de Givray in a salacious 1957 piece on Brigitte Bardot, was 'the art of making pretty women do pretty things' (de Givray 1957: 43).

The taken-for-granted sexism of a group of young men in the 1950s may seem scarcely worth commenting on, since the primacy of male subjectivity was so much part of the prevailing doxa, but it is apparent even in the pages of *Cahiers* itself that an alternative way of viewing gender was available. In December 1955, a rare female voice, that of Annette Raynaud, reviews the work of an equally rare woman director, Agnès Varda,⁹ and employs the terminology of Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (published 1949) to describe the heroine as a 'femme-sujet' (female subject) rare in contemporary film (Raynaud 1955: 46). Pierre Kast, one of the few committed left-wing critics to write for *Cahiers*, consistently pays attention to the way that women are depicted in film and attacks stereotyping in Hollywood films in similarly Beauvoirian terminology: 'a certain concept of woman as object, a sort of throw-away soap made by men for men, is proposed and imposed', 'the sexual perspective is

always that of a man. Sensuality means that a man takes his pleasure, or gives it, – a woman is never allowed to take hers without being punished for her “sin” (Kast 1955: 40). However such awareness that male and universal were not, in fact, synonymous, and that film could have social consequences was the exception rather than the rule in *Cahiers*. On the whole, the perspective on film was consistently and unquestioningly androcentric.

This made for some interesting blindspots in the future New Wave's readings of Hollywood films. The extremely conservative sexual politics of some directors – for example Howard Hawks – were simply ignored as beneath proper critical attention (Sellier 2005: 23–24), while the interestingly complex portrayal of women in some Hollywood films, which for good commercial reasons also addressed a female public, generally went unnoticed. A large proportion of cinema-goers were women, and thus market imperatives encouraged some inclusion of female issues and even perspectives. The contradictions in women's situation in the 1950s, tugged between a theoretical emancipation and a powerful ideology of motherhood and domesticity, found a degree of expression in many Hollywood films of the period. Thus, for example, the many *Cahiers* readings of Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954) – one of the group's ‘films-fétiches’ or key texts – focus on the self-referentiality produced by the hero's position as *spectator* of life in his neighbourhood, on the film's formal structures and ‘universal’ themes of ‘solitude and the lack of love’ (Chabrol 1955: 42),¹⁰ but pay scant attention to the role played by Grace Kelly and the extent to which it is she, the ultra-feminine would-be wife, who in fact solves the mystery through a different, less cerebral and more empathetic form of spectatorship,¹¹ and a physical daring that belies her fashion-plate exterior.

Nicholas Ray as *auteur*

Hitchcock (born 1899) was already in his fifties, and had been making films since the 1920s, when the future New Wave directors (born between 1920 [Rohmer] and 1932 [Truffaut]) unanimously re-defined him as an *auteur*. The group were equally agreed on the importance of a younger director Nicholas Ray (born 1911) whose career began post-war and who thus felt much closer to their own generation. Godard described one of his films as ‘not cinema, more than cinema’ (Godard 1985: 18). Rohmer called him ‘the greatest director of the new generation of American film-makers [...] an *auteur*, a great *auteur*’ (Rohmer 1956: 33); Truffaut ‘an *auteur* in our sense of the word’ (Truffaut 1955a: 39),

and 'certainly one of the greatest American film makers of the younger generation' (Truffaut 1955b). Rivette described him as 'the most secret, the greatest, the most spontaneously poetic' of American directors (Rivette 1955: 20).

Ray was a commercially successful director who worked in Hollywood continuously throughout the late 1940s and the 1950s. Critically, he was less well received at home than in France: those very qualities of introspection and 'poetic' experimentation with colour, lighting and framing that made him an 'auteur' for *Cahiers* were often seen in the United States as pretentious, and as a failure to understand the functioning of genre. Thus *Johnny Guitar* (1954), praised by the *Cahiers* critics for its 'dream-like, magical' take on the Western genre (Truffaut 1985: 107) and for its dramatisation of Ray's recurring themes of 'twilight, [...] the solitude of living creatures, the difficulty of human relationships' (Rivette 1985a: 96), seemed to *Variety* 'so involved with character nuances and neuroses [...] that "Johnny Guitar" never has enough chance to rear up in the saddle and ride at an acceptable outdoor pace' (*Variety* 1954). The *New York Times* found it a 'flat walk-through of Western clichés' and especially disliked its portrayal of gender: Joan Crawford as the heroine, Vienna, was 'as sexless as the lions on the public library steps and as sharp and romantically forbidding as a package of unwrapped razor blades', and Sterling Hayden in the title role 'galumph(ed) around morosely' rather than acting like a proper Western hero (*New York Times* 1954). *Cahiers* were surely right to see in the film not a failure to observe the genre's narrative conventions, but rather an original, complex and visually compelling reworking of them. The story pits its hero and heroine, representatives of a progressive, anti-violent form of modernity, against a static, inward-looking small-town culture, making the hated symbol of the encroaching modern world Vienna's huge, magnificently solitary saloon, with its piano, its well-ordered gaming tables and its 'feminine' comfort. Vienna welcomes the railway that is blasting its way through the hills to civilise this violent frontier society, and plans to make the saloon the first step in the construction of a whole new town, but the locals fear and hate her. Johnny Guitar loves her, and takes her side. The battle is fought out in vivid colours and images: Vienna's white dress against the indigo night sky when the mob trap and attempt to hang her, the scarlet and yellow flames that destroy her saloon, the white waterfall and blue sky against which the couple are framed, embracing, at the happy ending.

The critics of the future New Wave also recognised and liked Sterling Hayden's representation of a fragile, wounded, but nonetheless heroic

masculinity. They read the narrative – as they read all of Ray's narratives – as the hero's story: 'the story of a violent man who wants to stop being violent, and his relationship with a woman who has more moral strength than himself' (Truffaut 1985: 29). And *Johnny Guitar* does offer an interestingly non-standard version of the Western hero, within the gender conservatism of the 1950s. Though he is the principal narrative agent, in the sense that it is his arrival in town that opens the film and triggers all subsequent action, he comes in search of the woman, Vienna, whom he has loved and lost, and without whom he can no longer live. Once he has appeared, his story is driven by hers: if he is to win her, he must accept her refusal to run away from her enemies, side with her against the brutality of the locals, and fight on her side, on her terms. At first witty and laconic in true hero style, Johnny soon reveals that he is less in control of his emotions than Vienna, begging her to 'Lie to me – tell me you've been waiting for me. That you'd have died if I hadn't come back. That you love me.' Vienna agrees to lie, and chooses her moment to reveal that the lies are, in fact, the truth. The *New York Times* critic's objection to Hayden's 'morose galumphing' is an objection to the hero's paralysing intensity of feeling, which contradicts the view of virility as active, initiating, capable of the sublimation of emotion in heroic action. Resolutely androcentric in their worldview, the *Cahiers* critics were nonetheless drawn to portrayals of masculinity as flawed, uncertain, in thrall to powerful women, struggling for self-definition rather than confidently natural.

The striking omission in *Cahiers* discussion of *Johnny Guitar* is the film's unusual depiction of women. First, this Western goes against generic norms by making the central conflict, with its culmination in a shoot-out, a battle between two female characters: Vienna, played by Joan Crawford, and Emma Small, played by Mercedes McCambridge. Vienna represents the film's positive values: progress, the refusal of violence and love; Emma, motivated by sexual jealousy and fear of change, represents prejudice, immobilism and hatred. True to the melodramatic binaries of the genre, good and evil are clearly incarnated and a fight to the death announced early in the plot:

Emma: I'm going to kill you.

Vienna: I know – unless I kill you first.

Rather than the familiar idealisation/demonisation of women as a sex, here a narrative struggle between two sets of human values is simply enacted between two female characters. Moreover, Vienna is a highly

unusual heroine in terms of 1950's gender norms. Crawford (born 1904) was very close to fifty when the film was shot. Truffaut notes with fascination her strong, chiselled features, finding her to be 'unreal, the ghost of her former self. [...] a face of steel [...] becoming more virile with age' (Truffaut 1955b), but his review pursues no further Crawford (Vienna)'s interesting fusion of gender identities. The narrative agency that traditionally belongs to cowboy heroes is hers throughout, as we have seen. Her active function in the film is emphasised in the opening scenes by her slim, mobile body dressed in 'masculine' black trousers and shirt, her strong face framed by short black hair: she is a much more dynamic, controlling figure than the big, loose-limbed Johnny with his softer contours and neutral-coloured clothing. She first appears at the top of the saloon stairs, her authority and poise signified by a series of up-shots that frame her as she surveys and dominates the scene. Vienna represents a cluster of heroic virtues that are normally those of a male hero: autonomy (she loves Johnny, but has built herself a very successful life without him), a pioneering spirit, integrity, physical and moral courage. But at the same time, the masculinity of Vienna's dress is always inflected by, for example, the small brightly coloured neckties she wears, and her big dark eyes, pale skin and scarlet lips are intensely feminine. Her sexual allure is confirmed by Johnny's passionate love for her, and by the desire she provokes in the film's second handsome cowboy Dancin' Kid (Scott Brady), whose preference for Vienna is the cause of Emma's jealousy. In her attempt to protect Turkey, the youngest and weakest of the Kid's gang of outlaws, Vienna also shows maternal tenderness. It is the fact that Vienna is very much a woman that disturbs Emma's lynch-mob of local farmers and makes them reluctant to use violence: hiding Turkey, Vienna receives them in a long white dress, seated at her piano, and her effective performance of femininity almost succeeds in throwing them off the scent. Crawford certainly manifests what Laura Mulvey famously termed 'to-be-looked-at-ness', but it is far from that sexually objectified allure that conventionally holds the spectator's gaze: she fascinates through her very visible combination of extreme femininity and 'masculine' power.

Johnny Guitar demonstrates the *Cahiers* critics' pre-determined reading of all films as male stories, even where this is a reductive interpretation, and their refusal, in the name of auteurism, to acknowledge a film's social or political relevance. The reactionary herd-like violence of the farmers and their fear of change surely resonated with McCarthyism for contemporary American spectators, and the film's strikingly unusual representation of relations between the sexes raises questions about

1950's orthodoxy on gender roles, but these are simply passed over. Similarly, in reviews of what is perhaps Ray's most celebrated film, *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), *Cahiers* remains indifferent to the depiction of inter-generational conflict, although for American critics this is essentially what makes the film interesting. For *Variety* the film is a 'melodrama of unhappy youth' (*Variety* 1955), for the *New York Times* 'a violent, brutal and disturbing picture of modern teenagers' (*New York Times* 1955). For Truffaut, it is – like all Ray's films – a story about the hero's 'moral solitude' (Truffaut 1956b); for Rohmer too the teenage hero (James Dean) and heroine (Natalie Wood) belong more to the 'common genealogy' of all Ray's characters than to a specific era. Rivette's 1953 comment on Ray's cinema summed up the *Cahiers* position: 'the world hardly interferes at all, or if it does, it is only to harm (the hero). Salvation is a private affair' (Rivette 1985b: 105).

But in this film, surely, salvation is far from a private or an ahistorical affair. The main protagonists are three teenage victims of parental inadequacy or neglect, who struggle to develop viable identities and codes for living despite the impoverishment of the models offered by most adults. Set in contemporary America, the film makes it clear that gender is central to identity, and suggests that gender roles have become confused and distorted. Jim Stark (the James Dean character) longs for his father to provide him with an example of masculine strength and integrity, but Mr Stark's gentle, compliant, domesticated mode of fathering totally fails to meet his needs. Jim wants to know how to be a man in a world where his peers define masculinity in terms of violence and dangerous games of rivalry, but the film makes it clear he will find no answers from a father-figure clad in an apron, literally on his knees before his wife as he picks up the tray of breakfast he dropped on his way to her bedroom. Judy's father is embarrassed and unconfident faced with her adolescent sexuality, and retreats into what she interprets as a withdrawal of love. Plato (Sal Mineo) has no father at all, and adopts Jim as a surrogate paternal model. In each case the mother is equally if not principally at fault: castratingly bossy and overbearing in the case of Jim's mother, insensitive in that of Judy's, and simply absent in that of Plato.

Contrary to the consistency attributed to *auteurs* by New Wave theory, Ray presents a very different and much more conservative moral vision here than in *Johnny Guitar*: salvation seems to depend on the teenagers rejecting their parents' inadequacies to return to a fairly classical distribution of gender roles. The bodies and body language of the three young protagonists initially suggest a break away from traditional identities:

Dean's sulky, awkward glamour with its undertones of emotional need, Wood's initially cool, hard demeanour and rebelliousness, Plato's openly expressed intensity of feeling for his (male) friend. But the solution the film proposes is a reinstatement of the classically ordered family. Playing out a surrogate family drama in the deserted house to which they flee, pursued both by gangs of their peers and by the police, Jim takes on the role of 'husband' to Judy (who defines satisfactory masculinity for him as 'standing up for what you feel or think, not running away, but also being able to be gentle and sweet') and protective 'father' to Plato; Judy accepts Jim's leadership and 'mothers' Plato; Plato is almost saved by Jim's intervention, though here adult stupidity triumphs and he is shot down by a police bullet. Teenage rebellion reinstates the sense of integrity the adults have lost, and makes this inseparable from a clear and differentiated sense of gender.

Not only does *Rebel Without a Cause* convey a sense of generations radically divided by culture – the music, fashions, fast cars and *angst* of the teenagers are totally foreign and incomprehensible to their parents – but also the film (a huge box-office success in the United States and Europe), without proposing any new answers, dramatises anxious questions about gender roles. What did it mean to be a man in an affluent, civilian post-war world? If women in their idealised roles as domestic goddesses became embittered and emasculating, how should their daughters define femininity? The New Wave critics again responded to the appealing representation of the hero as fragile and solitary, but showed little interest in the film's social significance, or in its representation of the feminine.

Hollywood models and the first New Wave films

If American films, even in the repressively conservative context of the early 1950s, often carry undertones of contestation and of a woman's point of view, this is surely because the appeal to a youth and a female market are central commercial imperatives. In France, defence of the national film industry against both American competition and television led in 1948 to a system of State subsidy. From 1956 this was further developed into support for a specifically French *art* cinema, through the 'advance on profits' that supported the making of films approved on artistic grounds (Sellier 1999: 218). The early films of the New Wave were among the first to benefit from this system, and thus their theoretical indifference to the mass-market was translated into reality: State subsidy freed them, to a considerable extent, from the need to appeal to a

popular audience. Truffaut (*The 400 Blows* [*Les 400 Coups*] 1959; *Shoot the Pianist* [*Tirez sur le pianiste*] 1960), Godard (*Breathless* [*A Bout de souffle*] 1960) and Chabrol (*Handsome Serge* [*Le Beau Serge*] 1958; *The Cousins* [*Les Cousins*] 1959) were, of course, delighted to find that their films did resonate with a wide youth audience and thus made them famous and, to an extent, rich, but they enjoyed an important degree of freedom from commercial pressure in their apprenticeships as film-makers.

Their aim was of course not to reproduce Hollywood cinema, but to make very French, very personal films that alluded, affectionately and respectfully, to the Hollywood cinema that had inspired them, as well as to the French *auteurs* they were willing to claim as their heritage. However, the favourite Hollywood films of the critics-turned-directors, or at least their readings of them, undoubtedly informed their own creative work in a number of ways. The wholly male perspective on the world, the image of masculinity as fragile, solitary and in search of love, the denial of female subjectivity combined with an anxious sense that women may somehow be the stronger sex, are all equally present in *Cahiers* readings of Hollywood and in early New Wave films. Despite the New Wave's romantic wish to free creativity from social determinants, these similarities are in part shared responses to similar social contexts. But they also demonstrate the inevitable and creative intertextuality of film: the films the New Wave had seen and discussed formed part of the texture of their own cinematic vision. In terms of gender, New Wave films show the influence of Hollywood models – though both the extreme cinematic self-awareness that characterises the New Wave, and the difference between French and US attitudes to sexuality meant that these films, with their international impact, would also represent a new take on gender and sexuality that would in turn influence subsequent US film. The relationship was indeed one of dialogue.

The differences between individual New Wave directors and films are, of course, as important as their similarities, but certain common patterns do make for a family resemblance. Early New Wave films tell the story of a brittle, uncertain male hero, seeking a mode of survival and self-realisation in a world he fails to understand. Physically, with the partial exception of the muscular, handsome Jean-Paul Belmondo, the male stars of the New Wave were more James Dean than James Stewart: often small (Charles Aznavour in *Pianist*), with irregular if appealing features (Belmondo, Gérard Blain in *The Cousins*) and an air of self-absorption, vulnerability and uncertainty rather than the dependable strength of the traditional hero (all of them). As with Ray's heroes, their outsider status is often confirmed by a narrative move that places them on the wrong side

of the law (*The 400 Blows*, *Breathless*, *Pianist*). Father figures, potential models of how to be a man, tend – as in Ray's films – to reveal a disappointing lack of strength or moral authority (the father in *The 400 Blows*, Lars Schmeel in *Pianist*). This representation of masculinity as dislocated from traditional models, in search of itself, is interesting in an era of strongly marked gender, and the unexpected box-office success of the films suggests a degree of audience recognition. In the New Wave films, the idea that masculinity is constructed rather than inborn is emphasised by the films' self-reflexive nature: the Belmondo character in *Breathless* models himself on Humphrey Bogart, Truffaut's Charlie/Edouard (Aznavour) in *Pianist* imagines properly masculine courtship moves but fails to enact them.

To these heroes adrift in an alien world, women appear at once desirable and alarming. The women's perspective is rarely given or evoked: women are seen from the outside as contradictory and mysterious or, in Beauvoirian terminology, 'other'. From the seductive, heartless mother in *The 400 Blows* to the finally duplicitous Patricia in *Breathless*, from the unfaithful Florence in *The Cousins* to the women who love and yet destroy Charlie in *Pianist*, New Wave films represent women as intensely desirable but dangerous to men. There are none of the *Johnny Guitar*-style reversals of narrative role, nor even *Rear Window* implications of an alternative, feminine way of viewing – aspects of Hollywood that failed to interest the New Wave directors in their days as *Cahiers* critics. Desire for a woman, or women, is central to all the early New Wave narratives, but desire on the whole proves fatal to the male hero (*Pianist*, *Breathless*, *Handsome Serge*, *The Cousins*) and its female object is punished if not by death (*Pianist*) then by being finally identified with the film's negative values (*Breathless*, *Handsome Serge*, *The Cousins*). In Chabrol's first films, androcentrism borders on misogyny: Marie and Yvonne in *Handsome Serge* and Florence in *The Cousins* are the passive and unresisting objects of the male protagonists' dehumanising idealisation (Charles in *The Cousins*) or their sadistic sexism (Serge in *Handsome Serge*, Paul in *The Cousins*), and the films provide no basis for a counter-perspective.

And yet, in the dialogue with Hollywood that saw the New Wave, in turn, open up new possibilities for American cinema in the 1960s, the representation of sexual relations between men and women would play a crucial role. First, both the New Wave's limited budgets and their determination to innovate meant that instead of established female stars they introduced new, young actresses to the screen, and in their search for a new, intimate realism filmed them with a close attention that attenuated the uniquely male focus of their stories. The strong, characterful

faces and acting styles of Jean Seberg (*Breathless*), Marie Dubois (*Pianist*), then Jeanne Moreau (Truffaut's *Jules et Jim* 1962) and Anna Karina (Godard's *It's My Life/Vivre sa vie* 1962) bring to the portrayal of women an implication of complex subjectivity that the film's narratives decline to explore. From the point of view of a female spectator, whatever the final narrative fate of the women these actresses play, the on-screen representation of desiring, demanding and credibly modern women was potentially enabling. New Wave directors themselves, to varying extents, developed the exploration of female subjectivity in their subsequent careers,¹² and French New Wave cinema was an acknowledged influence in the American cinema of the 1960s with its uncertain heroes and insubordinate heroines (for example Faye Dunaway in *Bonnie and Clyde* [Arthur Penn 1967], Jane Fonda in *Klute* [Alan J. Pakula 1971]).

Secondly, French culture is, historically, less puritanical than American, and the United States was at its most repressively censorious in the early 1950s. It is symptomatic that Roger Vadim's 1956 *And God Created Woman*, with its famous opening nude scene of Bardot, caused only minor scandal in France, but thoroughly shocked the United States and had to be heavily cut before being licensed for public showing. Reviews of the film focused, despite the heavy censorship, on the 'spectacular display' and the camera's 'brazen ogling' of Bardot's body (*New York Times* 1957). Similarly, *Breathless*, in France, was initially received as an interesting ethnological study of contemporary boy-girl relationships (Sellier 2005: 51), but not as particularly erotic, whereas the *New York Times* saw it as 'a pile-up of gross indecencies' and 'concerned mainly with eroticism' (*New York Times* 1961). In a relatively liberal climate, then, and aiming at a close, realistic depiction of relationships, the New Wave directors demonstrated the possibility of filming sex differently, and opened up the erotic as a domain that could be explored and imagined in a candid and guilt-free way, potentially by women as well as men. The famous long sequence in the bedroom in *Breathless* may, as Sellier argues, privilege Michel (Belmondo)'s desire (Sellier 1999: 222–223), but with its use of 'real time' it also portrays an interplay of conversation and silence, conflict and tenderness, play and passion between the couple that has some of the complexity and awkwardness of lived experience. The pleasure and intimacy of sex, for both partners, are also well and closely rendered in Truffaut's *Shoot the Pianist*, in both comic mode (the scene between Charlie and Clarisse) and lyrically tender mode (the overlapping fades of the sequence where Charlie and Lena spend their first night together). A more explicit, less codified way of filming sex could of course – and did – lead to greater objectification

of the female body, but the New Wave's greater sexual realism also made it more possible, in the 1960s and after, to explore on screen how sex felt, and what it meant for both sexes.

Conclusion

Cahiers criticism was a discourse that assumed its era's male-for-universal perspective on the world, and read Hollywood films accordingly. But the liking of the future New Wave directors for films that featured a flawed, vulnerable, self-questioning model of masculinity foregrounded one of the most interesting aspects of 1950's Hollywood, and later carried this into their own, very different films. Their blindness to the often interesting ways that women were depicted in mass-market Hollywood films, whether misogynist or proto-feminist, translated into an unconscious androcentrism and 'othering' of women in their own films. But the New Wave's concern to produce an original, poetic and fine-textured realism, combined with the relatively liberal French attitude to the erotic, produced some innovative representations of sexual relations that were potentially enabling for women as well as men. These, in turn, would feed into future Hollywood cinema, and indeed into world cinema as a whole.

Notes

1. Eighty per cent of women surveyed in 1944 would have chosen to keep their jobs (French 1978: xvii).
2. See also Geneviève Sellier, *La Nouvelle Vague. Un cinéma au masculin singulier* (Sellier 2005: 12).
3. In 1955, 43 per cent of cinema-goers in Paris were between the ages of 15 and 24. The same age-group accounted for only 17 per cent of library book borrowing (de Baecque 1998: 71).
4. Clearly, there were differences of approach between the individuals writing for *Cahiers*, as becomes apparent below. But it is no misrepresentation of the journal to write of a collective *Cahiers* discourse of auteurism, admiration for Hollywood, and rejection of 'sociological' cinema.
5. From *Cahiers du Cinéma* (Truffaut 1957).
6. From *Arts* (Truffaut 1956a). Truffaut's regular reviews for *Arts* expressed the same philosophy of film as his work for *Cahiers du Cinéma*.
7. Sellier's concern with the sexual politics of film makes her more or less a lone voice in film studies within France. A series of articles on the gender politics of the New Wave in the 1990s and early 2000s culminated in her book *La Nouvelle Vague. Un cinéma au masculin singulier* (see Sellier 2005: fn. 7).
8. The adjective I have translated as 'prudish' is 'Marie-Chantalisesantes'.

9. The review is of *La Pointe Courte*.
10. The film was also reviewed by Truffaut, Godard, Rohmer and Rivette.
11. See Modleski (2005) for interesting readings of the sexual politics of Hitchcock's cinema, including the idea that different (and gendered) modes of spectatorship are represented on-screen.
12. I am thinking particularly of Godard and Truffaut, for example the former's *Tout va bien* (1972) and the latter's *Adèle H* (1975).

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10

A Fistful of *Yojimbo*: Appropriation and Dialogue in Japanese Cinema

Rachael Hutchinson

There are many ways to read the relationship between a film and its remake: in terms of fidelity, imitation, plagiarism, appropriation, or other enactments of power. For the most part, such models rely on a binary system to analyse the relationship between two films in isolation from their surroundings. In this chapter I wish to examine such a relationship in terms of a wider model of understanding, based on possibilities of dialogue with a wider film genre. The case study will be the relationship between Akira Kurosawa's film *Yojimbo* (*Yōjimbō* 1961) and Sergio Leone's remake, *A Fistful of Dollars* (*Per un Pugno di Dollari* 1964).¹ The two films themselves are very well known. Akira Kurosawa (1910–1998) made *Yojimbo* because he had always wanted to make a movie in the Western genre after the style of John Ford, whose movies he had seen as a child. Sergio Leone (1929–1989) was electrified by *Yojimbo* and made his own version starring Clint Eastwood, a relative unknown. Both films broke box-office records, inspired sequels and made huge stars of their main actors, Toshirō Mifune and Eastwood. As we shall see later in this chapter, Leone's film has been credited with single-handedly creating a new genre in European cinema, the 'Spaghetti Western'. Taken individually, these films had a massive impact on the Japanese and Italian film industries respectively. Both have been critically examined in terms of this impact, but, surprisingly, they are hardly ever discussed in relation to each other. When they are, critics focus on the fact that although Leone's film was extremely close to Kurosawa's, he failed to credit Kurosawa on the screen titles, giving rise to charges of plagiarism (Galbraith 2001: 311); or, alternately, to analyses that compare the scripts to see how different Leone's film was from the original (Frayling 1998: 148–150). The main approaches to the films so far have thus taken the form of 'fidelity discourse'.

Examining the plot, both films tell the story of a nameless hero who arrives in a town being torn apart by the power struggles between two rival gangs. This so-called 'hero' decides to amuse himself and cause some trouble, hiring himself out to the highest bidder as a bodyguard. Both films derive humour from the mannerisms of the hero – Mifune's *rōnin*, or masterless samurai, far from being a noble warrior, spends all his time scratching, cursing and stuffing himself with rice and saké, while Eastwood's cowboy smokes constantly, falls asleep instantly and hardly speaks for the duration of the film. Both men are only out for money. Both redeem themselves in a side plot, saving a young woman and returning her to her family, but the films escalate into an apocalypse of violence and death, ending with dust and smoke swirling around the empty streets of what is now a ghost town. Leone's film reprises the same story, characters and even dialogue as Kurosawa's film. One cannot deny that the two films are very close. However, in this chapter I wish to get away from fidelity discourse and find some way of analysing these two films that will give us a broader understanding of the relationship between them, as well as a better understanding of their combined impact on the Hollywood Western genre.

Fidelity discourse and remake theory

Fidelity discourse examines the remake and asks 'how faithful is the film to its original source?' This approach judges the success of the second film by comparing it to the first. In other words, this model works backward, beginning with the second film and looking back at the original in order to say what was included or omitted in the remake. This approach ignores most aspects of the second film unrelated to its status as a remake, and fails to explain the success of either film, adding little to our understanding of the films or the relationship between them. Fidelity discourse becomes obsolete in a case such as Gus Van Sant's *Psycho* (1998), which in its frame-by-frame precision rendering of the original is aiming at something beyond mere 'faithfulness'. Such a film makes the spectator think: what is the director trying to achieve? Similarly, we may ask the question: why did Leone remake Kurosawa's film so closely? What effect does this have? In other words, what is the value of a remake? Remake theory seems to provide a more promising model of understanding, as it attempts to explain what is going on when one director remakes the film of another.

Many critics analyse the remake in terms of tension and 'physical violence': imitation is one thing, but taking the film of another artist, changing some details and then packaging it as your own is seen as gross plagiarism and theft. Stuart Galbraith calls Leone's film 'an unequivocal steal of *Yojimbo*, albeit transposed to the American West' (Galbraith 2001: 311). In this model, the director of the remake is little more than a criminal.² Paul Sutton takes this reading one step further and calls the remake a site of 'trauma' for the spectator. Viewing either the original or the remake in isolation is a comfortable experience in which the spectator may appreciate the films on their own merits. But drawing on Freud, Sutton argues that if the spectator sees both the original film and its remake, the second viewing triggers a response similar to *déjà-vu*, in which the conjunction of one event with another causes trauma. To distinguish this trauma from the 'physical violence' of theft, where the original film and its director are seen as victims, Sutton describes it as a 'psychical violence' wreaked upon the spectator (Sutton 1999: 69–80).

These readings are useful in that they attempt to explain what is happening when one director remakes an already existing film. Looking at Leone's remake in particular, we may accuse Leone of doing some kind of violence to Kurosawa, because the screen titles of *A Fistful of Dollars* make absolutely no mention of Kurosawa, *Yojimbo* or Tōhō studios. Tōhō studios and Kurosawa productions sued Leone over this infraction, and Kurosawa even wrote Leone a personal letter asking for financial compensation (Galbraith 2001: 310–313). While the matter was eventually settled, the remake in this case posed a serious legal question of copyright infringement. We could thus add another type of violence to the physical and psychical, which I would term 'practical violence', incurring real-world problems of legal fees, court appearances and payout costs. Ultimately, however, the result of this approach is that the 'remake' is seen as inherently negative, a discursive act that does physical, psychical and what we might call practical damage to the original. Just as in fidelity discourse, the original film is given a privileged, pure position of creativity and real achievement while the remake, as a lowly copy, must be judged by various criteria. Once again, the analysis is only moving in one direction, comparing the remake back against the original. In order to assess each film on its own merits as well as the power relationship between them, it may be more useful to use a model based on the dynamics of power, such as discursive appropriation.

Appropriation and the remake

The remake can easily be read as an appropriative act: in remaking a film one is taking hold of something and putting it towards one's own purposes, in order to achieve something new. We have seen how Leone's appropriation of Kurosawa's film is often viewed in negative terms, but Christopher Frayling sees Leone as an innovative and creative director, working with the basic material of *Yojimbo* to produce a completely new version of the narrative. In terms of appropriation discourse, Leone may be seen not as a plagiarist but as a visionary, responsible for a new interpretation of the mythical West. In this reading, Leone is not doing wilful damage to the original but using it as a source to create something positive. However, the act of appropriation is still a forceful enactment of power. Leone's refusal to credit Kurosawa in his screen titles, even when sued for such credit, may be seen as the ultimate denial of subjectivity to Kurosawa.

If we are to read the films in a balanced way, however, we must also read Kurosawa's film in appropriative terms. If we start with the idea that film-making itself is a discursive act, we can see Kurosawa's creation of *Yojimbo* as an act of appropriation (Hutchinson 2006: 165–179). Kurosawa loved Westerns, especially the films starring William S. Hart. In his autobiography, Kurosawa recalls: 'What remains of these films in my heart is that reliable manly spirit and the smell of male sweat' (Kurosawa 1982: 36).³ Kurosawa found an echo of this 'masculine touch' in the later films of John Ford.⁴ Possessed by the desire to make a Western himself, Kurosawa made *Yojimbo*. Some critics maintain that *Yojimbo* was based on Dashiell Hammett's 1929 novel *Red Harvest*, in which case the film is an adaptation.⁵ Whatever the source material, however, we can ascribe subjective power and agency to Kurosawa in appropriating the Western. Other critics argue that Kurosawa shares directorial elements with John Ford, George Stevens, Howard Hawks and other Hollywood directors, some couching the argument in terms of 'similar thematics' and others arguing for direct imitation of techniques for location shooting and complex action scenes.⁶ Kurosawa puts it this way: 'Westerns have been done over and over again and in the process a kind of grammar has evolved. I have learned from this grammar of the Western' (quoted in Richie 1984: 147). Developing this idea of a 'grammar', Stephen Prince argues that Kurosawa was not taking content from the American Western so much as taking on a 'syntax of movement and of framing', leading to the formulation of what he calls Kurosawa's 'kinetic narrative' (Prince 1999: 17). This reading provides a

more positive image of Kurosawa, who emerges as the creative appropriator of a whole system of cinematic language.

Appropriation provides a useful model for examining the film as a discursive act, and for exploring the power relationships involved in the cinematic remake. But this reading also has limitations. It does not take into account the success of either film or their impact outside the confines of the two-film relationship. More insidiously, this reading can lead to problems based on binary systems: appropriator versus appropriated, subject versus object. When the two films in question are from Japan and Italy, it is difficult to see the films as anything but products of a national cinema. While it is possible to argue that Kurosawa's appropriation of the Western here is an act of self-affirmation as a Japanese director, playing with the conventions of the Western and throwing it out as a completely changed form, this reading does have the danger of reducing Kurosawa to a 'national cinema' model – only interesting as an example of a Japanese director, in binary opposition to Hollywood, and thus marginalised. While the appropriation model is still far more useful and positive than fidelity discourse and remake theory, its fundamental binary structures may lead to an Orientalist misreading in relation to Hollywood and the wider film genre.

Genre: Convention and innovation

Appropriation discourse is a useful tool, helping us to understand the films in terms of intertextuality as well as the power plays involved in adaptation and the remake. But in order to understand the impact of these films on the Western genre as a whole, it is necessary to situate them within the genre and see how they broke with and played on convention, examining how these innovations affected later films. Both Kurosawa and Leone were innovative in their use and depiction of violence, breaking with the conventions of Japanese *jidaigeki* (historical costume drama) and the Hollywood Western. In terms of camerawork, Kurosawa and Leone employed existing techniques but played upon convention to produce startling results, many of which have since become staples of the Western genre.

For both the domestic and international audience, perhaps the most influential scenes in *Yojimbo* were the images of violence: the dog trotting past with a human hand in its mouth; a severed arm lying on the ground; Unosuke, the villain, lying in a pool of his own blood. Before 1961, blood on the Japanese screen had been the preserve of horror movies, not *jidaigeki*. After *Yojimbo*, fights which had previously

been choreographed to the last detail now took on the unpredictable and explosive action of Toshirō Mifune. Nishimura argues that Mifune's instantaneous explosions of violence had so much impact not only because they were so different to the choreography of *chambara* swordplay movies, but also because the primary effect for the spectator was one of powerful, emotional catharsis (Nishimura 2000: 116). However, Japanese directors were more captivated by the violence itself than its emotional effects. Japanese cinema became even more bloody after the sequel to *Yojimbo*, *Sanjuro* (*Sanjurō* 1962), featured a geyser of blood erupting from the villain's chest. Such graphic violence influenced *jidaigeki* to the extent that it degenerated into the *zankoku eiga* or 'cruel film' genre, seen in many Tōei and Tōhō productions of 1962–1963 (Nishimura 2000: 117–118; Yoshimoto 2000: 290–291).

Yojimbo opened in art-house cinemas in the United States in 1962 to mixed reviews. Seneca International picked it up for wider distribution, adding English subtitles and later releasing a dubbed version. The same violence which so influenced Japanese *jidaigeki* made a great impact on Hollywood directors. However, Hollywood was not shocked by the blood in *Yojimbo* so much as impressed by Kurosawa's intelligent handling of violence. Arthur Penn later used Kurosawa's technique of interspersing slow motion with normal speed by using multicamera filming to achieve the climactic violent ending of *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967).⁷ It may be argued that the impact of Kurosawa's violence on Hollywood was the exact opposite of its impact on *jidaigeki*, as American directors were more interested in the emotional effects. Kurosawa's beautiful and shocking images stay in the mind because they emphasise the horror of the brutality behind them. Leone's film was also violent for the time, featuring more blood and realistic death throes than would be expected from either the Hollywood or European Western. By the time that audiences had seen both *Yojimbo* and *A Fistful of Dollars*, other directors were also attempting more realistic gunfights, although few were to attempt the scale of Leone's massacre by the river. While Leone also used the shock of explosive action, his fight scenes were effected differently: the unbearable tension of the drawn-out standoff was to become a Leone staple and classic feature of the Hollywood Western.

In terms of the most far-reaching impact of these films, we must consider the camerawork in *Yojimbo*. This was not the first Japanese film to use widescreen format, but Kurosawa made innovative and extensive use of the anamorphic frame: a wide-angle lens which gives the audience 180-degree vision. When used to focus on one person, the anamorphic lens gives a feeling of power and dominance, seen in the close-up,

low-angle shots of Sanjurō entering the town.⁸ When used to film action such as two rival gangs fighting in the street, it flattens the action out and gives an epic, almost staged feel to the scene as humans are set against a backdrop of an uncaring world. This staginess and formalism elevate the action to mythic level. Another effect of the wide-angle lens in shooting fight scenes was that it made people's movement look extremely rapid. Certainly, the climactic scene where Sanjurō attacks Unosuke features such rapid movement that it seems Mifune is striking like a snake. The wide-angle fight became so popular in Japan that it spawned a new genre of cinema featuring large groups of people fighting to the death in the midst of extremely powerful rain and wind (*shūdan kōsō jidaigeki*). Because the anamorphic lens accentuates the action in Kurosawa's film, Prince and Nishimura agree that it is the kinesis of Kurosawa's cinema that had the most lasting impact on films both in Japan and around the world (Prince 1999; Nishimura 2000: 117–119).

In keeping with the innovative camerawork, Kurosawa was also the first Japanese director to use realistic sound effects for swordplay, especially the sound of a sword cutting flesh. The music of Masaru Satō was highly innovative in using both sound effects from Hollywood Westerns as well as traditional Japanese music (Galbraith 2001: 302–303; Satō 2002: 239–240). Kurosawa's use of music has been called the 'wall-to-wall' effect, as the music fills the film and defines its mood. Galbraith sees the many innovations of *Yojimbo* as a 'direct response to the mindless *chambara* Tōei, Daiei, and Nikkatsu were churning out', while Anderson maintains that the film parodies the conventions of both the Western and *jidaigeki* genres. But in playing with convention, Kurosawa changed convention. Yoshimoto describes the release of *Yojimbo* as the 'fatal blow' to Tōei studios, which fell into decline when it continued to rely on the same old formulas (Galbraith 2001: 301; Anderson 1973: 13; Yoshimoto 2000: 245, 289).

In filming *A Fistful of Dollars*, Sergio Leone made direct use of Kurosawa's anamorphic frame, panoramic action, formalistic arrangement, 'wall-to-wall' music and graphic violence. The main difference in camerawork is described by Frayling in his comparison of two very similar scenes (see Frayling 1998: 148–150). The hero, offering his services, proves himself by striking down a number of gangsters in the street. On dispatching the gangsters he instructs the coffin-maker to prepare a number of new coffins – the joke being that one more coffin is needed than the hero originally anticipated. In filming the fight, Leone employs the same scenario, laconic dialogue and panoramic framing of the action. However, Leone makes use of the low-angle shot to greater

effect, so the men exude power. Faces fill the frame in close-up shots, cutting from one man's face to another as the tension builds. The panoramic, low-angle and close-up shots in this scene would define Leone's films for the rest of his career. The extreme close-up in particular was very influential, and is now an often-parodied staple of the Western genre.

A Fistful of Dollars was an enormous box-office success, taking more money than any other Italian film to that date and reinvigorating the Italian film industry, just as *Yojimbo* had revitalised the *jidaigeki*. Peter Bondanella goes so far as to say that the Spaghetti Western was a genre that Leone 'created almost single-handedly' (Bondanella 2001: 262). While Bondanella agrees with Frayling that the creation of the Spaghetti Western phenomenon was mostly due to economic factors, especially since Hollywood Westerns were in decline and Italian cinema was looking to expand into new markets, he also argues that the success of the Spaghetti Western as a genre cannot be explained by economic and industry factors alone. By 1964 the genre had not enjoyed as much success as expected – until *A Fistful of Dollars* was released (Bondanella 2001: 253–254). Thomas Weisser also pinpoints *A Fistful of Dollars* as 'the movie responsible for the popularity of the Spaghetti Western genre' because 'it set a standard, designed a roadmap, for a violently nihilistic cinematic style that dramatically separates EuroWesterns from the Hollywood variety' (Weisser 1992: 114). Given the break with traditional Western conventions, it is interesting that Craig Ledbetter sees Leone's trilogy – *A Fistful of Dollars*, *For a Few Dollars More* (*Per Qualche Dollaro in Più* 1965) and *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (*Il Buono, il Brutto, il Cattivo* 1966) – as the foundation of the Spaghetti Western in their establishment of the new 'staples of the genre', which would eventually become clichés (Weisser 1992: ix). Many of the elements singled out by critics as essential to the Spaghetti Western may be seen as coming from Leone's *A Fistful of Dollars*, via Kurosawa's *Yojimbo*.

A new template: Liminality

Before *Yojimbo* and *A Fistful of Dollars*, violence, masculinity and the bordertown setting were all already present in the Western genre. Kurosawa and Leone exaggerated these elements to epic proportions, using camera angles and the anamorphic frame especially in situating the humans in relation to their surroundings. The kinetic energy and epic, stagy formalism given by the anamorphic frame can be seen reverberating around the Western genre in a larger-than-life form after 1964.

In terms of narrative impact on the Western, however, I would suggest that the most influential and most powerful element of these films is their emphasis on liminality. These films gave the Hollywood Western a ready-made mythos to tap into and replicate, but it was a different myth to that of the Hollywood Western before 1961. Kurosawa and Leone, by breaking and playing with convention, established a new template for the Western based on liminality and complexity rather than a simple binary system of good versus bad. We can examine this liminality in terms of character, scenario and mode.

There are many aspects to the characters in these films which we may see as liminal. The hero in both films has mixed motives, not all of which are good. Sanjurō and 'The Man With No Name' seek money, power and their own selfish amusement in the manipulation of other people. At times, the better side of their nature shows through, as when they save the woman, but their motives remain ambiguous. More interestingly, the hero is nameless, standing for everyone and no-one at the same time. Toshiro Mifune's character is called 'Sanjurō Kuwabatake' (30-year-old mulberry fields), an alias invented on the spot as he gazes out the window. Clint Eastwood's character is nameless until the last 15 minutes of *A Fistful of Dollars*, when the coffin-maker suddenly calls him 'Joe'. Although the hero of *For a Few Dollars More* is given a name from the very beginning, Monco, it is hardly used. The appeal of the nameless is seen in the marketing of both *Dollars* films as featuring 'The Man With No Name'. In *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, advertised as the last in 'The Man With No Name' trilogy, Eastwood's character is referred to as 'Blondie', while all three characters are given ironic labels to stand in for names in the screen titles. The idea of namelessness was influential: many Cinecittà studio Westerns were to feature a nameless hero, a trend later parodied in Tonino Valerii's *My Name is Nobody* (*Mio Nome è Nessuno* 1973).⁹

Turning to the villain, we find that he is interesting and charismatic, even attractive: Kurosawa believed that the villain should be just as powerful and charismatic as the hero, in order to maintain interest and give the hero a real challenge. Tatsuya Nakadai, Gian Maria Volonté and ultimately Lee van Cleef all play ambiguous characters, undoubtedly evil but sexually attractive at the same time. It is noteworthy that while Toshiro Mifune and Clint Eastwood are given very plain costumes, the villains are adorned with scarves, embroidered shirts and entire outfits of block colours such as black or white. In *For a Few Dollars More*, Leone plays on conventional iconography by dressing Lee Van Cleef's character all in black, although he is actually a neutral character, while the real

villain, played by Gian Maria Volonté, is shown once in an all-white costume and once in all black. Just as this costuming suggests, the villain is not all bad – in fact, he is just like the hero in many ways, hungry for money and driven to kill. The villain has mixed and complex motives, as suggested in the flashback scenes of *For a Few Dollars More*: it may be the case that Indio's drive to kill has its root in mental trauma brought on by the suicide of a girl he may have truly loved (Cumbow 1987: 25–26). Ultimately, the villain is revealed to be worse than the hero, and must be destroyed. However, the relationship between the hero and villain is not always confrontational. They see themselves in each other, and empathise, even help one another, as when Sanjurō hands Unosuke his gun at the end of *Yojimbo*.

A further liminal element is seen in the treatment of the heroic male body in both films. Although Kurosawa and Leone are much vaunted for their emphasis on masculine sweat and active movement, the masculinity in these films is complex rather than one-dimensional. Sanjurō and Joe are not all-powerful. The fragility of the human body is emphasised when both heroes get beaten to within an inch of their lives and must literally crawl out of town. Bodily strength is shown to be neither timeless nor natural – it can be lost and must be regained through hard work and training. Both heroes are shown slowly recouping their strength in hiding, readying themselves both mentally and physically for the combat to come. It is the process of training the body, rather than the end result, that is emphasised through repeated action, as we see Sanjurō pinning a leaf with a thrown dagger, and Joe shooting repeatedly at a target. By emphasising the reality of the body, Kurosawa and Leone complicate the essentialised idea of masculinity and create men with real depth.

The most obvious liminal element in both films is found in the scenario, or basic plot structure, as the story hinges on the fact that the main character occupies a space directly between two opposing poles. Frayling notes that this basic 'Servant of Two Masters' plot became a mainstay of Spaghetti Westerns from 1964–1967, to the extent that he calls it the foundational narrative of the genre (Frayling 1998: 51). In *Yojimbo*, the liminal position is explicitly shown by repeatedly framing Sanjurō in the centre of the screen, flanked by members of the two rival gangs. Using the anamorphic frame, Kurosawa creates a tableau for the central fight scene, displaying the whole street at once. Ushitora's gang lines up on the left of the screen, Seibei's on the right, with Sanjurō perched on his bell-tower in the centre of the shot, surveying the battle below. At the close of this famous scene, Sanjurō's position is made

clearer. Sanjurō's bell-tower appears in the central background of the shot, placed carefully between the faces of Ushitora and Seibei as they argue in the foreground. In *A Fistful of Dollars* the liminal position is elucidated in dialogue rather than explicit camerawork. At the beginning of the film, the hero looks down from the balcony and assesses his situation in the town: 'Baxter's over there, Rojo's there, and me right in the middle.' In a parallel statement at the end of the film, he decides to leave town before the officials arrive looking for the gold: 'You mean the Mexican government on one side, maybe the Americans on the other side, and me right smack in the middle? Too dangerous!' Apart from goodbyes, this is the last dialogue in the film, underscoring the impression of the liminal position as Joe rides away across the square.

In both films, it is by dint of his liminal positioning that the hero can manipulate the action and finally escape, presumably to go on to some other place and repeat the process again and again. This timeless, repetitive air is borne out in the sequels, as Tatsuya Nakadai and Gian Maria Volonté reprise their roles as villains facing off against Toshirō Mifune and Clint Eastwood. While the names of the characters have changed, the sameness of the scenarios heightens the feeling of legend and myth. It is a self-reflexive myth, however, playing on audience expectation in the reappearance of stock characters. Leone's introduction of Lee Van Cleef as Eastwood's rival in *For a Few Dollars More* is complicated in the third film as Van Cleef is cast instead as 'the Bad'. The actor's switch from neutral to bad undoes audience expectation, especially as the actor wears the traditionally villainous head-to-toe black throughout both films. It is such self-reflexivity that leads Frayling to argue that Leone's films are less about the myth of the Western as they are about the myth of cinema itself, playing with iconography, conventions and camerawork to give an extra dimension of resonance for the audience (Frayling 1998: 40).

Before *Yojimbo* and *A Fistful of Dollars*, most Westerns were easily categorised as adventure, comedy, or tragedy. Kurosawa and Leone mixed modes, unsettling audience expectation and bringing an element of complexity to generic classification. This flexible approach allowed for humour, juxtaposed with vicious violence – making the violent act all the more shocking in context. It also allowed for a healthy dose of cynicism, making room for critique as well as social and political commentary. This is particularly apparent in the final episode to Leone's trilogy, *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, as the senseless violence of the Civil War is shown to be far beyond human control or comprehension. Such critical commentary is seen in Hollywood

Westerns after 1964 as directors took a more complex view of good, bad and the meaning of violence, seen in Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* (1969) and culminating in Clint Eastwood's own *Unforgiven* of 1992.

The significance of *Yojimbo* and *A Fistful of Dollars* is thus found not just in the impact of their shots or cinematic technique, but in the liminal element that runs through each of the films. The effects of this liminality may be seen through the whole genre – in the 'Servant of Two Masters' Eurowesterns; in the violent yet hilarious comedy Westerns such as the *Trinity* series starring Bud Spencer and Terence Hill; and even in the strange hybrid kung-fu Westerns of the 1970s. These are not all good films, but they retain the same liminal narrative myth. The liminal scenario is to be found and celebrated in the modern remake *Last Man Standing* (1996), while the dubious motives of hero and villain may be seen in the more recent Westerns of Robert Rodriguez. Even the kung-fu Western, the ultimate in mixed-mode liminality, is perpetuated in Jackie Chan's popular *Shanghai Noon* (Tom Dey 2000) and *Shanghai Knights* (David Dobkin 2003). The subtle complexities, ambiguities and liminal positions of Kurosawa and Leone have provided the standard by which modern Westerns may be judged. It is when the liminality is absent and directors lose their subtlety that the genre fails.

Conclusion: Liminality and the Western genre

One question that remains to be asked is whether the Western is an inherently exoticising genre. Myth, liminality, exoticism and essentialisation all make use of the imaginary. The 'West' of the 'Western' is an exotic space, where anything can happen. The myth of the 'West' taps into a wider human myth of the unknown, the frontier, the place of unlimited possibility. Treasures are beyond imagination, violence is swift and without retaliation, the masculine is inviolate. The frontier itself is a liminal space, between the known and the unknown. It is no coincidence that many Westerns take place in a border town or a crossroads. Beyond definition, the liminal space is open to any possibilities we can project upon it. Because the 'West' is far from here, it is also inherently exotic. The creation and imagination of the 'West' may be seen as a process of exoticisation: distance and difference are fundamental to its definition. The 'West' has been created and recreated so many times that everyone can recognise a Western when they see one. Generic convention itself is a form of essentialisation, boiling

down a genre to its essential elements, none of which represent the genre accurately in themselves, but all of which may be seen as instantly recognisable elements of any particular film. Essentialisation and exoticism, however, are the mainstays of appropriation discourse, concerned with power dynamics operating in a binary system. If essentialisation and exoticism lie at the heart of the Western genre, what does this mean for relationships between films within that genre?

Kurosawa's version of the 'West' is an imagined place in the recent Japanese past. Leone's 'West' transposes Kurosawa's story to a mythical Mexican border town. One could argue that in Leone's appropriation, the 'Japan of 1860' in the first film has been understood as an exotic distant locale. In such an argument, Leone's remake becomes an Orientalist exoticisation of 'Japan' enacted by a European director, reinforcing and perpetuating a structure of European imperialist power over Asia. But one could equally argue that Kurosawa's 'Japan of 1860' had less to do with the Japan of 1860 than with the myth of possibilities at the crossroads in the middle of nowhere. Situated within the Western genre, Kurosawa's 'Japan of 1860' cannot be seen as a realistic representation, but as a completely imagined place. Can such an imagined place be open to 'exoticisation'? Where is the power in re-imagining the imaginary? Both Kurosawa and Leone set their films in bordertowns, at a fork in the road, in the middle of an undescribed nowhere, an 'other' place entirely. Not only were the settings liminal, but the locations for the shoots were as well. Kurosawa shot *Yojimbo* on a constructed set: a completely imagined place. Leone did shoot on location, but went to Spain to do it. Frayling argues that the setting of the Spaghetti Western was an economic accident – Europeans found it cheaper to shoot in Spain, which fortuitously resembled the American southwest – but the fact remains that Spain is not the American southwest, but an imagined, constructed version of it. Leone's recasting of Kurosawa's myth is not so much an imperialist appropriation of 'Japan' as a rewriting of the liminal place.

By reading *Yojimbo* in terms of liminality and the myth of the Western genre, we defuse the politics of power inherent in the appropriative model. This is particularly interesting for the Western genre, premised as it is on essentialised notions of distance. One might expect that this genre would lend itself perfectly to a binary appropriative model, but that is not the case. The significance of *Yojimbo* and *A Fistful of Dollars* is that both occupy a space between convention and innovation, where binary systems break down and we are left with complex, messy realities that refuse to fit any preconceived notions of categories and

classification. It is the 'inbetweenness' of these films and their legacy that leads me to hope that studies of world cinema in terms of genre and dialogue might be one way to overcome the national-cinema problems of appropriation discourse.

Notes

1. Throughout this essay I will give Japanese names in the order of given name first, family name second. Sergio Leone released his film in Italy and America under the pseudonym 'Bob Robertson'. On the Anglicisation of Italian director's names, and other appeals to the American market, see Bondanella 2001: 254. Christopher Frayling argues that the names were Anglicised to fool Italian audiences into thinking they were watching a 'real' Western rather than a home-made one (Frayling 1998: 147).
2. Lucy Mazdon argues that the remake is often seen in terms of criminality or violence against the unassailable original: Mazdon 1996: 48. On the impact of adaptation discourse and fidelity discourse on the reception of Japanese cinema in particular, see Yoshimoto 2000: 250–261.
3. Kurosawa does not list the William S. Hart films he saw by title, but Hart was very prolific during the period 1916–1919, averaging eight films a year. He continued making films through the early 1920s, so Kurosawa may have seen any of a number of Hart's Westerns in these years.
4. In his autobiography, Kurosawa lists all the films he can remember seeing between the ages of 9 and 19, including *The Last of the Mohicans* (Maurice Tourneur 1920), *The Covered Wagon* (James Cruze 1923), *The Iron Horse* (John Ford 1924) and *Three Bad Men* (John Ford 1926), *The Gold Rush* (Charles Chaplin 1925) and *The Salvation Hunters* (Josef von Sternberg 1925). See Kurosawa 1982: 73–74.
5. Galbraith calls *Red Harvest* the 'uncredited' basis for *Yojimbo* (Galbraith 2001: 313), while Yoshimoto maintains that *Yojimbo* is based on an original script (Yoshimoto 2000: 234–235). David Desser describes the relationship in terms of a loose adaptation of basic plot structure – see Desser 1981: 101–102.
6. See Desser 1981: 58; Prince 1999: 12–14; Richie 1984: 223. Prince in particular lists many critical comments on the similarities between *Yojimbo* and particular American Westerns.
7. This method of 'intercutting' slow motion and normal speed film taken from several different cameras is seen most clearly in *The Seven Samurai* (1954), although it became a hallmark of Kurosawa's technique. On this method and its imitators, see Prince 1999: 348–349.
8. The first Japanese film made using CinemaScope was Sadatsugu Matsuda's *Bride of Otori Castle* (*Otori-jō no hanayome* 1957). On the geometric and linear formalism of specific shots in *Yojimbo*, see Yoshimoto 2000: 291–292; Prince 1999: 225–228; and Richie 1984: 152–154.
9. Directed by Tonino Valerii, produced by Sergio Leone and starring Terence Hill. The extremes of exaggeration and intertextuality in this film are an excellent case of self-reflexivity in generic convention. See Bondanella 2001: 272–274.

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11

All that Melodrama Allows: Sirk, Fassbinder, Almodóvar, Haynes

Eric M. Thau

In the late 1950s, Danish-born, German-trained Douglas Sirk directed a series of lush, Technicolor melodramas for Universal studios, which, while successful, were generally panned or ignored by serious film critics. Such overwrought soap operas as *Written on the Wind* (1956), *Imitation of Life* (1959) and *All that Heaven Allows* (1955) seemed the height of Hollywood artifice, the apotheosis of the 'weepie', the four-handkerchief movie aimed at the suburban housewife of Eisenhower's America. By the 1960s these films had a large following in the gay community for their camp elements, but as Christine Gledhill has pointed out, it was precisely these films' artificiality in their portrayal of bourgeois American life which led to a neo-Marxist appreciation of the ironic critique they offered of the rigid suburban milieu (Gledhill 1987). Such critics as Paul Willemsen and Jon Halliday in 1971, but most importantly Thomas Elsaesser in his seminal essay 'Tales of Sound and Fury' in 1972, began a reassessment of the impact of the Hollywood family melodrama, and Sirk's in particular, which has travelled through poststructuralist, feminist and psychoanalytical criticism to contemporary times.

In this chapter I will examine the cross-cultural influence of Sirkian melodrama on three extremely influential film-makers: the late Rainer Werner Fassbinder, whose New German Cinema was transformed once he came into contact with Sirk, Spaniard Pedro Almodóvar, whose particular uses of melodrama, and the lush Sirkian aesthetic, created a new look in Spanish cinema, and American Todd Haynes, whose *Far from Heaven* (2002) is a post-modern homage to Sirk. I hope to show how the specifics of their various cultural frameworks allow for completely different interpretations of the 'distanciation' theorized by Louis Althusser and applied since the 1970s to Sirk's filmic aesthetic.

Douglas Sirk

I have selected *All that Heaven Allows* from the Sirk oeuvre, for the obvious reason that it is the direct inspiration for Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* (*Angst essen Seele auf* 1974) and Haynes' *Far from Heaven*, although the latter includes many references to other Sirkian melodramas. Almodóvar's films are only tangentially influenced by this film, amongst many others. The director, perhaps prematurely, as witnessed by *All About My Mother* (*Todo sobre mi madre* 1999), told Marsha Kinder in 1987 that 'all the influences on me and all the film references in my films are very spontaneous and visual. I don't make any tributes. I'm a very naïve spectator' (Kinder 2004: 48). But this is precisely the level upon which Sirk's melodramas reach us. As Elsaesser points out, Sirk's emphasis is on conveying themes through style and technique rather than the psychological depth of the characters (Elsaesser 1987). In his excellent review of *All that Heaven Allows*, Fassbinder noted that

Douglas Sirk's films are descriptive films. Very few close-ups. Even in shot/counter-shot sequences the partner is always partly visible in the frame. The moviegoer's intense emotion doesn't come from identification but from the montage and the music. That's why you leave these films feeling somehow dissatisfied.

(Fassbinder 2001)

This ironic distancing, created through dense colour, artificial and at many times claustrophobic settings, and restrictive, often clichéd dialogue, are what offer more from these films than the Manichean oppositions of their stultifying moral framework. But as Peter Brook points out in *The Melodramatic Imagination*, melodrama can express the need to reach 'a mythological realm where the imagination can find a habitat for its play with larger moral entities in a world where what one lives for and by is seen in terms of, and is determined by, the most fundamental psychic relations and cosmic ethical forces' (Brooks 1976: 13).

All that Heaven Allows tells the story of Carry Scott (Jane Wyman), a wealthy widow whose empty suburban life in New England is radically changed and challenged, when she falls in love with her gardener, the free-thinking Ron Kirby (Rock Hudson), 20 years her junior. As Laura Mulvey has pointed out, the film displays 'the dichotomy between [the] contemporary New England society [of the 1950s as lived by Carry] and the home of Thoreau and Emerson as lived by Ron' (Mulvey 1987). She

quotes Jon Halliday to the effect that 'Hudson and his trees are both America's past and its ideals. They are ideals which are now unobtainable' (Mulvey 1987: 79). Carry transgresses her role as the upper-class sexless widow and mother to adult children through her forbidden affair with the young, handsome, working-class non-conformist. This is expressed visually through the juxtaposition of her suffocating home and Ron's presence in the outdoors, her crisp tailored dresses and Ron's red hunting jacket and flannel shirts, and the luxurious but corrupt Country Club party as opposed to the natural, free-spirited party she attends with Ron at the home of the Andersons.

Sirk imposes limiting frames on the interiors of Carry's world. When her children come home the first time, she is seated at a vanity table, the rest of the room exposed in her mirror. Her son and daughter are seen in silhouette framed in the bedroom doorway. The first image of the cocktail hour with her de-sexed suitor Harvey is a straight line master shot of Carry, Harvey and her son Ned. Movement is kept to a minimum, and the imposing mantelpiece anchors the actors within their rigid social stratum. Conversely, when Ron enters the same living room, and is offered the identical cocktail by Ned, the camera pans across the room, emphasizing his dynamic presence. In this instance, rather than celebrating the free spirit Ron embodies, the motion of the camera underlines the social tension evident in Ned's condescending attitude toward this inappropriate invader of his social milieu. A similar device is used at the country club party. While employing his signature vivid colours in the dresses of the women, the circular movement of the guests, and their eventual gatherings into small groups for drinks and conversation actually undermine any sense of lively celebration. Rather, it seems a temporary exhalation within the constraints of their judgmental upper-class decorum. Carry's discomfort is visible on her face, and if her feeling of claustrophobia, awakened by her liberating involvement with Ron, was not clear enough from her facial expressions, it is literally constructed in the tight clinch she receives while dancing with the drunken Howard Hoffer. Sirk brings his camera in so close that one can almost smell the alcohol on the breath of the would-be adulterer. In sharp contrast, the guests at the Andersons' party wear casual clothes, sing and dance with abandon and enjoy themselves unselfconsciously. With certain visual irony, Sirk's camera circles the close confines of the living room as the dancers happily bump into each other, in sharp contrast to the ample space but strictly ordered *mise-en-scène* of the country club.

Too weak to fight against the gossip of the town, Carry rejects Ron, until a hunting accident leaves him bed-ridden and she runs to care for him, at his idyllic, newly renovated old mill home. As he comes to, she assures him all will be well and they will live together from now on, despite what her peers may think. The camera moves from a two-shot of them at the sofa to the picture window, where in a snowy field a young deer appears, as the music surges and the credits roll. This utterly contrived moment places the happy ending in harsh relief. While the moral high ground which Carry has finally achieved, following love in the defiance of conformity, is celebrated, the artificiality of the moment leaves the spectator suspect as to whether true happiness is attainable within this world, visually anchored as it is in its aesthetic conceits.

Rainer Werner Fassbinder

In 1974, Rainer Werner Fassbinder wrote and directed *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*. Inspired by a story told by a character in his *The American Soldier* (*Der amerikanische Soldat* 1970), of a German widow who falls in love and marries a younger foreigner, the story of *Ali* was transformed by his introduction to Sirk and his films in 1971. Fassbinder transfers Sirk's lush New England home of the upper classes to the harsh Munich working class, at the same time, as Robert Reimer says 'relocating the story from the personal sphere of banal lovers' quarrels to the sociopolitical sphere of discrimination and exploitation' (Reimer 1996).

Fassbinder saw the opening sequence of *All that Heaven Allows* as establishing the social commentary, in that Ron remains out of focus, in the periphery of Carry's life, until her friend Sara comments on his presence. Sara is unable to stay for coffee, so Carry invites Ron to join her. In *Ali*, the social inequalities are thrown at us immediately, as Ali and his friends stare down the insecure Emmi, who, in order to escape the rain, has wandered into the bar the Moroccans frequent. Fassbinder had dramatized the difficult situation of the foreigner as 'other' as early as 1969's *Katzelmacher*, in which he himself plays a hated Greek immigrant. In contrast, this first establishing shot places the German native in the position of outsider, as the editing cuts between the line of Moroccans at the bar and the forlorn Emmi seated at the table closest to the door, as far removed from them as possible. The spatial tension is only broken when Ali, on a dare, approaches her and offers a dance. The immediate intimacy created between them is underlined by Ali's encompassing and reassuring embrace, his large, dark presence enveloping her small, blond

sadness. This 'two against the world' moment will be repeated several times in the film, until the circumstances begin to alienate the couple.

In *All that Heaven Allows*, the depths of Carry's incapacity to overcome her family and friends' disapproval of her relationship with Ron is represented by her son's gift of a television, which he tells her is 'all the company you'll ever need'. Upon learning of Emmi's marriage to Ali, her son Bruno kicks in the TV, a clear allusion to the earlier film. In this sequence the tight, claustrophobic grouping of Emmi's children echoes both the static compositions of *Katzelmacher*, and the country club party-goers carefully organized by Sirk in *All that Heaven Allows*.

Throughout the film, Fassbinder will emulate Sirk's limiting frames, creating boxes and prisons from which his lead characters must find some escape. Emmi's neighbour, Mrs Ellis, the eyes and ears of her building, appears behind a caged window in the stairwell. The staircase is a repeated motif, including two scenes where Emmi and her fellow cleaning women eat their lunches and gossip on the stairs. The banisters function as prison cell bars, underlining the shunning of Emmi by her racist colleagues. In the second, almost identical sequence, after her colleague has forgiven her transgressive affair as long as she does her favours, the cleaning women shun a new colleague, Emmi, having obviously learnt nothing from her experience of racism, is now happy herself to shun this woman for being Yugoslavian. Fassbinder, like Sirk before him, even sustains this claustrophobia in exterior shots, where 'the outside is the inside', as Thomas Elsaesser puts it (Elsaesser 1996: 59). When Emmi and Ali have a coffee in the garden of a restaurant, they are framed in the same way as during their wedding dinner at Hitler's favourite Italian restaurant; when the shopkeeper watches Emmi's comings and goings it is seen through the shop window, creating an interiorized tableau of the street before us.

Fassbinder's pessimism is apparent, where Sirk's was left to the individual viewer. While in *All that Heaven Allows*, both Sara Warren and the doctor eventually come around to accepting and supporting Carry, in Emmi's world it is only when they can exploit her that Emmi's children, the local grocer and her gossipy neighbour Mrs Ellis open their world again to Emmi. And as Reimer points out, while Sirk offers us a (however unbelievable) happy ending before the Christmas card-like picture window, Ali lies in a hospital bed after his crippling ulcer attack, as the doctor assures Emmi that he will probably continue to have attacks due to the high-stress lives of guest workers. As opposed to the idyllic image of snow and the young deer, the window behind Ali is closed and the blinds are drawn, the repetitive pattern of the hospital

wallpaper alluding to the monotonous working-class world in which they live.

It is also important to note that the *melos* of melodrama goes mostly begging in Fassbinder's version. Unlike Frank Skinner's overdone score for *All that Heaven Allows*, Fassbinder only includes two songs, one Arabic and one German, the tellingly titled 'Black Gypsy' to which Ali and Emmi first dance. Background music is limited to two short intervals of delicate guitar strumming and a softly evocative harmonica, when Ali seeks out the comfort (and couscous) of his former girlfriend, dramatizing the struggles between him and Emmi, and again at the end, as Emmi sits crying at his bedside. It is as if Fassbinder needs to negate this all-important element of the overwrought Hollywood sudser, to emphasize the harder realities he depicts.

Clearly Fassbinder's version of the story is conditioned by his situation as a gay leftist in the highly combative atmosphere of the politically and economically turbulent West Germany of the 1970s. Reimer suggests that Fassbinder's pessimism is also the result of his real life relationship with El Hedi Ben Salem, who plays Ali, a relationship he was ending as it had become stagnant for him (Reimer 1996: 286). Sirk's Hollywood happy ending is left as an open question, conditioned by the very social and cultural constraints his film seeks to denounce. A clear endorsement of Ron and Carry's relationship would fly in the face of conservative values in the late Eisenhower era, yet the possibility of their happiness appeals, both on the purely escapist level which would surely please the casual moviegoer and the Universal executives, as well as the forward looking liberals of the time. But as Jane Shattuc notes, Fassbinder's films 'undermine the overt social morality of the melodramatic narrative' and directly call into question the transcendence of bourgeois social dominance which Sirk's films attack sub-rosa, and only when viewed with critical irony from outside that framework (Shattuc 1990).

But then, as Pedro Almodóvar, exasperated in his early career by constant critical comparisons to the German, only half-jestingly points out, 'the difference is that Fassbinder, as a German, doesn't have much of a sense of humour' (Kinder 2004: 47). In fact, Almodóvar greatly admired Fassbinder, and recognized their common interest in melodrama. But as he told Frederic Strauss, their similar attraction to

a baroque form of melodrama is a spontaneous defence of the outsiders in society. In Fassbinder's case, his interest was more intellectual; in mine it's more a question of social origins. But the basic difference between us lies in his way of denouncing injustice. He's

Manichean. He always explains very clearly who is bad and who is good. And the baddies are real monsters.

(Strauss 1995: 148)

Pedro Almodóvar

Almodóvar's films have always had some basis in melodrama, yet as he says, he has eschewed the clear binaries of melodramatic conflict. Coming to prominence in the midst of Spain's frenetic *Movida* – the youthful explosion of sex, drugs and pop culture creation which followed the death of Franco – his greatest strength is, as Kathleen Vernon puts it, 'the breakdown of old hierarchies and the resulting dissolution of barriers and boundaries in a post-patriarchal, post-religious Spain' (Vernon 1993). And melodrama often provides the mode for that exploration. Sharing the camp aesthetic with the likes of John Waters, his films have found a strong audience in both Europe and America.

In *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* (¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto? 1984), the opening sequence can be related to the opening of *All that Heaven Allows* in that it starts with a crane shot of the protagonist's world, but rather than a vivid autumn view of a small New England town it is a small, dense plaza in Madrid. Like Fassbinder, Almodóvar is going to show us the life of a working-class heroine, and her frustrations in maintaining herself and her family in the government erected housing blocks, the *vertical chabolas* that border the M-30 highway on Madrid's periphery.¹ But as Gloria (Carmen Maura) crosses the plaza, where a film is being shot, the camera and a sound boom operator, seen in the frame, follow her into a Kendo studio. Almodóvar thus enunciates the performative nature of all life, both the real and what is represented in film. The opening music, reminiscent of the music heard in Italian neo-realist films of the 1940s and 1950s, is like an organ grinder's tune, sad in its attempt at festivity, and repetitive, like Gloria's life.

The frustrations of Gloria's life, from her tryst with the impotent policeman in the studio, to her struggles to pay the bills, are punctuated by the claustrophobic spaces of her meagre apartment. Like Sirk's constant use of mirrors and door frames, and Fassbinder's staircases, Almodóvar places his camera inside the appliances which rule Gloria's life: the washing machine, the oven. As Vernon points out, the classic shot/counter-shot of a two-character scene is replaced by the appliances looking back at her (Vernon 1993: 35). The symbols of Spain's entry into consumer society become her interlocutors, and her jailors.

The artificiality of Sirk's melodrama in *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* is replaced by a broader, comic artifice; the kitsch of Sirk's deep colours and stagy sets replaced by an unhindered revelling in *lo cutre*, the cheap vulgarity of '70's Spanish furnishings. In Almodóvar's television moments we are treated to himself and his drag-rock band colleague Fanny MacNamara lip-synching Miguel de Molina's version of 'La bien pagá' ('The Well-Paid Woman'). The song, in its transvestite pantomime, serves as a musical and visual metaphor for the life-as-commerce message of the film. There is also one of his trademark commercial parodies, this one for instant coffee. Its narrative structure is itself a mini-melodrama in which the eager male lover hideously burns his paramour when he trips on her high-heeled pump. The explosion of the assumed structures of bourgeois life and love are played in high camp.

The final scene offers, as Vernon points out, 'an emotional response blocked until this point in the film' (Vernon 1993: 38). Gloria contemplates suicide on her balcony after her sad goodbye to older son Toni and her mother-in-law, who are returning to their village in La Mancha. As she looks down at the pavement way below her she spots her younger son Miguel, who has returned from the paedophile dentist to whom Gloria had sold him to pay for a bridge and to buy herself a curling iron. As he appears in the doorway, a surging saxophone score begins, reaching a sexy/romantic crescendo as mother and son embrace. This type of music, normally reserved for the reunion of lovers, underlines Miguel's return as the 'new man of the house' and Almodóvar's complete deconstruction of the bourgeois, patriarchal structure of Spanish family life. And yet, this implicit happy ending is made emotionally ambiguous as the camera pulls back to reveal that like Gloria's building, Madrid has thousands of similar apartments in identical buildings, and the coda of the theme music of the opening credits promises that these tragic farces are bound to repeat themselves.

By the mid-1990s, Almodóvar would progressively move toward more traditionally constructed melodramas, such as *The Flower of my Secret* (La flor de mi secreto 1995), *High Heels* (Tacones lejanos 1991) and *Live Flesh* (Carne trémula 1997), culminating in 1999's Oscar-winning *All About my Mother*. In that film his constant exploration of how melodrama can best represent women and motherhood would indeed include tributes to several classic Hollywood films and actresses. The title, taken from Joseph Mankiewicz's *All about Eve* (1950), the re-enacting of that film's dressing room intrigues, and the framing of much of the film's action within a production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* are all in service to his homage to motherhood and family, in whatever form they take.

The imagery of the film, in the lush colours familiar from the Sirkian palette, and by this time consecrated as the Almodóvar look, continue to emphasize the power of artifice at the heart of not only melodrama, but life itself. The lush score by Alberto Iglesias is punctuated by the striking 'Tajabone' of Senegalese musician Ismael Lo, which is heard as Manuela enters Barcelona. The striking montage of the city it accompanies belies the conscientious artifice of the film. This is a glorified Barcelona, with more in common with Sirk's stage set New England than any real city – for there is at work here an almost utopian vision of a future in which AIDS can be eradicated, transsexuals can be accepted as the women they yearn to be, and anyone who seeks to mother or be mothered will find their family. As transsexual Agrado says in her speech about her surgeries: 'Yes, ma'am, it costs a lot to be authentic.'

In some ways, Agrado's message speaks directly to Almodóvar's particular achievement within the genre of melodrama as evidenced in *All About my Mother*. Where Fassbinder asserted that the spectator's emotional reaction to Sirk's melodramas came not from psychological identification with characters, but from the montage and music, and his own films clearly depend on the alienation created by his *mise-en-scène*, Almodóvar's film thoroughly embraces its artificiality. The inspiration for Manuela's character was a scene in his earlier *The Flower of my Secret*, where one of the protagonist's friends works as a nurse/actress who plays the grieving relative of a dead patient in training sessions for doctors who must learn how to ask properly for permission to remove organs for transplant. The scene is repeated almost exactly word-for-word and image-for-image in *All About my Mother*. The celebration of the simulacrum is doubled for all who have followed Almodóvar's career. What is different in the newer film is the unabashed celebration of the performative nature Manuela takes on in all her roles. And as Agrado's speech indicates, the director embraces and invites the spectator to embrace openly the search for authenticity through the constructed nature of identity. It might be said that both Sirk and Fassbinder are still operating within a modernist framework, while Almodóvar's films are unabashedly postmodern in both approach and impact. In this sense, rather than distancing through heightened effect, he takes the melodramatic form full circle and emotionally connects with a viewing public well acquainted and quite comfortable with extremes of artificiality. This is as much an accident of chronology as a deliberate technique of the film-maker's art. It can be argued that without the precedent of Sirkian melodrama, Fassbinder's re-interpretations and the ensuing critical assessments Almodóvar's films would not have the same emotional

impact on the public as they have received. An examination of Todd Haynes' *Far from Heaven* in many ways places Almodóvar's achievement in perspective.

Todd Haynes

Haynes graduated from Brown University with a degree in Fine Arts and Semiotics, and in many ways, his intellectual training is imprinted on his films. His first short to gain recognition, 1987's *Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story*, retells the rise and tragic fall of singer Carpenter through the use of Barbie dolls. The stark contrast of the female ideal of the doll and Carpenter's fatal battle with anorexia nervosa displays Haynes' approach, which challenges the spectator to feel in spite of the artificiality of the filmic construct. Haynes' focus on the alienation of feeling in everyday life reaches a climax in 1995's *Safe*. Julianne Moore plays Carol, a woman with environmental allergies which turn her own home into a health hazard. The feeling of claustrophobia within everyday spaces is marked, Carol's world eventually reduced to a sterile white bubble, where, safe from contamination, she is finally able to open herself back up to her feelings.

One of the characters in Haynes' *Velvet Goldmine* (1998) says, 'we prefer impressions to ideas – brief flights to sustained ones – exceptions to types – situations to subjects – and yourself?' He is summing up the world of British glam-rock of the 1970s in a phrase reminiscent of Bob Dylan's 'Ballad of a Thin Man' ('Because something is happening here/But you don't know what it is/Do you, Mister Jones?'), but as Keith Uhlich argues, the statement underlines one of Haynes' key cinematic beliefs (Uhlich 2002).

However, it can be argued that in his take on Douglas Sirk, 2002's *Far from Heaven*, Haynes does quite the opposite. His meticulously constructed pastiche of Sirk's most important films (including visual and thematic allusions to *All that Heaven Allows*, *Written on the Wind* and *Imitation of Life*) is a 'sustained flight', a study in types. Haynes wishes to offer us a tribute to Sirk's 1950s melodramas while at the same time laying bare subjects like homosexuality which were kept below the surface in those earlier films. At all times Haynes' craftsmanship is on display, his team's superior technique in production design, lighting and music in the foreground, as with Sirk's productions, but one is constantly made aware of the academic critique of the genre, so specific is the re-creation of Sirk's world. New York Press film critic Armond White referred to *Velvet Goldmine* as 'a desiccated thesis-film' (quoted

in Uhlich 2002), and *Far from Heaven* is only saved from a similar fate by the superior acting of Julianne Moore, Dennis Quaid, Dennis Haysbert and Patricia Clarkson. The irony of this salvation through realistic acting is striking in that Sirk's films achieved a great deal of their impact through the distanciation created by the remarkably wooden line readings of his actors. In the 'Making of *Far from Heaven*' feature on the DVD, Haynes explains how carefully he constructed his film to resemble Sirk's originals, right down to the stilted 1950's dialogue. His party scene, in Cathy Whitaker's home, is a note-for-note re-enactment of the country club party in *All that Heaven Allows*, including the swirl of crinoline gowns in bright Technicolor shades and the careful placement of the party-goers in circles of conversation. Where Fassbinder alluded to Sirk's constructions, Haynes redoes them with postmodern self-awareness and an archness unseen in the German's films.

It is perhaps another irony of the postmodern moment that Almodóvar, living in a Spain that has freed itself from the harsh social repressions of the Franco years through a ludic celebration of the absurdities of style and artifice, has embraced the life-affirming humanity beneath the facades. Haynes, on the other hand, creates a heartfelt replica, a breathtaking simulacrum celebrating Sirk's distanciation techniques. Rather than indicting the sterility of the repressed bourgeois environment of Eisenhower's America, *Far from Heaven* makes patently obvious the limitations of a too-intellectual re-interpretation of the generic clichés of melodrama.

Conclusion

Douglas Sirk's family melodramas of the 1950s allowed for a varied reception by their audiences within the culture of Eisenhower's America, their subversive messages available to the non-conformist subcultures of the time. The prism of European critical appraisal, and the inevitable dawning of an ironic awareness in audiences which is tied to the integration of those non-conformist viewpoints into the greater mass of viewers allowed for their deeper appreciation. Fassbinder, from this same European and alternative perspective, would carry Sirk's techniques into his depiction of alienation in the crisis-ridden Germany of the 1970s. Almodóvar, who enunciates the camp elements in humorous celebration, would bring the Sirkian aesthetic into a new postmodern era. Haynes, rather than applying Sirk's techniques to new themes, creates a letter-perfect simulacrum, which in some ways expresses the difficulties of reassessing Sirk in an America where half the population is actively

engaged in an attempt to bring back the 1950's values these family melodramas indicted.

Note

1. *Chabola* is the Spanish term for ramshackle shanties which were erected around major cities in the rush to urbanize after the Civil War.

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12

Lost in Translation: A Few Vagaries of the Alphabet Game Played Between Bombay Cinema and Hollywood

Kaushik Bhaumik

The dialogue between Hollywood and Bombay cinema is a long-standing one that can be dated back to the earliest years of film history. Imported films were seen in Bombay from 1896 onwards creating a film culture that was to define the shape of Bombay cinema in crucial ways. Maturing in the 1920s, the dialogue has continued through to contemporary times, affording some intriguing insights into processes of cultural translation. American cinema's domination of world film markets is datable to the 1920s and coincides with the rise of Hollywood as the hub of an international film culture. Right from the beginning Bombay film-makers and artists were keyed into developments in Hollywood. This very interest, however, has proven a contested terrain in the ways in which the industry and its products have been evaluated at home and abroad. Charges of being a clone of Hollywood have dogged the development of the Bombay film in all phases of its history. The development of the idea of 'Bollywood' in recent times (the alphabet game referred to in the title) has not helped matters. On the one hand, the term, invented by the industry itself in the 1980s as a self-legitimising gesture, suggests the entry of Bombay film into the arena of international cinema on a par with Hollywood, Hong Kong and other national cinemas of repute as regards technical sophistication and star value. On the other hand, when utilised by the West it often suggests that such films are simply derivative of Hollywood. No wonder the very same industry that invented the term now contests it, while strategically utilising the mileage 'Bollywood' has in Western markets and with audiences to enter a new phase of consolidation of resources and products.

Yet Bombay cinema's relationship with Hollywood begins long before Bollywood came into being and runs a course far more interesting than the term 'Bollywood' can encompass. From very early times the crucial factor connecting Bombay and Los Angeles is a contested relationship between subaltern and hegemon. Such a relationship emerged out of the need for an industry to live up to audience's expectations of a modern cinema that conforms to international standards set by Hollywood. Bombay films were supposed to deliver the goods and thus enfranchise India's claims to the modern. The ensuing dialogue between Hollywood and Bombay cinema, however, bypasses the simplistic analytical framework of derivation and sets itself up within a contested cultural field that transpires to be a *bricolage* of filmic styles, where overlaps with Hollywood films float in and out of filmic scenarios while remaining firmly rooted in the Indian cultural ecumene. As I shall suggest in this chapter, such film is, moreover, often subversive of Western cultural and political expectations. Indeed, if Hollywood remains the uncontested dominant force in international film markets and cultures then Bombay films have carved out an autonomous history alongside American popular films on an international and now an increasingly global scale, catering to the cultural imaginations of populations in Third World nations and Third World diasporas in the West and elsewhere.

Bombay cinema and Hollywood, 1910–1931

The early years of film exhibition saw films from all over the world pour into India. Scandinavian films rubbed shoulders with films from Germany, and even films from China and Burma found their way into Indian cinema halls. However, the volume of imports from France and the United States far outstripped films from any other part of the world including the coloniser Britain, a fact that would cause much chagrin in officialdom during the 1920s. Very early on, comedies and serial adventure films became the staple of the Indian film-going masses. Pathé serials were special favourites amongst audiences. Thousands in Bombay saw, for example, the serials of the French director Louis Feuillade at the height of their international popularity. As in most other parts of the world, Charlie Chaplin and Pearl White led the charge on behalf of American cinema in film markets in India. Chaplin was an instant favourite amongst the masses, leading to songs being written about him in regional languages as well as Noor Mohammed, one of the leading comedians of the Indian silent cinema era, being conferred with the title of 'Charlie' by popular opinion. Films were advertised in

regional language newspapers in ways that made the content of Western imports understandable to local audiences. Writers were employed to translate newspaper advertising material into Gujarati, Hindi or Urdu, and plot summaries were presented in the form of publicity booklets. The work was well paid when compared to other part-time employment and attracted the attention of a new generation of young Indian men with a taste for things modern. In some instances a multi-part serial would be converted into a pulp novel and sold as fiction in the markets, the writers of which often went on to become scenarists for silent films in Bombay when regular production took off in the 1920s.

By this time the audience taste for imported films began to mature in response to Hollywood's growing influence amongst the Indian middle classes and educated youth who appreciated what they felt to be meaningful cinema, usually consisting of screen adaptations of literary masterpieces. That said, film stars also played a major role in attracting audiences, with this more sophisticated interest in Hollywood cinema growing up around the films of Douglas Fairbanks, Rudolph Valentino, Wallace Beery, Greta Garbo, Norma Shearer, the Talmadge sisters and others. This continued when the likes of Joan Crawford and Gloria Swanson appeared on screens and began to command huge popularity amongst audiences. Theda Bara, with her vampish screen persona, also had a special following amongst the Bombay masses. Bara had multiple retrospectives of her films very early on. Existing stills from Bombay silent films reveal the substantial impact the personae of the Hollywood stars had on defining the 'look' of film actors in early Indian cinema.

It was spectacle that united all sections of the masses and created a unified film culture for Hollywood film in a city like Bombay. This was noticeable even in pre-1920's Bombay film culture. Historical spectacles had been especially popular with *Cabiria* (Giovanni Pastrone 1914) and *Quo Vadis?* (Enrico Guazzoni 1912) running to packed houses in the city. A decade later *The Lost World* (Harry O. Hoyt 1925), starring Wallace Beery, received huge audiences. However, it was Douglas Fairbanks and the popularity of *The Thief of Baghdad* (Raoul Walsh 1924) that overshadowed everything else in the history of Hollywood in Bombay in the 1920s. The film could be seen in some part of the city or the other for the better part of a decade after its release in 1925. Such was the popularity of the Fairbanks film and its companion series in adventure cinema, the Zorro films (beginning with *The Mark of Zorro* [Fred Niblo 1920]), that a discussion of Bombay cinema's dominant response in its early years to Hollywood could very well be summed up by the way in

which Fairbanks and his cinema took over the imagination of audiences and film-makers all over India and in Bombay in particular.

The Bombay film industry found its feet after the release of *The Thief of Baghdad*. Not only did the returns of the film set the exhibition business on an even keel but the film also allowed local film-makers to gauge the mood of the audiences and invent a winning formula that would stabilise film production for the industry in its first decade. Countless stunt adventure romances were made throughout the silent period and until the very end of the era in 1934 the stunt film remained the staple of Bombay film production. The specific influence of *The Thief of Baghdad* is to be found in the setting of so many of these stunt films against an Oriental courtly background. The stunts themselves quoted a repertoire repeated in many serial films, starring actors such as Elmo Lincoln who had dominated public minds in Bombay and the world over before the Fairbanks era. The formula underwent mutations over the decade but the basic premise of the genre generated by spectacular deeds of physical valour in the face of evil remained throughout. Over time the focus on romance was amplified, a move made easier by the discovery of Bombay female superstars of the silent era such as Sulochana and Ermeline who were willing to do stunts as well as recall the glamour of Gloria Swanson or Theda Bara. Master Vithal, who came from a traditional Indian body-building context, starred as the heroic stunt adventurer in many of the stunt hits of the 1920s and was popular as the 'Indian Douglas' all over the country. By the end of the decade a stable of new stars from amongst the Parsi middle classes were adding Westernised sheen to stunt films. While most stunt films in the Vithal period were set against a 'traditional' version of the Princely States in India with princes wearing traditional regal costumes, later films starring E. Bilimoria and Sulochana played out adventures against a modernised Princely India, with royalty now sporting Western clothes and romancing in ways considered to be 'modern'.¹

Bombay cinema and Hollywood, 1931–present

The coming of the talkie in India saw a contradictory consolidation of tastes for Hollywood cinema and an autonomous filmic idiom for Bombay films that had very little direct dialogue with Hollywood films themselves. Undoubtedly a general ethos of middlebrow realism both in matters of set design and acting styles could be referred back to Hollywood, but thematically the dominant brand of Bombay cinema set up its own agendas, informed by indigenous political and social

issues. That said, some of the cheaper and popular productions did carry on a dialogue with popular Hollywood cinema. This was certainly the case with the stunt films made by the Wadia brothers (Jahangir and Homi) in the early years of the talkies which continued the tradition of Bombay cinema inspired by the popularity of *The Thief of Baghdad*. Especially successful through the 1930s were the now legendary stunt films directed by Homi Wadia starring the female lead Fearless Nadia (e.g. *The Lady with the Whip* [Hunterwali 1935]). Her costumes as the masked horse-riding avenger were a throwback to the era of the Zorro films (Bhaumik 2001: 129–31). However, through the next two and a half decades, the dialogue between Hollywood and Bombay cinema would remain fragmentary. What Nouvelle Vague critics dubbed the *plan américain* in terms of mise-en-scène had a considerable impact on shooting and acting styles. In the post-independence period, musicals were immensely popular amongst Indian audiences with films such as *The Sound of Music* (Robert Wise 1965) and *Mackenna's Gold* (J. Lee Thompson 1969) breaking box-office records. Undoubtedly the song and dance sequences in certain Hindi films, especially the ones filmed against the backdrop of a music hall atmosphere, carried on a fruitful dialogue with Hollywood musical styles, from the work of Busby Berkeley (*The Gang's All Here* [1943]) to *West Side Story* (Jerome Robbins and Robert Wise 1961). Comparisons with Hollywood stars and cinema were common in film magazines of the period. Stars like Raj Kapoor would emulate Chaplin in their social realist cinema, and Dev Anand, a star of many romantic comedies as well as social realist cinema, continued the tradition of being defined in Western terms already seen in previous decades, dubbed as he was the 'Gregory Peck of India'. Yet when closely observed, Bombay films of this period, even those most closely resembling a Hollywood film, reveal lyrical and melodramatic sensibilities quite alien to American cinema. This is a point I shall come back to in the concluding section of this chapter.

The dialogue with Hollywood recommenced in substantial measure in the 1960s, when frothy romantic comedies starring Doris Day or Elvis Presley ran to full houses. Middle-class audiences, on the other hand, were attracted to the more socially critical melodramas of the time. The influence of this vogue for melodrama and youth romances was felt in mainstream Bombay film productions of the 1960s that responded to fashion statements, dance movements, modes of romantic action as well as the lush cinematographic style ushered in by the introduction of Eastmancolour in Hollywood.² In the 1970s mass audience tastes in Hollywood films shifted to action films starring the likes of Clint

Eastwood and Charles Bronson. Also immensely popular were Bruce Lee's films, which resulted in the Hong Kong martial arts repertoire of stunts being adopted as a staple in Bombay cinema. Alongside this was a long-standing admiration for Westerns that began in the era of the John Wayne films.³ The action sequences in Bombay films in this decade provide a kaleidoscope of styles in circulation in international cinema, packaged together in a single sequence. By the 1980s action cinema had begun to dialogue with Hollywood cinema from periods as diverse as the 1950s and the 1970s as well as with contemporary films. Marlon Brando's following has managed to overcome the restrictions of time and maintains a cult following amongst Indian audiences, particularly amongst the younger generation. *On the Waterfront* (Elia Kazan 1954) remains a benchmark for cinematic excellence for many Bombay film-makers and actors. Over time stars such as Robert de Niro were added to the gallery of admired acting styles, some imported and some home-grown, that when mixed and matched provide the various incarnations of the Bombay film action star.⁴

Hollywood comedies have also always done well in India. Jerry Lewis, Peter Sellers and Jack Lemmon films were loved and much emulated in their time and the taste for comedy remains intact through to the popularity of Jim Carrey and Adam Sandler. However, in contemporary Bombay cinema the thriller reigns supreme and has reached a level of sophistication that can match international production standards. Comparisons with the films of Quentin Tarantino and Steven Soderbergh, or even older masters like Francis Ford Coppola and Martin Scorsese, reveal Bombay cinema adapting very well to the mores of US cinema in the 2000s. Directors like Mani Ratnam and Ram Gopal Verma are *auteurs* whose work dialogues with Hollywood cinema in various ways but who also add new dimensions that can only be understood with reference to the quintessential rules of a Bombay film. Bombay cinema today is as eclectic generically as Hollywood, indeed more so considering film-makers have also established a dialogue with the cinemas of Hong Kong and Iran.⁵

Industrial relations between Bombay and Hollywood

The dialogue between Hollywood and the Bombay industry was concretised by events such as Frank Capra visiting India in 1952, followed by other film-makers and stars visiting India through the 1950s and 1960s. Direct contact with Hollywood was established in the 1920s when the biggest film exhibitor in India, Jamsetji Madan, visited

Hollywood and certain technicians and directors such as Ezra Mir began to train in Hollywood studios. Cecil B. DeMille's 'Famous Players-Lasky' even set up a production office in Bombay in 1921–1922. However, efforts at making Hollywood films set in India came to nought as British industry put pressure on the government to protect the interests of home production against the onslaught of Hollywood films in the post-First World War period. Hollywood's only direct contact with the Indian industry was through the studio exhibition chains that opened branches in Indian cities in the 1930s, the most famous being MGM's Metro chain of halls. The inauguration in 1938 of the Bombay Metro met with protests by Indian nationalists for competing against indigenous exhibition business (for more details, see Bhaumik 2001).

A number of Hollywood productions were shot in India but until recently the Merchant-Ivory films had been the most substantial relationship the Bombay industry had with Hollywood. Their films conferred on actor Shashi Kapoor a measure of international stardom in the 1970s. Films set against the backdrop of colonial or Princely India have remained the staple of Hollywood films set in India, be it Richard Attenborough's *Gandhi* (1982) or David Lean's *A Passage to India* (1984). The dialogue with Bombay cinema in such films was minimal. Indian film stars have made occasional forays into Hollywood with Persis Khambatta's role in *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (Robert Wise 1979) being an early instance. In the 1980s Indian actors such as Shabana Azmi and Om Puri performed in Hollywood films with Azmi's role in John Schlesinger's *Madame Sousatzka* (John Schlesinger 1988) being the most substantial role essayed by an Indian actor in a top-flight Hollywood production outside of the Merchant-Ivory films. But what is remembered internationally more often than not is the role of the villain played by Amrish Puri in Spielberg's *Indiana Jones and Temple of Doom* (1984) – a performance never seen in India owing to the film being banned there – or Kabir Bedi's villain in the James Bond film *Octopussy* (John Glen 1983).

In recent times, the dialogue between Hollywood and Bombay cinema has taken on new shapes, with film-makers such as Baz Luhrmann paying tribute to Bombay films in his musical tour de force *Moulin Rouge* (2001). It has also become more intense, helped by the clout of Shekhar Kapur in Hollywood, the director being at the helm of top Hollywood productions like *Elizabeth* (1998) and *The Four Feathers* (2002). Recent roles for Indian actors in Hollywood productions have been mostly at the lower rungs of industrial production. Nothing came of the excitement generated around the possibility of Aishwarya Rai playing a Bond

girl in a forthcoming edition of the series. However, she did have the lead role in Gurinder Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), which was distributed by Miramax and had production credits from Pathé. Technicians are travelling back and forth between studios more easily than before. The search now is on for the 'Bollywood' crossover film. Mira Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* (2001), which focused on events at an Indian wedding complete with song and dance, was considered by many as the first crossover film. Yet given its minimal involvement with the Bombay industry such an epithet is problematic. Indeed, the increasingly powerful drive by Bombay film-makers to make films that catch a crossover audience is taking film production further and further away from India. Casting Western actors and shooting in the West is becoming fairly common in Bombay films. They are, however, having an increasing impact internationally. Ashutosh Gowariker's *Lagaan* (2001) made it to the Oscar nominations and had substantial success amongst non-diasporic Western audiences. Indeed, Bombay films regularly appear among the top money-earners at the box office in the United Kingdom. They have begun to receive regular reviews and showings in mainstream Western theatres and there is a movement amongst critics and academics to re-evaluate the place of this cinema in film history. However, the following amongst Western male audiences remains very minimal and a real crossover film that combines Bombay filmic staples is yet to come.⁶

The dialogue defined

The most fruitful way of defining the dialogue between Bombay films and Hollywood is to configure the relationship within a shared history of the modern. This history is also a history of growing inter-visibility between nations and cultures leading to the formulation of a shared repertoire of commodities, gestures, personalities and linguistic tropes that find culturally specific inflections in actual usage. For many years Hollywood, in its role as the leading film industry of the world, set the benchmark for popular cinematic excellence, and was much emulated in a large number of popular film cultures. In a postcolonial context like India the project of modernisation along Western models made dialogue with Hollywood a contested terrain. On the one hand, postcolonial elites sought to develop an indigenous national culture that referred back to a 'tradition' which transcended the period of colonialism. On the other hand, having inherited a nation in a period when the standardisation of consumption habits and lifestyles was beginning to sweep across the globe on a mass scale, this project of modernisation inevitably took

routes that were considered Western and derivative. The situation was further muddled by the fact that sections of the elite that came to dominate Indian society and politics in the early postcolonial period were unabashed admirers of the West and held it up as a model for modernisation. This group was opposed by those who sought to define India along lines 'traditional'.

From the beginning, Bombay films were charged by sections of the Indian intelligentsia with being derivative of American cinema, their favourite targets being film style in the stunt film, modes of romance and sartorial practices that commentators thought were copied from imported cinema. However, surviving films and film stills reveal that such charges represented the political vision of one faction of the Indian intelligentsia that sought to take control of the developing national culture and were opposed by members of the film industry who saw themselves as modernisers. Indeed, the debate about derivation reveals the plurality of visions that have sought to guide the development of Indian modernity, a plurality that has continued since the invention of 'Bollywood'.

The anxieties around the market-oriented nature of Indian modernity, when filtered through film culture, are mainly articulated around issues of sex and violence. Starting from the depiction of mouth-to-mouth kissing and passing through issues of nudity and representing the sexual act on screen, sexual matters have been monitored in a protracted multi-faceted debate between detractors, the industry, public opinion and the state. Recently, however, the liberalisers have gained the upper hand as national censorship laws have begun to relax in sexual matters. Similarly, violence was tightly censored until the 1960s, but since then has been under ever-lighter regimes of scrutiny. Although such issues have been raised in a number of contexts in society-wide cultural debates, Bombay film and the influence of Hollywood has always remained an important element in the debate (Prasad 2001).

An overview of the dialogue between Hollywood and Bombay cinema reveals that any simple framework around the issue of authenticity or derivation does scarce justice to the international or global political and cultural economies within which the dialogue has developed. It would be better to evaluate the relationship between these cinemas as part of a growing inter-visibility between nations and cultures in the modern period, mediated by the circulation and consumption of a standardised repertoire of commodities and lifestyle models by substantial sections of the world's population. At first sight the dialogue between Hollywood and Bombay cinema looks rather one-sided as regards *mise-en-scène*

as well as aspects of industrial organisation such as the star system, with Hollywood undoubtedly being the leading interlocutor in such matters for the Bombay industry. However, as time has gone by, Western dominance in defining this dialogue has been increasingly challenged, leading to a greater degree of heterogeneity and diversification. Indeed, a close scrutiny of Bombay film styles across the whole of its history, as suggested by the opening sections of this chapter, reveals a highly nuanced picture that does not fit easily into a model of cultural derivation.

The very first thing that strikes the viewer is that Bombay films are defined by music and high melodrama, the likes of which are not to be found in Hollywood cinema. They also tend to have longer playing times than a Hollywood film. Here one might mention Raj Kapoor's *The Vagabond* (*Awaara* 1951), a film probably seen by more people in the world than any other, which tells the story of a singing tramp who leaves his upper-class home to roam amongst the citizenry of the nation and which is a classic example of such work. In this and other films, typical Hollywood framing is replaced by more 'unorthodox' techniques, ranging from frontality to diagonals. Cutting style in an average Bombay film is radically heterogeneous, in a way that Hollywood film did not discover until the 1990s. Rapid cutting, an extensive use of tracks and zooms and a dramatic use of music to denote tension and danger have been *de rigueur* in Bombay cinema since the 1970s, reaching far greater amplitude than in Hollywood films. A frontal mode of presentation is maintained mainly through the sound track, where melodramatic dialogue delivery at loud volumes or with intense intimacy projects the action forward into the audience. Such techniques are sometimes underscored in the image track through frontal address to audiences by actors or by zoom and track-out techniques. Thus the films' 'unorthodox' style aids in amplifying the range of melodrama employed as the dominant medium of communication in Bombay films. Melodrama has always been high drama, with acting styles imposing the burden of representation on the body as well as the voice in ways that can at best be compared to opera in the West but that really have no parallels in any other dramatic or cinematic culture. Bombay melodrama places itself within the polarities of naturalistic representations of apocalypse and lyricism, extremes avoided or stylised in other cinematic cultures.

In matters of industrial organisation the Bombay film industry remains an oligopoly, far more centralised than Hollywood. The star system too is more intense, being mediated in large measures by the embodied presence of the star in public culture rather than being

mediated in the main by images or glimpses from afar. Although recently Bombay stars have been forced to withdraw from the public slightly for reasons of security, they have tended to appear on television with far more regularity than Hollywood stars, thus maintaining a more intimate presence in Indian homes. The long-standing trend of stars entering mass populist politics that inevitably entails high levels of physical intimacy with the public has also remained intact. Melodrama spills over from the screen into public history in the making that has insisted in keeping Bombay cinema as an integral element in the process.

Songs and, increasingly since the 1960s, dance have been vital for emphasising the polarities of the melodramatic regime of Bombay cinema. Furthermore, despite momentous shifts in regimes of representation, melodrama remains pivotal to the success of 'Bollywood' films the world over. Almost all innovations in *mise-en-scène* in Bombay films are aimed at increasing the viscosity of melodrama in the film, be it in the registers of sex, violence or social relations depicted on screen (Vasudevan 2002). In turn, the sub-text of the melodramatic diegesis of the Bombay film text is one that articulates dramatic tension by defining the individual against a horizon of mass collective goals that are subsequently themselves debated in the film, thereby rendering this same ethical horizon incomplete. Indeed, the incomplete, contested nature of the ethical horizons of Bombay cinema is the lynchpin of the melodrama. This differs sharply from Hollywood cinema which generally considers its ethical horizon to be already well defined, the tensions in such film being created rather through material or psychological lack that stands in the way of individual achievement.

The incomplete nature of the ethical horizon in Bombay films often also stands as a metaphor for a lacking, yet hoped for, fruition of the dual projects of nationhood and modernity (Chakravarty 1993). In the early stunt films this could be seen in their failure to celebrate the rise of the modern individual. Instead they celebrated the birth of the citizen-hero who could correct the anomalies in Princely India and who could successfully negotiate the transition from tradition to modernity through heroic action. Since those days, Bombay melodrama has consistently emphasised both the monumentality of the heroism required if a nation like India, with its vast economic and cultural disparities, is to modernise in a mass, collective and democratic manner, highlighting the didactic elite behaviour that such a project ostensibly demands.

It is in the performance of an incomplete modern and the mass collective nature of this vision that Bombay cinema becomes a subaltern cinema vis-à-vis Hollywood with its 'achieved' modern. What we see are

visions of the modern constructed out of a *bricolage* of elements from a shared international repertoire of popular filmic elements defined in the main by Hollywood. Thus, we find what might be defined as a 'standardised' mise-en-scène rubbing shoulders with indigenous performance styles and presenting the tense dialogue between religions, social groups, classes and generations to define the meaning of 'the modern' for India. However, the classic Bombay film has as a rule 'put the former as the object of contention that is then "subdued" or mediated by the latter'.⁷ That is to say, it is precisely the elements from the Hollywood-influenced mise-en-scène, for example, sartorial styles or modes of communications as 'imported' signs of the modern or performance styles, that are contested in the diegesis of the Bombay film. Thus villains might be recognisable by their craving for smuggling foreign goods, creating a contraband world that the hero then sets right.

From the 1970s onwards extreme violence and the pornographic intensity of sexuality in Bombay films underlined by the dramatic shooting and cutting techniques of the multi-generic *masala* (spicy) film reveals the subaltern nature of this cinema in a darker vein. The codification of *masala* cinema began with *A Procession of Memories* (*Yaadon ki Baraat*, Nasir Husain 1973), which for the first time put together music, violence and sex on an epic scale unknown in Bombay cinema until then. This was rapidly followed by a number of films, including *Embers* (*Sholay*, Ramesh Sippy 1975) and *The Wall* (*Deewar*, Yash Chopra 1975), which became definitive classics of a type of Bombay film that would later be re-branded as 'Bollywood'. In these films, the under-capitalised conditions of production utilise, for example, excessive zooms as well as rapid and unorthodox cutting to make films look glamorous and edgy to match international standards. They cover the kitsch with a degree of hyper-violent action and a visceral realism that Hollywood is only now beginning to achieve. The violent film style, produced by an under-capitalised industry, in turn often becomes an index of the violence unleashed by capitalism in an underdeveloped economy. The melodrama in such films tends to depict the tensions generated by the cultural norms regulating an underdeveloped economy that celebrate austerity of consumption and expression, only to be resolved at the end in landscapes of liberated and lyrical individuality.

By way of illustration of many of these points, let me now turn briefly to a number of these films, starting with *A Procession of Memories*. The film tells the story of three brothers who are separated due to the brutal massacre of their family in childhood. The landscape that they inhabit in material privation is replete with smugglers, vamps, jewel

thieves and haughty rich people. The film depicts the adventures of these heroes as they navigate this dangerous world by means of their cunning or extreme violence, means that finally brings them and their lovers together at the end of the film. The centrepiece of the film is an elaborate song sequence set in a sleazy hotel against which unfolds a drama in another space where the elder brother orchestrates a heist. The sequence is constructed through a dazzling array of rapid cutting, tracks and zooms with dramatic music that emphasises the edginess of the world the protagonists inhabit. We are presented with the fractured environment of the subaltern exploited by international capital that forces them to do dangerous jobs for smugglers and which forces women to flaunt their sexuality and young men to rebel in irony against the absurdity of the universe. The radical editing and shooting styles sit well with signs of fatigue, poverty, violence, labour and pornographic sleaze coded in dress, decor and textures of skin giving the whole image a subaltern edge. The world is imaged viscerally as lacerated by desire and by the will to survive at any cost. It is a world consisting of fragmented minds and bodies that, in turn, fragment the world in the quest for coherence.

The Wall and *Embers* likewise describe the fortunes of social outcasts who seek to regain a footing in society by taking recourse to violent action outside the realm of the law. Their drift into the illegal and unlawful results from a mixture of social injustice arising out of prejudices and personal ambition which are coded by the signs of a modern regime of commodity consumption. In both films the male lead (played in each case by the megastar Amitabh Bachchan) dies in the end. However, his martyrdom is precisely the space where a future lyrical individuality is made possible through a message of non-violence, coded as a redistribution of wealth that marks these films throughout.

Adaptation to an international modern is increasingly portrayed as a violent process that produces a subaltern critique of the process itself. However, adaptation in these films does not ultimately mean becoming like the West. Rather, it means contextualising the circulation of goods within the specific histories of communities and social groups as they negotiate the process of the modern. All goods – imported or indigenous – circulate in the Indian market everyday all at once and any model of cultural derivation misses the simultaneity of the cultural economy on a global scale that now defines the modern.⁸

The individual in these films speaks to the masses by recourse to a melodramatic didactic ideal behaviour that reaches out to a collective audience. The hero in Bombay cinema lives in a dense and protracted

time of various shades of the collective which moves between his family and a huge circle of friends and strangers that he meets during the course of the film. As already mentioned, film times tend to be long as the narrative generally tries to pack in an immense amount of storytelling. *A Procession of Memories*, for example, portrays the destinies of its three protagonists in great detail, the narratives running through sometimes overlapping and at other points divergent networks of friends and adversaries. Time is also needed for heroes to establish their reputation through protracted, generally sung, dialogue with parents, lovers, friends and enemies. Thus in *The Wall* the minutiae of the hero's emotional life with his mother is described in great detail. The destitute mother defends her fatherless child in a vast open-ended collective, and the son is bound by this to defend his mother in textures that do justice to the pain, pleasures and threats that such a fickle collective embodies. In *Embers*, probably the most famous film in the history of Bombay cinema, we see the heroes break out of a prison and ride off into the Indian countryside in hope of a lyrical adventure, only to find the countryside in the grip of deadly violence in the form of a bandit who exploits a village. This is the scattered collective that the heroes then proceed to repair. The collective is signified by the exemplary fragility of individuals – of children and women in the main – in the face of the force of modern violence. The intensity of modern violence that reduces the individual to helplessness is rectified through a reformulation of the collective around lyrical individuals. The more intense the violence, the more there is the need for lyricism in the collective to counter it. Only then can the fight against tyranny begin.

Conclusion

The incomplete nature of the modern in Bombay films is not defined against any standard of Western individuality but against the goal of achieving social harmony and the uniform distribution of the fruits of modernity. The utopian modern here depicts the end of social strife and the achievement of collective social harmony, a process mediated by the charismatic lyrical hero who invariably drives the narrative. As seen above, this individual also suggests the meaningful encompassing of the subaltern within a larger collective. It is not surprising, therefore, that Raj Kapoor's singing tramp in the *The Vagabond* was popular in socialist nations. This naturally free lyrical individual, despite being set in a film that overlaps in measures with Hollywood filmic styles, somehow resists

all attempts at stern individualisation along Western lines and therefore becomes an index of the utopia of 'national' social harmony.

The maintenance of the collective ideal via melodrama in both its violent and paradisiacal forms is itself a subaltern tactic used against the vagaries of an incomplete modern, an insistence on a mass dialogical openness required for mediating the dignity and difference of the subaltern within a modern democracy. Certain recent films, especially those often viewed internationally as quintessential 'Bollywood' films on account of their portrayal of song, dance and sumptuous festivity, a notable example of which is the monster international hit *Brave-Heart Will Take the Bride* (*Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*, Aditya Chopra 1995), have taken to emphasising the lyrical as an occult yet substantial presence constructed both as a universalist modernist project and as an alternative to the Western modern. This denotes the obviation to a certain extent of the subaltern nature of Bombay cinema and its coming of age. The emphasis here is on a lyrical paradise of commodities. At the same time, the popularity of Bombay films *tout court*, from the stunt film to 'Bollywood', amongst the subaltern masses of Asia, Africa and the eastern edges of the West betrays a wish to see images of the collective heroic stance required, perhaps, in adjusting to the nomadic onslaught of a market-driven model of modernity, and resulting in the formation of a significant 'minor' international cinema, a world subaltern cinema, celebrated for its superiority over Hollywood in matters lyrical.⁹

Notes

1. For details of early film culture in Bombay in the 1910s and 1920s, see Bhaumik 2001: 20–56.
2. Eastmancolour films starring Shammi Kapoor such as *The Wild One* (*Jungle*, Subodh Mukherjee 1961) and *The Third Floor* (*Teesri Manzil*, Vijay Anand 1966) detail the life of a singing and dancing hero in picturesque vacation spots and feature some of the first use of rock and roll music in Bombay films.
3. The popularity of Westerns such as *The Magnificent Seven* (John Sturges 1960) and films by Sergio Leone have been considered as likely inspirations for parts of the mise-en-scène for *Embers*, one of the biggest hits in Bombay film history.
4. *The Slave* (*Ghulam*, Vikram Bhatt 1998), which deals with the life of a young boxer caught between his brother in the pay of the Mafia and his lover pays homage to *On the Waterfront*.
5. The career of a director like Ram Gopal Varma closely resembles the career of Quentin Tarantino in that his career in cinephilia began in a video shop that he owned. Later on he went on to make widely acclaimed films such as *Satya* (1998) and *Company* (2002). Both films depict in graphic ways Varma's vision of the Bombay underworld. His latest film *Government* (*Sarkar* 2005) that deals

- with the career of a Mafia Don-style politician begins with a homage to Francis Ford Coppola's *Godfather* cycle of films.
6. For an analysis of the politics of Bombay cinema as World Cinema, see Bhaumik 2006.
 7. For an excellent discussion on the relationship between Hollywood filmic idioms and Indian cinema, see Gopalan 2002.
 8. For a discussion about the larger context of globalisation, see Appadurai 1996.
 9. I use the term 'minor' in the sense it is used by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their discussion of Kafka's fiction and other literatures which while produced in a dominant language nevertheless are contrapuntal and subversive of the regulations of the dominant canon. See Deleuze and Guattari 1986.

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13

Between Sunrise and Sunset: An Elliptical Dialogue Between American and European Cinema

Rob Stone

Boy meets girl, they walk and talk. As a pitch, about all this has going for it is that it is less than twenty-five words. *Before Sunrise* (1995) and its real-time sequel *Before Sunset* (2004) are minimalist, open-ended and utterly beguiling films directed by Richard Linklater that examine the interrupted relationship between an American boy and a French girl and the young adults they become. In the first, Jesse (Ethan Hawke) meets Céline (Julie Delpy) on the Budapest–Vienna train and they spend a night together in Vienna, whiling away increasingly precious hours until Jesse has to catch his flight. In the second they meet again 9 years later in Paris and while away the dusk until Jesse once again has to catch a plane home. Actually filmed 9 years apart, these two films examine the potential of youth and, subsequently, the loss of that potential, as well as the possibility of its recapture. Most incredibly, the 9-year ellipsis between these films allows for a representation of reality that constitutes a successful attempt at the kind of ‘pure film’ that was always dreamed of by the likes of Renoir, Hitchcock, Godard and von Trier. Amongst much else, the characters debate the emotional, physical and philosophical merits of a single, perfect night together against the advantages of a relationship that might evolve over time and distance, thereby examining the generational, geographical and dialogical ellipses that both separate and unite the characters with the ideal, similarly ageing audience that saw these films in 1993 and 2004 respectively. These ellipses challenge the assumed polarisation of American cinema as product and European film as art and remind us of the interdependence of Hollywood and European cinema. In addition to the dialogue, moreover, Linklater’s empathetic cinematic language negotiates a discourse composed of references, homages and allusions to

American and European film that, for example, alternates phrases from Renoir, Vigo, Rivette, Ophüls, Truffaut, Godard, Bresson and Kieślowski with those of Cassavetes, Malick, Scorsese and the new independents of the 1990s, resulting in an elliptical discourse that is also illustrative and critical of the relationship between America and Europe in the intervening years.

The *Slacker* ethos in the films of Richard Linklater

The greatest obstacle to recognising Linklater (born Houston 1960) as a maker of art films is the context of his endeavour. His association with the American independent, low-budget 'guerilla' filmmakers of the early 1990s that Brian Price identifies as disciples of Rick Schmidt's cult book *How to Make a Feature Film at Used Car Prices* (1989) and included Steven Soderbergh, Spike Lee, Kevin Smith, Robert Rodríguez and Quentin Tarantino is indelible, although Linklater's celebrity is inexistent in comparison with his more conspicuous peers. Nevertheless, his debut film *Slacker* (1991) seemed so emblematic of the so-called Generation X that its title became a synonym for the stereotype of the post-beatnik idler who spurned career, ambition and political activism in favour of just hanging out. *Slacker* appears to celebrate aimlessness in form and narrative, for it is composed of a potentially endless chain of encounters between passers-by in the town of Austin, Texas, whereby the fluid camera follows a character for a short while before latching onto another and so on for 97 minutes. The snatches of conversations and monologues of free association include deliberations on the nature of time, diatribes against the media and various conspiracy theories that frustrate, disconcert and amuse. One character identified as Working on Same Painting in the credits apologises for being late to a colleague called Having a Breakthrough Day, who shrugs and replies 'That's okay, time doesn't exist.' When asked if he voted in the recent elections, Hitchhiker replies 'Hell, no. I've got less important things to do', while Anti-Artist admits 'Uh, I don't do much really, I just read, and work here, and, uh, sleep and eat, and, uh, watch movies'. Yet, rather than celebrate idleness as many of its most ardent critics and fans ironically agree, the boundless philosophising of the feature results in a unique and subversive celebration of imaginative thought. The accumulative effect is musical: *Slacker* is an epic 'passed-along song' of a generation that shares what Jane Feuer terms the 'socio-economic alienation' (Feuer 1993: 2) of the Hollywood musical and popular art and makes up for 'the breakdown of community [by] the creation of folk relations' (Feuer 1993: 3).

In common with naturalistic musicals, *Slacker* 'cancels choreography' (Feuer 1993: 9). Instead, its 'passed-along' form and narrative 'employ film techniques such as the travelling shot and the montage sequence to illustrate the spread of music by the folk through the folk' (Feuer 1993: 16). Widely misunderstood as a stuttering parade of disgruntled, apathetic drop-outs, *Slacker* is actually a collage of dissent that is every bit as focussed as Godard's *My Life To Live* (*Vivre sa vie: Film en douze tableaux* 1962), which examines a Parisian woman's descent into prostitution through a series of twelve seemingly unconnected tableaux. In its anti-capitalist meandering after ideas, *Slacker* also resembles the chain of exploitation that is forged by the passage of a forged 500 franc bank-note in Robert Bresson's *Money* (*L'Argent* 1983), but is ultimately more optimistic in its open-endedness. Made shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union and during the first Gulf War, *Slacker* was a notable retort to the Reagan and Bush administrations, offering alternative priorities to consumerism such as imagination and reflection.¹ Indeed, it is no stretch to imagine that the generation of *Slacker*, many of whom would vote in Bill Clinton (and many who would abstain), would become the anti-globalisation and environmental campaigners of the late 1990s, especially when one considers the film's final disclaimer: 'This film is based on fact. Any similarity with fictional events or characters is entirely coincidental.'

In its apparently aimless nonconformism, *Slacker* exhibits the cool flavour of the French New Wave in its structure, characters and themes. The debt to French cinema is especially evident in its platform for insouciant Godardian monologues delivered rhetorically but with no specific audience in mind, and intense Rohmeresque dialogues in search of meaning. *Slacker* also resembles the dream of pure film espoused by Renoir (as recounted by Robin Wood) of switching between random characters (Wood 1998: 329). Because *Slacker* follows the movement of ideas, it also recalls the technique of freely associative thought employed by the Surrealists in the 1920s, who developed the ruse as a means of liberating the subconscious from the structures of reason, moral inhibition and law-abidance. The fluidity of *Slacker* is not only musical but oneiric, allowing for an alternative American dream-state while resembling the fragmentary narrative of chance encounters that would become a characteristic of European art cinema due to its elaboration in such films as Michael Haneke's *71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance* (*71 Fragmente einer Chronologie des Zufalls* 1994) and *Code Unknown* (*Code inconnu: Récit incomplet de divers voyages* 2000). This union of style, form, structure, narrative and dialogue is clearly a potent vehicle for exploring

what Brian Price terms 'the many ideas that cannot simply be contained within the pre-existing structures of dominant modes of production' (Price 2003). Yet *Slacker* also exhibits a charming affinity with the great silent film comics, Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd and Laurel and Hardy, dearly beloved by the aforementioned Surrealists and slackers all, whose absurdist antics can be seen as a riposte to the drudgery of Depression-era America.² Where Lloyd shrugs, Keaton stares and Stan and Ollie toddle off together, so Linklater's slackers exhibit a similarly feigned ambivalence to the tail end of the recession of the late 1980s, preferring to protect and privately nurture romantic ideas of the self instead of surrendering them to the social and political expectations that mean, as Linklater states, 'everyone is encouraged to see their lives, the world through the eyes of the rich' (Walsh 1998). It is precisely because slackers, the silent comics and the rebels and poseurs of the French New Wave cannot afford to be idle that their deliberate and cultivated appearance of idleness symbolises a lifestyle choice that is tantamount to a political stance. Hence a paradox: the committed slacker.³

Politics apart, however, Linklater is a cinephile and therefore typical of the 'video-generation' of American filmmakers in the 1990s who succeeded the film school generation of Coppola, Scorsese, Schrader and De Palma. Linklater still manages a film society in Austin, Texas, that has offered extensive retrospectives of Fassbinder, Godard and Kiarostami amongst others. 'To see films from around the world, this is part of your education. This is your life', he claims (Price 2003). When the 'video generation' began making films, it was the quality of their dialogue and the originality of their characters that compensated for the rudiments of their technique. However, whereas Tarantino's auteurist pose was consolidated by his appropriating textures and techniques from a ragbag of world cinema, the affined evolution and obsessive focus of Linklater's philosophical questioning and empathetic technique has made him, as Price argues, 'the most subtle *and* radical of his generation' (Price 2003). In comparison with Linklater's genuine and enduring slacker ethos,⁴ Soderbergh's *Sex, Lies and Videotape* (1989) portrayed its single unemployed and aimless anti-hero (James Spader) as a selfish troublemaker, while the convenience store colleagues of Kevin Smith's *Clerks* (1994) were more concerned with debating *Star Wars* than questioning the political causes of their bottom-rung existence. Tarantino and Rodríguez, meanwhile, have riffed so self-consciously on the conventions of escapist genres under the guise of postmodernism that their films have arguably aided the colonisation of the imagination of their audience by capitalist ventures rather than abetting its release.⁵

In sum, as Linklater has surmised, 'I think there are two kinds of filmmakers. Ones that had their little 8mm cameras and their trains and were setting fires and blowing them up and crashing them into each other, and then there were the ones who read a lot and were going to the theater and maybe reading philosophy' (Price 2003).

Linklater's second feature was *Dazed and Confused* (1993). Similarly structured by loose encounters on a single day, it follows incoming high school and junior high students on the last day of school in May of 1976 as they engage in pranks, hazing, flirting, smoking reefer and existentialist musings. The authentic dialogue and naturalistic performances cemented Linklater's reputation for precisely scripted and closely choreographed films that seemed spontaneous and unpredictable. Says Linklater: 'You plan everything as much as you can but leave a certain openness for these – you could call them accidents, but I would call them pre-arranged empty spaces that you know you will be able to fill with things that are better than you could possibly imagine' (Hewitt 2004). Criticism of his slacker characters, style, tone and structure contends that the pursuit of an idle life has no redeeming political value, but Linklater is fully alert to the causes and consequences of the stance in *SubUrbia* (1996), an adaptation of the play by Eric Bogosian, in which the attitude of slackers in their late teens and early twenties is shown to have become resentful and defensive. Slacking is an alternative form of activism that posits stasis as a response to the corruption and exploitation that estranges bright, imaginative youths from the kind of social and political affiliations and media that should define and inspire them. Driven by disillusionment to inaction, they refuse to eat in the kind of fast food places that Jeff (Giovanni Ribisi) calls a 'mosh-pit of consumerism' even though they cannot afford to eat anywhere else. The same intellectual alienation is explored in the period setting of the 1920s in Linklater's *The Newton Boys* (1998) in which four brothers abandon their hopeless farm-life in favour of robbing banks, and when one brother complains that stealing 'isn't a real job', a sibling replies, 'It is real. It's real fun.' The clear antecedent of *The Newton Boys* is *Bonnie and Clyde* (Arthur Penn 1967), not only in terms of subject matter, but in the poignancy, humour and romanticism that Penn adopted from the French New Wave and introduced into American cinema. Just as Penn noted that 'young people [during the Great Depression] felt excluded from a society that seemed to be destroying itself economically',⁶ so *The Newton Boys* offered a fresh connection between New Wave stylings, the Great Depression of the 1920s and the exclusion from wealth and welfare of a substantial section of American youth in the late 1990s.

This indebtedness to the French New Wave of American filmmakers of the late 1960s and early 1970s that included Altman, Cassavetes and Scorsese attests once again to a frequent cross-pollination of American and European influences that is tantamount to the chain of encounters between slacker folk in films directed by Linklater, who has continued this trend into the new millennium. Consequently, the widely held belief that an art cinema is like some endangered big cat, extinct in America and a protected species in Europe, which is supposedly the last natural refuge of film as art, must be challenged. In contrast to the homogenisation of European film culture by Hollywood and its influence, there must also be recognition of art cinema in America that is informed by the enduring ebb and flow of pan-Atlantic influences. The jealous imposture of European coolness by American filmmakers of the 1970s and 1990s most often suffered from the surrender of filmmakers to studio values once their commercial viability was proven, with the increasingly self-conscious auteurist poses of Scorsese and Tarantino for Miramax symbolising the similar fate of both generations. Yet a willingness to stick with tiny budgets that allow for independence, if only for the making of dialogue-driven films featuring a handful of collaborative actors, is what sets John Cassavetes and Richard Linklater apart from their respective generations. As a corrective to the studio-sponsored auteurist cults of so-called independent American filmmakers, the following analysis of *Before Sunrise* and *Before Sunset* embraces the romanticism of Linklater's slacker ethos in order to identify the rekindling of American cinema's affair with European cinema and the notions of art, philosophy and human interconnectedness that this entails.

Meeting Europe in *Before Sunrise*

The idea for *Before Sunrise* came from Linklater spending a night walking and talking around Philadelphia with a woman he met in a toy store. In developing the screenplay he enlisted Kim Krizan to provide the female perspective before casting Ethan Hawke and Julie Delpy, who were emblematic of the types of film that *Before Sunrise* seeks to reconcile. Hawke (born Austin, Texas 1970) was noticed in *Dead Poets Society* (Peter Weir 1989) but it was *Reality Bites* (Ben Stiller 1994) that established his screen persona as a grungy Generation X-er.⁷ Delpy (born Paris 1969) was an art film muse who made her debut aged 14 as Wise Young Girl in Godard's *Défective* (1985) and acted in the films of a range of European auteurs including Krzysztof Kieślowski, for whom she played

Dominique in *Three Colours: Blue; White; Red* (*Trois couleurs: Bleu* [1993], *Bialy* [1994] *Rouge* [1994]).⁸ As such, the meeting between Jesse and Céline could have been a typical slacker-style encounter that might have gone either way, with the camera briefly following either Jesse off the train or Céline onto Paris; but the characters are as alert to their respective cultural baggage as the film is aware of the iconography of its cast. At the same time, their chemistry together, the authenticity of the dialogue, the sensitive camerawork and the resultant intimacy of the low-budget project⁹ meant that, as Robin Wood remarks of their performances, 'the usual distinction between "being" and "acting" is totally collapsed' (Wood 1998: 321).

Jesse is not the stereotypical awestruck and cautious American tourist but an introspective loner, who responds to Céline's teasing ('How do *you* speak such good English?') by performing the cliché: 'I get it. I'm the crude, dumb American who doesn't speak any other languages.' Later, when they rôle-play each other's best friends in a telephone conversation, he must struggle to disprove the prejudice expressed in Céline's parody of slacker-speak: 'Hey, dude, what's up?' For her part, Céline reveals herself as a child of the New Wave, born to 'angry 1968 people' and regretful that her parents are now more concerned with 'the constant conversion of my fanciful ambitions into practical, money-making ventures'. Both Jesse and Céline thus appear like orphans from their respective cultures. Just as he attempts to counter the caricature of insularity and cultural ignorance by expounding upon 'scattered thoughts' that include a detailed premonition of the Big Brother television phenomenon, so Céline is troubled by globalisation ('I hate that the media are trying to control our minds. It's very subtle but it's a new form of fascism really') and possessed of a nascent activism that will be confirmed in *Before Sunset*. Their dialogue is by no means devoid of pretension, but this only serves to render their characters more real, while both do try to undermine their own archness by self-deprecating humour that does much to deconstruct the conceit of the film: 'It's like some male fantasy', says Céline of their night in Vienna. 'Meet some French girl on a train, fuck her, and never see her again.'

Sex is a frequent topic of conversation, but evidence of a deeper sensibility is found in their acknowledgement of the inevitable souring of male-female relationships: 'Have you ever heard that as couples get older, they lose their ability to hear each other?' asks Céline. 'Nature's way of allowing couples to grow old together without killing each other' replies Jesse.¹⁰ Undeterred, however, they act upon the no-lose proposition that their connection is either ephemeral ('No delusions,

no projections, we'll just make tonight great!') or full of exceptional potential. Thus, when Jesse suggests that Céline should join him in Vienna to discover if she would ever regret not having done so, she, quite reasonably, accedes. Anthony Lane observes that 'Linklater is so adept at building up a mood of shrugging petty-picaresque adventure that we kid ourselves that Jesse is doing the obvious thing, that cool comes naturally to all' (Lane 1995: 93), but the truth is that Jesse and Céline are engaged in the fulfilment of an emotional-sexual fantasy that has something of a literary origin. When they meet, Jesse is reading Klaus Kinski's autobiography *All I Need is Love*,¹¹ which details the actor's obsessive search for sex and suggests a parallel between Kinski as Werner Herzog's on-screen alter-ego and the possibility that Hawke might be Linklater's.¹² Céline, meanwhile, is reading Georges Bataille's flamboyantly pornographic *Story of the Eye* (1928), a transgressive work that extrapolates philosophical considerations from sexually charged metaphors. The literary influence on their own romance is further highlighted when the date of their meeting is revealed as the 16 June – Bloomsday in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922).¹³ The stream of consciousness and all-in-one day conceit of *Ulysses* is a clear model for *Before Sunrise*, whose portrait of Vienna is as affectionate as Joyce's admittedly more sordid view of Dublin; but, more than this, it is the literary and philosophical sensibilities of *Before Sunrise* that underline its links with European culture. As Lane observes, unlike his contemporaries Linklater 'relaxes in the presence of art and literature' (Lane 1995: 93), just as Jesse exhibits no awkwardness in reciting W. H. Auden's 'As I Walked Out One Evening' (in imitation of its recording by Dylan Thomas) to Céline, while she expresses a similar enthusiasm for the paintings of Georges-Pierre Seurat, one of the founders of Neo-impressionism, whose work on exhibition in Vienna is, like her, briefly estranged from Paris: 'His human figures are always so transitory, like they are disappearing into the background.'

Allusions to European art are also suggested in the title's relation to Claude Monet's *Impression, Sunrise* (1872) and to F. W. Murnau's *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans* (1927), although *Before Sunrise* inverts that film's cliché of a new dawn signifying a happy ending by having its lovers part in accordance with Linklater's assertion that the film 'was sort of an anti-Hollywood romance'.¹⁴ Because the relationship between Jesse and Céline also unfurls in long takes, it recalls the films of Max Ophüls, whose classic melodrama *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (1948) is similarly set in Vienna. The long Steadicam takes evoke a dream-like atmosphere that suggests a metaphysical encounter whereby Jesse and Céline

move from the real Vienna to a fantasy construct that corresponds with a literary and cinematic shift from realism to romanticism. Their frequent questioning of the nature of reality is an imaginative response to their circumscribed time together and increasing fear of sunrise. The burgeoning romance is a panacea that eradicates the more usual menace of being lost in a European city at night and even corrects the harsh view of Vienna expressed by that other American visitor, Harry Lime (Orson Welles) in *The Third Man* (Carol Reed 1949), which laments the loss of 'the old Vienna before the war with its Strauss music, its glamour and easy charm'. Indeed, the expressionism of *The Third Man* is pointedly replaced by the romanticism of *Before Sunrise* when Jesse and Céline take a spin on the same Ferris wheel on which Lime expressed his views on the insignificance of humans ('Would you really feel any pity if one of those dots stopped moving forever?') and they use it as the setting for their first blissful kiss.

Most films about Americans in Europe either fear or fetishise Europeanness with perhaps only *Last Tango in Paris* (Bernardo Bertolucci 1972) managing to do both.¹⁵ However, whereas Paul (Marlon Brando) constructs a purposefully shallow sexual relationship as a barrier to experiencing anything like the love he felt for his recently deceased wife in that film, Céline (who was revealed to have attempted suicide in the pre-release cut of *Before Sunrise*)¹⁶ awakens to the possibility of catharsis through an emotional, philosophical, romantic and ultimately sexual union with Jesse, one that steers the film towards a European sensibility that tallies with Linklater's own admission that 'the inner life of the characters is the story of the movie'.¹⁷ Strolling around Vienna at night while discussing memories, philosophies and feelings, as Barbara Shulgasser writes, illustrates 'the relentless human drive toward love', but Shulgasser is also typical of many who misunderstand Linklater's characters by claiming this is 'about as far as could be from slacking' (Shulgasser 1995). On the contrary, the apparent aimlessness of Jesse and Céline inspires a vibrant inner life that constitutes an imaginative and intellectual alternative to conformity and compromise, one that includes the possibility of a perfect love and narrative-wise has greater momentum and suspense than a car chase.

Another European influence on *Before Sunrise* is clearly Éric Rohmer, a key figure of the French New Wave and a former editor of *Cahiers du cinéma*, whose eloquent dramas peopled by intelligent, somewhat neurotic adults contributed greatly to the stereotype of European art cinema. The prolific Rohmer's films were frequently grouped into series such as *Six Moral Tales* (*Six contes moraux* 1963–1971), *Comedies and Proverbs*

(*Comédies et proverbes* 1981–1987) and *Tales of the Four Seasons* (*Les contes des quatre saisons* 1990–1998), and their popularity on the American arthouse circuit made them a profound influence on Woody Allen for one. Rohmer's delicate but solidly crafted, dialogue-driven films often focused on characters who referred to ideas from literature, quoting for meaning rather than effect and speaking passionately of ideas and ideologies. *Before Sunrise* often contextualises Jesse and Céline amongst a collage of couples and characters who resemble the protagonists of intimate Rohmeresque dramas and there are even moments of what might be affectionate parody, when, much like Belmondo and Aznavour emulating Bogart because they have seen too many films noirs in *Breathless* (*À bout de souffle* 1960) and *Shoot the Pianist* (*Tirez sur le pianiste* 1960) respectively, Jesse and Céline, who may have seen too many French films, seem to fill pauses in the conversation by thinking of what a character in a film by Rohmer might say next. Confused and contradictory, both Jesse and Céline are as paradoxical as a slacker: where he is cynical and idealist, she is romantic and pragmatic. What unites them is love; not movie-love, which usually depends upon cliché to make the feeling stick, but the kind of surrender to tangible romance that has rarely been glimpsed elsewhere. In *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz 1942) certainly, precisely because Rick and Ilsa's relationship is doomed twice, first by a departing train and secondly by a leaving plane, just as Jesse and Céline are threatened by impending flights in both their films. Contemporary American cinema has arguably managed it twice, in *Lost in Translation* (Sofia Coppola 2003) and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (Michel Gondry 2004), the first of which has a similar premise in its couple of strangers in a strange land (Tokyo) spending their jet-lagged time together, while the second literally deconstructs a relationship through the gradual erasure of memories to find genuine love at its core. In common with *Before Sunrise*, these films explore love in the kind of boxed-in moments typified by the long take of Jesse and Céline in the record listening booth, just one of several that seem designed to allow for spurts of growth in the relationship, but which are interspersed with the finely calibrated symmetry of the shot-reverse shot montage of conversations that express inhibiting tensions.

One hindrance to the otherwise thriving cult success of *Before Sunrise* and *Before Sunset* is the reluctance of critics to admit an emotional connection with the films that overrides objectivity and cynicism.¹⁸ However, of the outspoken few, Robin Wood writes, 'I knew, the first time I saw *Before Sunrise*, that here was a film for which I felt not only interest or admiration but love' (Wood 1998: 318). Similarly, Nick James

in *Sight and Sound* admits, 'when I started to think about *Before Sunrise*, it seemed as if this wonderful film would prove impossible to pin down' (James 2004), while Erik Syngle admits that 'miraculous is the extent to which I come to care for them both in 101 minutes' (Syngle 2004), and Suzanne Scott calls it simply 'a thing to marvel at' (Scott 2004). Nominated for the Golden Bear at the 1995 Berlin Film Festival, *Before Sunrise* won the Silver Bear for its director and took \$22,600,000 in worldwide box office, \$17,200,000 of which came from outside the United States (Internet Movie Database 2006). For many spectators, the melancholy of Bach's first viola da gamba sonata over the closing images of Jesse and Céline being carried away from each other made for a bittersweet open-ending that left it unclear whether Jesse and Céline would actually meet up again as arranged 6 months later on the same train platform. Further considerations of the practical obstacles that Jesse and Céline would encounter increased as the years passed for the debaters in dedicated Internet groups, who, one supposes, were similarly estranged from the romanticism of the film by time and by financial, professional and familial commitments. Lingering consensus accepted that Jesse would be reabsorbed into the Americana of his university years, while Céline would go back to her music and her cat and her old-world grandmother in Budapest. Only Robin Wood held out 'that one will and the other won't' return to Vienna in 6 months time in an article that may have influenced Linklater's own thoughts on the matter (Wood 1998: 323).¹⁹ But much changed during the 9 years of the characters' estrangement: President Clinton came and went, the destruction of the World Trade Center ushered in a (third world) war on terrorism and the invasion of Iraq, climate change became a tangible threat to life on Earth and arms, media and pharmaceutical companies became the shameless puppet masters of what might already be termed the survivors. Jesse and Céline were relegated to a dream of what might have been, literally so in Linklater's *Waking Life* (2001), an animated extrapolation of the form and concerns of *Slacker* and *Before Sunrise* in which Wiley Wiggins (a character from *Dazed and Confused*) enters a lucid dream-state populated by such characters as Linklater himself as Pinball Playing Man ('There's only one instant, and it's right now. And it's eternity') and a post-coital Jesse and Céline, who picks up on Jesse's ideas about reincarnation from *Before Sunrise*: 'Everybody says they have been the reincarnation of Cleopatra or Alexander The Great. I always want to tell them they were probably some dumb fuck like everybody else.' *Waking Life* was shot entirely on mostly hand-held video cameras then rotoscope-animated on Mac G4 computers and later transferred to 35-mm film.²⁰ The technique

provided a fluidity of form that matched the stream of consciousness of Linklater's characters, though these few minutes with an animated Jesse and Céline seemed to confirm that the two had indeed kept their second date at the same time as the contextual dream-state of their encounter denied it. More objectively, the sequence confirmed the continuing interest in the characters from Linklater, Hawke and Delpy, who would shortly return to make *Before Sunset* with just one rule established by Linklater: 'I wanted it to be a conversation, just one. And it had to be real.'²¹

Re-acquaintance with Europe in *Before Sunset*

Although realism on film is almost always a construct, a complementary notion of film as the time-wary movement of light and sound is a staple of art cinema. The nature of time has been examined by filmmakers such as Andrei Tarkovsky, Krzysztof Kieślowski, Abbas Kiarostami, Gaspar Noé, Julio Medem and Wong Kar-Wai, who Jonathan Rosenbaum compares to Linklater as a 'lyrical and elegaic filmmaker [whose main theme is] the romance and poetry of moments ticking by' (Rosenbaum 2004). This is akin to Tarkovsky calling film to the task of philosophical change in his *Sculpting in Time*, in which he states 'the rhythm of the movement of time is there within the frame, as the sole organising force of the – quite complex – dramatic development' (Tarkovsky 1989: 114). *Before Sunset* exemplifies these theories by allowing the real time events of its 77 minutes to interact with the real time distance of 9 years from the events of its prequel. Further aids to realism include the fluid use of the Steadicam and filming only at dusk (in the line of Terrence Malick's *Days of Heaven* 1978) within a 15-day shoot following 5 months of writing and 2 weeks of rehearsal. The fact that *Before Sunset* takes place in real time makes it utterly romantic as well as uniquely existentialist.

Although rigidly planned and choreographed, the spontaneous, improvisational feel of the film has much to do with how Hawke and Delpy relate to their screen personas. This extends to their co-credit with Linklater for the screenplay and the influence of their own lives on their creations, such as when Hawke's failed marriage to Uma Thurman resonates in Jesse's admission of his own separation from his wife. Moreover, where *Before Sunrise* ended with an already nostalgic collage of the places they had visited in Vienna (a sequence that Wood reads as an homage to Antonioni's *The Eclipse* [L'Eclisse 1962], [Wood 1998: 334]), *Before Sunset* largely avoids retrospection by beginning with an anticipatory montage of places to be visited by Jesse and Céline during the film. This

announces with great subtlety that the sequel is about the reclaiming of potential by guarded strategies rather than the reckless games of youth, for one realises at the film's close that these streets and landmarks always led to Céline's apartment. Whereas the condensing of 14 hours into the 105 minutes of *Before Sunrise* suggested a sifting and moulding of memories into a compact whole, the real time events of the 77 minutes of *Before Sunset* convey an urgency in matters of the heart that also relates to dramatic changes in the world since 1995, most specifically in terms of the relation between Europe and America. Jesse's notions of time have changed dramatically, for example. Whereas in *Before Sunrise* he espouses the artistic creation of 24-hour videos of the everyday that run for 365 days straight, now, during the press conference for *This Time* (his novelisation of the events of *Before Sunrise*), he muses about writing a book that takes place within the space of a single pop song, thereby illustrating his evolution from the idealistic, unrestrained and impractical ambition of his youth to his resignation to the contained, restrained endeavour of his older self. Céline, meanwhile, sees time slipping away as a global emergency, haranguing Jesse with details of water shortages when he suggests that the world is not such a bad place after all. Complex issues of time are therefore twisted about the ageing and evolution of the characters and the audience. The film confronts Jesse and Céline with the ellipses by dropping in silent shots from *Before Sunrise* to punctuate Jesse's reminiscences to the press and underscore, even undermine, the reunion with Céline that takes place immediately afterwards. Seemingly taking up where they left off, the couple resume walking and talking, though the rarely interrupted shots are always concerned to show the distance they have travelled. For example, the initial 'short' walk to a café that Céline favours stretches to the point where Jesse would be lost in the maze of sidestreets without her, thereby confirming Ryan Gilbey's observation that the film presents a 'transfer of power from Jesse to Céline' (Gilbey 2004). Indeed, many reflections and inversions are performed about memories shared by Jesse, Céline and its ideal audience (i.e. the one that first saw *Before Sunrise* in 1995). For example, although their most portentous dialogue is sometimes undermined by sarcasm ('It's amazing what perverts we've become in the last nine years'), a moment where Céline attempts and fails to touch Jesse's head recalls his tentative attempt at touching her hair in *Before Sunrise*. These inversions extend to a subtle switching of character traits, whereby Jesse has become fragile ('If someone were to touch me I would dissolve into molecules') and romantic ('I wrote [my book] in a way to try to find you'), while Céline adamantly no longer believes in reincarnation

and has become cynical ('Everyone wants to believe in love. It sells right?') and angered by the fact that, as she says, 'I put all my romanticism into that one night and I was never able to feel [love] again.' The ensuing negotiation of the generational, dialogical and geographical ellipses caused by the 9-year gap is what makes *Before Sunset* such a poignant case study of a dialogue between American and European cinema.

To begin, physical change is analysed with Jesse and Céline inviting comments from each other and, by extension, audience consideration of changes in the actors. Delpy, truly luminous in *Before Sunrise*, is thinner, less sensually myopic and more assured. Confronting and even accentuating her own physical changes, she ties her hair back for the early scenes until prompted to release it by Jesse, who is seeking evidence of their potential for regression. Hawke, meanwhile, has not grown into the bland good looks that were promised in 1995, but a more canine aspect marked by his sharp cheekbones and unruly teeth. Already, complex notions of time and memory interact in five intertwined threads of awareness: the fictional (Jesse and Céline confront their estrangement from their younger selves), the real (Hawke and Delpy do the same), the objective (the audience observes this critically), the subjective (the audience responds emotionally to the changes) and the metaphysical (the ideal audience experiences the changes in Jesse and Céline as a reflection of the changes in themselves). Despite the physical evidence of the ellipses, however, the veracity of memory and its relation to time is initially questioned by both. Jesse claims to 'remember that night better than I do entire years', even though he has doubtlessly embellished, distorted and anonymised the experience in his novel. 'Memory is a wonderful thing if you don't have to deal with the past', says Céline in a line that would have been considered seriously by a younger Jesse, who now responds by telling her that it should go on a bumper sticker. However, Jesse's ridicule of the kind of philosophising still espoused by Céline carries with it an air of regret for unpreserved enthusiasm. The waltz 'One Night Stand' sung by Céline (and composed by Delpy) and 'Just in Time' sung by Nina Simone (and mimed by Céline) also express this regret at the ellipses. Céline's waltz is especially evocative of Vienna while illustrating the rigid time structure that allows space for florid gestures, with its strict 3 by 4 rhythm nevertheless allowing for moments when no two beats are the same, a fluidity within a formal structure that seems emblematic of the film as a whole. However, whereas these ellipses are circumscribed within a general historical context marked by references to wars, changes of government and a deteriorating planet,

memory is shown to be a bridge between times that is even malleable to nightmare-logic. 'I had a dream I was 32, then I woke up and I was 23, then I woke up for real and I was 32', says Jesse in what amounts to a dream of the time lost between both films.

As regards the historical details of the ellipses between the two films and its effect on the characters and the audience, *Before Sunset* makes no attempt at a romantic discourse that shies away from the degraded relationship between America and Europe in the previous 9 years. Céline now works for an international organisation called Green Cross that 'deals with the environment' and her estranged boyfriend is a war photographer. Her memories of living in New York between 1996 and 1999, where she, like Delpy, attended NYU are tainted by her experience of violence, visa restrictions and American gun culture. 'I'm really relieved to hear you're not one of those "freedom fries" kind of Americans' she tells Jesse with reference to the anti-French feeling stirred up in America at the beginning of the second Gulf War, but she remains uncertain whether her activism allows her to excuse Jesse from what she perceives as the tyranny of his 'imperialist' homeland. 'Any particular imperialist country you have in mind there, Frenchie?' asks Jesse, who says he is still happy to see her even though she has turned into 'an angry, manic-depressive activist' with a cat called Ché that he takes for evidence of her Communism. Céline's statement that 'reality and love are almost contradictory' thus resonates as a deliberate challenge to the film's potential for reconciliation. Gradually, however, their walking and talking revives their old feelings for each other. At one point Jesse harangues her for not keeping their appointment in Vienna like he did, and the dialogue often points to other histories that might have been and might even be happening in alternative universes where, in at least one of them, Céline did turn up on that fateful 16 December. Regression is also attempted physically by Céline, who still delights in wandering through graveyards, and by Jesse, whose 10 cities in 12 days book tour is really an upmarket Eurail pass, when he slides kid-like down a railing after admitting to the wife and infant son that tie him inescapably to the present and probable future.

As before, the camerawork is fluid, understated, observational and unobtrusive except for one literally jarring shot from a motorbike in traffic and the elaborate crane shot on the winding staircase to Céline's apartment. Inevitably, the analysis of time and memory that dominates their conversation is influenced by their race against the dusk that symbolises ageing and may seem premature to an older audience but is nonetheless affecting. Unlike *Before Sunrise*, in which their younger

selves interacted with a variety of street folk, *Before Sunset* has an almost exclusive focus on the couple who barely take in the sights besides Notre Dame, which they just happen to pass on a barge that recalls both Jean Vigo's *L'Atalante* (1934) and Jacques Rivette's hallucinatory *Céline and Julie Go Boating* (*Céline et Julie vont en bateau* 1974). However, for a film that ignores the Eiffel Tower, *Before Sunset* manages an eloquent evocation of Paris as a lived-in city beyond the tourist guide which is balanced by a wake-up call to Parisians who neglect the beauty of their city, like Céline, who protests at the corniness of taking the barge but quickly succumbs to its pleasure. Thus the film admits to how introverted and isolated the characters have become at the same time as it rescues hope and potential from the debris of a 9-year-old one-night stand that is ironised in the near-postmodernist commentary on the film itself by the actors whose career-best performances these are: 'We're only good at brief encounters, walking around European cities in a warm climate.' Nevertheless, the potential for such an ideal romance is not incongruous with the slacker mentality but an imaginative consequence of its sensibility. Both relaxed and fraught with tension, *Before Sunset* evokes the sense of time slipping away both physically and metaphorically in frequent reminders to Jesse about catching his flight, to which he responds by negotiating extra minutes and seconds, which all pays off in the film's exquisite punchline as Céline, impersonating Nina Simone, draws what finally seems inevitable all along: 'Baby, you are gonna miss that plane.'

In this rather literal-minded examination of a dialogue between American and European cinema that is represented by the romance between a young French woman and her American soulmate over two films 9 years apart, it is encouraging to end on an optimistic note that promotes reconciliation. Certainly, the two films represent the cycle of attraction and estrangement that characterises the relationship between American and European cinema, with the gaps between bouts of enthusiasm from successive generations of American filmmakers serving as markers in the evolution of both. The uniquely elliptical dialogue that is maintained by *Before Sunrise* and *Before Sunset* provides a poignant illustration of this relationship at the same time as it acknowledges the changing context of social and historical events. As sensitive author and environmental activist, respectively, Jesse and Céline may still be tagged as slackers, but the fact that they can so credibly fall in love while discussing philosophy, morality, life and death, the need to resolve international tensions, climate change, fuel and water crises, globalisation and cultural differences reminds us of the potential of the imagination and the importance

of attempts to communicate even though the opportunity to do so may occur but once every 9 years. As Céline declares, 'If there's any kind of magic in this world, it must be in the attempt of understanding someone, sharing something. I know, it's almost impossible to succeed, but who cares, really? The answer must be in the attempt.' To date, the Internet remains quietly hopeful about the future of Jesse and Céline, perhaps trusting in Linklater, Hawke and Delpy to return in a decade or so with another reflection on the intervening years that will mark another round of generational, dialogical and possibly (if they part once more) geographical ellipses. Although American and European cinema are often seen as poles apart, the artistry and intelligence of *Before Sunrise* and *Before Sunset* finds common ground in an emotional response to the scattered thoughts and fumbled gestures of Jesse and Céline. Boy meets girl, they walk and talk. It may not be much, but it is all that we are.

Notes

1. Linklater: 'I always sensed instinctively from the earliest age that I was being lied to. Voting is a symbolic act. It doesn't mean anything because there are no choices anyway.' (see Walsh 1998).
2. Brian Price also connects the humour of idleness to Jacques Tati. See Price 2003.
3. The legacy of the slacker ethos can be detected in such films as *American Beauty* (Sam Mendes 1999) and *Office Space* (Mike Judge 1999), while the most explicit response to criticism of slackerdom has perhaps been the television series *My Name is Earl* (2005–) in which the eponymous slacker (Jason Lee) learns about Karma and sets about making up for all his past mistakes and wrongdoings at a time when the very notion of apologising and taking responsibility for unlawful acts might seem a deliberate contrast with the policies of the Bush administration.
4. Linklater has recently directed *School of Rock* (2003) and *Bad News Bears* (2005), which both have ageing but dedicated slackers as protagonists played by Jack Black and Billy Bob Thornton respectively.
5. Of the American film-makers of the 1990s, perhaps only Spike Lee could be said to have developed a career in politicised filmmaking, albeit one that has been largely overshadowed by issues of race.
6. The techniques, stylings and anti-heroes of the French New Wave were appropriate to *Bonnie and Clyde* because its original screenplay had been 'written with Truffaut in mind' by David Newman and Robert Benton (see Cowie 2004: 159).
7. More recently, Hawke has played edgy action characters in *Training Day* (2001) and the remake of *Assault on Precinct 13* (2005).
8. Delpy also appeared in Leos Carax's *Bad Blood* (*Mauvais sang* 1986), Bertrand Tavernier's *The Passion of Beatrice* (*La passion Béatrice* 1987), Godard's *King Lear* (1987), Carlos Saura's *The Dark Night* (*La noche oscura* 1989), Agnieszka

- Holland's *Europa, Europe* (*Europa, Europa* 1990), Volker Schlöndorff's *Voyager* (*Homo faber* 1991) and had a recurring guest role as a French waitress in love with Kovac (Goran Visnjic) in the eighth season of *ER* (2001).
9. The Internet Movie Database quotes an estimated budget of \$2,500,000 (Internet Movie Database 2006).
 10. I am indebted to the Yahoo group Sunrise and Sunset for the pdf of the script: <http://movies.groups.yahoo.com/group/sunriseandsunset/>.
 11. Klaus Kinski's *All I Need is Love* (Random House 1988) is also cited in *Slacker* and in the tie-in book (see Linklater 1992: 18).
 12. In addition to *Before Sunrise* and *Before Sunset*, Hawke has appeared in *The Newton Boys* (1998), *Waking Life* (2001), *Tape* (2001) and *Fast Food Nation* (2006) for Linklater.
 13. James Joyce's *Ulysses* was published by Sylvia Beach from Shakespeare and Company, the Left Bank bookshop in Paris where Jesse gives his own book-reading in *Before Sunset*.
 14. Production notes from Yahoo group Sunrise and Sunset, pp. 8–9. Available to download from <http://movies.groups.yahoo.com/group/sunriseandsunset/files/>
 15. Second World War pictures and period horror apart, films about Americans in Europe can mostly be divided into those that fear what is unknown and otherworldly, for example *An American Werewolf in London* (1981), *Frantic* (1988), *The Bourne Supremacy* (2004) and *Hostel* (2005), and those which wallow in idealised romanticism, for example *An American in Paris* (1951), *Roman Holiday* (1953), *To Catch a Thief* (1955), *Everyone Says I Love You* (1996) and *Le Divorce* (2003).
 16. Chris Hewitt writes of a scene cut from a workprint of *Before Sunrise* in which Céline reveals the scars of a suicide attempt on her wrists, a remnant of the work in progress whose revelation annoyed Linklater. See Hewitt 2004.
 17. Production notes from Yahoo group Sunrise and Sunset, pp. 8–9. Available to download from <http://movies.groups.yahoo.com/group/sunriseandsunset/files/>
 18. See for example the Yahoo group Sunrise and Sunset with 3049 members that justifiably describes itself as 'a very friendly, international group that spans 7 continents of the world and 49 countries', <http://movies.groups.yahoo.com/group/sunriseandsunset/>
 19. In the acknowledgements to this book, Wood thanks Linklater for being 'very supportive' (p. ix).
 20. Linklater would return to the technique with *A Scanner Darkly* (2006). It would also be adopted by Jørgen Leth for the fourth sequence of *The Five Obstructions* (*De Fem bånd* 2003), Lars von Trier's investigation of art film and film authorship.
 21. Richard Linklater, commentary on making of documentary on DVD of *Before Sunset*, Warner Independent Pictures, 2005.

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14

Hero: How Chinese Is It?

Julian Stringer and Qiong Yu

It is often claimed these days that we are currently waving goodbye to the old American twentieth century and saying hello to the new Chinese twenty-first century. If such assertions carry any weight and legitimacy, then the production and release of *Hero* (*Yingxiong*, Zhang Yimou 2002) constitutes a moment of great symbolic importance. Billed as the 'first Chinese blockbuster' (Zhang 2003), *Hero* is a large-scale martial arts epic based upon the old legend of Jin Ke assassinating Qin Shihuang, the first emperor of the Qin Dynasty. The film is commonly discussed as an attempt on the part of the People's Republic of China (PRC) technologically and aesthetically to upgrade the commercial viability of its cinema industry. More than this, by taking the Chinese film industry to new levels of international competitiveness, *Hero* is widely interpreted as representing a specific threat to Hollywood. Demonstrating both China's intention and its ability to engineer a large-scale challenge to America's continuing dominance of global markets, *Hero* is thus presented as a harbinger of things to come.

As Chris Berry has pointed out, arguments concerning the rise of the Chinese blockbuster at the turn of the century are highly contested (Berry 2003). Are such films necessary? And if they are, should they aspire to mimic the 'Hollywood model' or attempt to retain 'Chinese characteristics'? Given the very serious nature of the cultural, economic and political stakes variously underpinning such issues, it is not surprising that in a relatively short space of time *Hero* has already generated a large amount of heated criticism, ranging from spirited defences of the film's superb artistic accomplishments to loud condemnations of its disturbing nationalist sentiments and dubious fascist tendencies.¹ In the context of a volume of essays on world cinema's relationship with Hollywood, therefore, controversies surrounding *Hero* provide compelling evidence of just why debates concerning the globalisation of contemporary Chinese cinema matter.

Certainly, critical commentary habitually emphasises the degree to which *Hero* is a record-breaking 'first' of its kind. According to Yingjin Zhang, not only is this big and expensive 'event movie' – at a production cost of RMB250 million (\$31 million) and a promotion cost of RMB15 million – the most expensive Chinese movie to date, it also won over the massive PRC cinema-going public by taking advantage of Hollywood's financial muscle. As Zhang reports, this 'China-Hong Kong co-production' was 'backed' by the US company Miramax and was also 'aimed to compete with *Big Shot's Funeral* (Dawan, China, Feng Xiaogang 2001) and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Wohu canglong, China/Taiwan/US, Ang Lee 1999)', two 'money-makers distributed overseas by Sony Pictures' (Zhang 2004: 292). Following 'a long period of intense media hype', *Hero* subsequently received its 'much-publicized premiere' inside the Great Hall of the People on Tiananmen Square, Beijing, on 20 December 2002 (Zhang 2004: 292). From there, it went on to gross 'RMB98 million in one week and more than doubled the four-week domestic receipts of Feng's comedy a year before, moving eventually to claim a record RMB241.68 million in the domestic market and an equally extraordinary record in East and Southeast Asia by February 2003' (Zhang 2004: 292). After the PRC government granted *Hero* an unprecedented degree of anti-piracy protection, the film also garnered the highest ever amount of domestic DVD copyright earnings (RMB17.8 million).

Amidst the publicity generated by *Hero's* subsequent high-profile travels to diverse overseas territories – including 2002 nominations in the US for both an Oscar and Golden Globe as Best Foreign Language Film – media responses to *Hero* inside and outside China have often focused on two specific dimensions of its interest and importance. In line with the customary concerns of so much academic Film Studies, the film's director and its star have been singled out for particular attention.

Hero is usually placed first and foremost within the context of director Zhang Yimou's magnificent career. For Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu, one of the many reasons why Zhang is such a key figure in the PRC film-making landscape is his extraordinary ability to secure overseas financing for his numerous projects (see Lu 1997). In this regard, *Hero* represents a significant change of tack. Whereas many of Zhang's previous movies had been funded by transnational capital provided from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, France and elsewhere, *Hero* was backed by American money, thus suggesting an unprecedented degree of financial co-operation between China and Hollywood. To be sure, *Hero* is unimaginable without the market reforms which have transformed the

economy and society of the PRC since the early 1980s and which have attracted US investments to a commercially buoyant nation boasting a huge domestic marketplace (on this topic, see Rosen 2002). *Hero* may therefore be taken to represent both an intensification and a culmination of a process, providing evidence of the Chinese cinema industry's desire to compete with Hollywood and Hollywood's simultaneous desire to compete with China. In short, mutual competition in the cultural sphere is here understood to have taken the form of economic co-operation. Indeed, with *Hero* Zhang Yimou has been much criticised for playing both sides of the game. He is accused of 'selling out' to global Hollywood's commercial forces while also being hounded from pillar to post for peddling PRC state-induced nationalism.

By contrast, star Jet Li – who plays the central character, Nameless – has been made the focus point of a different range of concerns. While Li is merely one among a number of top Chinese film and media stars who appear in *Hero*, he is also distinct because he is the only one to date who has both tried to, and successfully maintained, a name for himself in Hollywood. Moreover, Zhang Yimou's ambition to win over the US market by forcing *Hero* to compete with Hollywood could arguably only have been achieved through strategic use of Jet Li. According to He Ming, Zhang claimed that with Jet Li's presence he could ensure that *Hero* would enter 2000 American cinema screens and thus guarantee commercial success in the US (Zheng 2003).

However, this process is fraught with instabilities. While *Hero* may be the ideal vehicle for consolidating Li's status as a transnational Chinese movie star, it also marks Li's controversial 'return' to the nationalist politics of the PRC after a long absence making movies elsewhere. On the one hand, Li has been widely criticised for his 'Orientalist' Hollywood roles, and so *Hero* represents the revitalisation in Asia of a star image believed by many to have been tainted by Hollywood.² On the other hand, struggles over the meaning and definition of heroism have recurred throughout discussions of both Li's filmography and his star image, and the release of *Hero* therefore allows for the circulation of a success narrative concerning nationalistic dimensions of the PRC film industry. This success narrative posits that, after many years away from his homeland and half a decade away from the *wuxia* (martial arts) genre that made him a star, Jet Li returns in glory from the US, having conquered Hollywood, and now appears in a big, spectacular Chinese rival to Hollywood's blockbusting action films.³ In providing a point of convergence for debates concerning the desirability, or otherwise, of *Hero's* very existence as well as its cultural characteristics, Jet Li straddles

a fault line. His presence mediates between claims that the film is an example of China competing with Hollywood and claims that it represents an example of how the PRC and the US interact through mutual economic co-operation.

Sifting through the arguments above, the story that emerges concerning *Hero* as a Chinese film in dialogue with Hollywood encompasses four main elements. First, the commercial rise of the contemporary PRC film industry. Second, the potential decline of Hollywood, or – more subtly – the question of the degree to which the Chinese and US film industries are currently competing or co-operating with each other. Third, the extent to which the director Zhang Yimou has ‘sold out’. Fourth, the question of whether or not *Hero* marks the triumphant return of star Jet Li to the mainland China film industry.

Credit where credit is due?

These elements do not constitute the whole picture, however. As we now go on to argue, when looking up close at the production and release of this ‘first Chinese blockbuster’, a more complicated story begins to emerge concerning the globalisation of the Chinese film industry and the nature of its current relationship with Hollywood. To begin to unearth this new perspective, we would therefore like to present two different ways of comprehending *Hero*’s significance. First, we begin by looking at how the film was marketed in the PRC in terms of the dual presence of key personnel Zhang Yimou and Jet Li. After that, we move in a different direction by paying attention to the film’s credits, spotlighting in particular the role played by those members of a production crew usually described, and dismissed, as mere ‘technicians’.

A first observation to make here is that before *Hero* was officially premiered in China, a 3-hour documentary about the making of the film, entitled *Cause* (Gan Lu 2000), was aired on television in the PRC.⁴ Cut down from 400 hours of material gathered over a period of 4 years, the film provides a detailed record of the production of the movie and functions as an illuminating and effective promotional tool. One of *Cause*’s key areas of interest lies in the manner in which it represents the relationship between Zhang Yimou and Jet Li. *Cause* emphasises how discussions among these two key creative personnel revolve around such important issues as definitions of the *wuxia* spirit, approaches to notions of heroism, and discourses concerning the concept of Chinese culture. In this sense, *Cause* frames viewer expectations and comprehension of *Hero* in very limiting ways – namely, in terms of how director and

star understand and discuss aspects of contemporary Chinese cultural nationalism.

For example, when Li is presented as meeting Zhang for the first time, he asks the director what kind of ideas he wants to convey to the audience. Zhang answers that he wants to try to emphasise the essence of 'the hero' in Chinese *wuxia* culture. He hopes to show how the movie's various protagonists fight for their ideals, beliefs and for their friendship instead of for reasons of personal revenge. 'I want western audiences to see Chinese ethos in *wuxia* film apart from the captivating martial arts', Zhang explains. 'Many contemporary *wuxia* movies over-emphasise fighting, and they lack eastern spirit inside.' Li agrees with Zhang, although he speaks about the issue in a slightly different way:

Only people born in the yellow earth⁵ will aspire to seek it [the essence of the hero]. Fighting does not attract us at all. Most alluring is the core of the *wuxia* spirit, namely mutual respect and trust beyond life and death. For Chinese, the feeling of having a confidant is so heart-touching, which means you will try your best to do something for the other, even paying with your life, without any words.

When Zhang then talks about why he invited Li to join this film, he admits frankly that he hopes Li can appeal to a very wide audience. By contrast, when Li explains why he accepted the job, he does so with the following words:

Director Zhang wrote me a letter after sending the screenplay to me. After I read it, I surely knew that I would present myself in this film. It is only because of one word, a Chinese word... confidant... He [Zhang] is such a passionate and unfettered person underneath his scholarly appearance. I know it is the blood born in the yellow earth that is running in his veins.

It is interesting to note that although in the above quotations Zhang and Li seemingly agree with each other, they actually present very different expectations of the film *Hero*. While Zhang harbours ambitions to exhibit the essentials of *wuxia* culture to Western audiences in order to change the latter's supposedly fixed opinions of Chinese martial arts movies, Li is presented as eager to go back to 'the yellow earth' by making a movie that will please Chinese audiences. Moreover, while Zhang is seemingly very practical-minded in his desire to use Li's star persona to ensure box-office success at home and abroad, Li appears

to be propelled by romantic feelings such as notions of rewarding the confidant (as Jin Ke did for the prince of Yan in the old story of assassinating Qin Zhang). In short, Zhang Yimou – a director who won fame at Western film festivals in the 1980s but whose critical reputation came under siege as a result of his controversial move into the ‘mainstream’ in the 1990s – wants to revive his popularity in the West through making a very Chinese *wuxia* film. By contrast, Jet Li – a star who built his initial *wuxia* hero image in the PRC in the early 1980s, then spent nearly 20 years in Hong Kong and America, and has now just returned to China – wants to portray a homecoming *wuxia* hero whom Chinese audiences will both recognise and embrace.

Cause may therefore be said to comprehend *Hero* in two ways. First, it propagates the view that the film has come about as a result of a primary creative dialogue conducted between director and star. Second, it suggests that the movie should be understood as not just a thoroughly Chinese film, but as an example of Chinese national thought. Such sentiments certainly underline other statements Zhang and Li make throughout the documentary. At one point, Zhang tells Li, ‘I hope this film can become one of the most important movies in your career. We will tell the audience what makes a person a real hero, not because of his excellent martial arts skills, but his unsurpassed insight.’ The inescapable implication here is that such ‘real’ and ‘unsurpassed insight’ cannot be found in the action films Li previously made in Hollywood.

Such rhetoric exists in the PRC alongside the emergence in recent years of a mass cultural conversation concerning the *wuxia* genre’s place and cultural significance. The popular *wuxia* novel had traditionally been dismissed by Chinese academics for a supposed lack of merit, but the situation began to change in 1993 when Beijing University scholar Chen Pin-yuan published his influential book *Xiaoke Dream in Chinese Literati* – the first systematic theoretical engagement with the *wuxia* genre (Chen 1993). One year later, Beijing Normal University professor Wang Yi-Cuang listed Jin Yong, the well-known Hong Kong *wuxia* author, among the ten best novelists of contemporary Chinese literature. Wang’s daring challenge to scholarly orthodoxy elicited a fierce response from academics and the media alike, igniting a heated debate concerning the nature and value of *wuxia* culture.

If Wang Yi-cuang and Chen Pin-yuan’s discussions of *wuxia* literature can in part be explained by their dissatisfaction with domestic autocracy and their longing for freedom and justice, Wang Xiao-dong – a so-called nationalist intellectual – similarly canonises *wuxia* spirit, but from a different perspective. In his controversial *China’s Road Under*

the Shadow of Globalization, Wang proposes a cultural strategy to fight against American hegemony and to deal with a perceived cultural crisis in contemporary China. This strategy is to build a form of nationalism that resembles the *wuxia* spirit. Moreover, failing to construct this nationalist *wuxia* spirit so as to change the spiritual desolation of the Chinese people will, for Wang Xiao-dong, prevent China from surviving in the modern world, not to mention establishing and maintaining global power (Wang et al. 1999). Wang Xiao-dong, Wang Yicuang and Chen Pi-yuan belong to different groupings in China, broadly definable as nationalist intellectuals and liberal intellectuals respectively. However, all identify with traditional *wuxia* culture and ground their pronouncements on Chinese nationalism firmly within the *wuxia* imagination. When placed alongside these and other publications on the topic, and when considered in the light of the unprecedented popularity of *wuxia* film and television dramas in the PRC in the 1990s, Zhang Yimou and Jet Li's discussions in *Cause* of the *wuxia* spirit in *Hero* thus take on wide cultural relevance.

It is important to point out, however, that *Cause* is a promotional artefact designed to publicise *Hero* in one distinct territory, namely the domestic PRC market. When turning to consider how *Hero* is marketed elsewhere, for example in the US, glaring differences come to light. Whereas publicity texts in China emphasise the importance of director, star and the Chinese culture of *wuxia*, promotional campaigns in America studiously avoid all traces of *Hero's* Chineseness.

For example, on both US theatrical movie posters as well as on the stateside DVD release, *Hero* is advertised as 'a visually stunning martial arts epic' and paraded under the banner, 'Quentin Tarantino Presents'. It is also branded, or re-authored, as 'Jet Li's *Hero*', and no mention is made of Zhang Yimou. Similarly, no reference is made to Li's status as a Chinese star; the only two of the actor's previous titles name-checked are the Hollywood hits *Cradle 2 The Grave* (Andrzej Bartkowiak 2003) and *Romeo Must Die* (Andrzej Bartkowiak 2000). In addition, *Hero* is here classified in the light of its prestigious reception solely inside the US, with the announcement that 'this motion picture was nominated for both an Oscar and Golden Globe as Best Foreign Language Film (2002)'. It is therefore entirely fitting that while *Hero* is described on the US DVD sleeve as all about 'a fearless warrior' who 'rises up to defy an empire and unite a nation', readers are never actually told which empire and which nation are being referenced. It is through these kinds of means that Hollywood continues to do what Hollywood has always done –

namely, absorb world cinema and sell it back to the rest of the world in a new, often more expensive and certainly more 'American' version.

Preliminary investigation of research materials suggests therefore that the Chinese marketing of *Hero* emphasises the film's Chinese dimensions, but that marketing in the US erases all signs of national specificity. Given how at the turn of the century big, expensive commercial movie projects need to be positioned differently – or indigenised – for distinct national markets, this much is perhaps not surprising. However, as we will now attempt to demonstrate, such strategies are (to say the least) highly ironic in the light of what we can learn about the transnational nature of *Hero* by looking more closely at information provided by the film itself.

Follow the credits

Alan Lovell and Gianluca Sergi have recently pointed out that critical writing on films and film-making consistently draws lines of distinction between key personnel and support staff. On the one hand, directors, stars and scriptwriters are placed in the former camp and celebrated as makers of 'artistic' meaning. On the other hand, editors, production designers and sound designers, among others, are claimed to fulfil 'technical' roles of supposedly lesser importance and thus habitually neglected (Lovell and Sergi 2005).⁶ Such perceptions retain a tyrannical grip over how audiences and cultural commentators routinely approach and comprehend questions of film production and authorship. Moreover, the practices of movie marketing continue to make life easy for critics and academics by maintaining the convenient, yet erroneous, belief that only a small nucleus of individuals (for example, directors and stars) need be borne in mind when seeking to explain and assess the complexities of contemporary film-making practices.

When watching *Hero* in a multiplex in Seattle or on DVD in Xi'an, American and Chinese viewers may resort to learnt behaviour when confronted with the unfurling of a long line of credits at 'the end' of this movie. For who can deny that at the very moment when credits start to roll, throngs of consumers the world over scramble for the exit, switch off the DVD player, or turn to the person next to them to complain that film credits these days are so irritatingly long.

In fact, following the credits is all that is required in order to grasp the 'secret' nature of a high-level dialogue conducted between Chinese and Hollywood film-makers on *Hero*. In order to demonstrate this argument, let us consider just who – aside from Zhang Yimou and Jet Li – may be

thought of as key personnel behind the film's production. For reasons of space, we shall focus here on only three examples.

First, Philip Lee acted as line producer on *Hero*. Prior to his work on the film, Lee was associate producer of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, production manager of the US/Japan title *Shadow of China* (Yanagimachi Mitsuo 1990) and also production manager of the Jean Claude Van Damme hit *Double Impact* (Sheldon Lettich 1991) and the Hollywood bio-pic *Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story* (Rob Cohen 1993). Upon completion of work on *Hero*, Lee acted as line producer for the high-profile Hollywood sequel *Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life* (Jan de Bont 2003).⁷

Our second example is the famous cinematographer Christopher Doyle, currently one of the most celebrated directors of photography (DP) in the world. Prior to working on *Hero*, Doyle found employment as a DP in Taiwan (*That Day on the Beach* [*Haitan shang de yitian*, Edward Yang 1983]), Hong Kong (*Chungking Express* [*Chongqing senlin*, Wong Kar-Wai 1994], *inter alia*), the PRC (*Temptress Moon* [*Fengyue*, Chen Kaige 1995]), South Korea (*Motel Cactus* [*Motel Seoninjang*, Park Ki-Yong 1997]), Australia (*Rabbit-Proof Fence* [Phillip Noyce 2002]), America (*Psycho* [Gus van Sant 1998]) and also on co-productions such as *The Quiet American* (US/Germany/Australia, Phillip Noyce 2002). Subsequent to working on *Hero*, Doyle has also worked in Thailand (on *Last Life in the Universe* [*Ruang rak nai nid mahasan*, Pen-Ek Ratanarwang 2003]) and the UK (*The White Countess* [James Ivory 2005]), as well as in Hong Kong, South Korea, China and America.

Our third example is Emi Wada, who worked on *Hero* in her capacity as costume designer. After working on *Hero*, Wada worked again with Zhang Yimou on the director's *The House of Flying Daggers* (*Shi mian mai fu*, China 2004). Prior to working on these two *wuxia* films, however, she worked as costume designer on the Japanese title *Gohatto* (Oshima Nagisa 1999), the UK/Netherlands/Luxembourg/German co-production *Eight and a Half Women* (Peter Greenaway 1999), the Hong Kong title *The Stormriders* (*Feng Yun Xiongba Tianxia*, Andrew Lau 1998), and the Dutch/French/Italian co-production *Prospero's Books* (Peter Greenaway 1991), among others.

Clearly, just by looking at the contributions of these three particular individuals, a stronger sense begins to emerge of how the production of *Hero* encompasses an obvious transnational dimension. Lee, Doyle and Wada all fulfil 'artistic' roles – indeed, they appear to be very active in the world of 'international art cinema' – and none of them works exclusively or even (with the possible exception of Doyle) primarily in

the Chinese film industry. At the risk of trying the reader's patience, we would now like to move on to consider four examples of individuals working in what are usually labelled as 'technical' roles. These kinds of creative responsibilities are often buried at the end of a long line of film credits, and they therefore are not usually deemed to matter very much when it comes to the marketing, publicising and critical and scholarly evaluation of commercial movies.

Despite and because of this state of affairs, we would like you to meet first of all Charlie Armstrong, who worked on both *Hero* and *The House of Flying Daggers* as visual effects co-ordinator. Before taking these jobs, Armstrong worked as digital compositor and/or visual effects supervisor on a range of other titles, including *The Quiet American* (2002), *The Crocodile Hunter: Collision Course* (Australia/US, John Stainton 2002), *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (US/New Zealand, Peter Jackson 2001), *Moulin Rouge* (US, Baz Luhrmann 2001), *Chopper* (Australia, Andrew Dominik 2000), *Holy Smoke* (US, Jane Campion, 1999), *The Matrix* (US, the Wachowski Brothers 1999), *Babe: Pig in the City* (US/Australia, George Miller 1998) and *Mousehunt* (US, Gore Verbinski 1997).

The second person we would like to introduce you to is Kevin Baillie. He lent his talents to *Hero* in his capacity as digital artist. Prior to working on the film, though, he served as effects artist on the Hollywood blockbuster *Star Wars: Episode 1 – The Phantom Menace* (George Lucas 1999) as well as on *Mission to Mars* (US, Brian De Palma 2000), and he also acted as associate visual effects supervisor on the Adam Sandler star vehicle *Anger Management* (US, Peter Segal 2003). Immediately after working on *Hero*, Baillie was computer graphics supervisor on *Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle* (US, McG 2003), digital effects artist on *Seabiscuit* (US, Gary Ross 2003) and associate visual effects supervisor on both *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (UK/US, Mike Newell, 2005) and *Superman Returns* (US/Australia, Bryan Singer 2006). In between, he found time to work as well on *Spy Kids 3-D: Game Over* (US, Robert Rodriguez 2003), *The Day After Tomorrow* (US, Roland Emmerich 2004) and *Sin City* (US, Frank Miller et al. 2005).

Third, Simon Leadley worked on *Hero* in his capacity as music editor. Immediately after working on the film, he was music editor for *Master and Commander* (US, Peter Weir 2003) as well as a range of other US and Australian titles. Prior to *Hero*, Leadley acted in varying capacities, as music editor, supervising music editor, music mixer and additional music recorder, on a cluster of other well-known titles, including *Dark*

City (US/Australia, Alex Proyas 1998), *Moulin Rouge* (2001), *The Crocodile Hunter: Collision Course* (2002) and *The Quiet American* (2002).

Finally, Steve Burgess worked on *Hero* in his capacity as sound editor. Immediately after his stint on this film, he worked on the Hong Kong/US title *Black Mask 2: City of Masks* (Tsui Hark 2002), as well as on *The House of Flying Daggers* (2004) and the China/Hong Kong international hit *Kung Fu Hustle* (Stephen Chow 2004), and also on yet another Hong Kong hit, *Seven Swords* (Chat gim, Tsui Hark 2005). Prior to this, Steve Burgess had acted as foley recordist and mixer for *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (2002), as foley mixer on *Moulin Rouge* (2001), foley recordist on *Chopper* (2000), foley supervisor and editor on *Babe: Pig in the City* (1998), foley recordist and mixer on *Dark City* (1998), foley recordist on *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* (Baz Luhrmann 1996), foley artist on *Shine* (Australia/UK, Scott Hicks 1996), foley artist on *Babe* (Australia, Chris Noonan 1995) and foley recordist on *Strictly Ballroom* (Australia, Baz Luhrmann 1992), among others.

Why bother paying attention to such niggly details? What do we learn from them? In the context of a consideration of the ways in which *Hero* may be said to be engaged in a dialogue with Hollywood, our attention is drawn to several areas of interest. First and foremost is the confirmation that far from being a 'Chinese film', *Hero* truly is an international product, albeit a more complexly international product than may at first sight be apparent.

In addition, by thinking along these lines we uncover unanticipated layers of activity beneath Hollywood's current involvement with other national cinemas. No matter how famous *Hero's* Chinese director and its Chinese stars may be, and no matter how Chinese its subject matter undoubtedly is, one simply cannot ignore the strong presence behind the scenes of so many top personnel from the US. In fact, one might go so far as to suggest that *Hero* does not look or sound like any other Chinese *wuxia* movie ever made before it – and that the reason for this is that men and women who had previously worked on some of the most high-profile contemporary Hollywood commercial titles enabled *Hero* to attain new levels of achievement in such important 'technical' areas as visual effects and sound.

Finally, we also learn that many of the Hollywood personnel who collaborated on *Hero* had at one time or another also worked together on other projects originating in the US as well as other countries such as Australia. (This then raises the vitally important question of where or what 'Hollywood' is – a subject we regrettably do not have the space to explore here.) In other words, a quick consideration of the credits at the

end of *Hero* reveals that, in the contemporary global film marketplace, teams of highly trained individuals are brought together across continents to work on large-scale international commercial projects such as this.

Movie credits therefore provide clues towards the understanding of how films are actually packaged and put together in the twenty-first century. Moreover, following their paper chain of evidence leads to the pondering of new questions and the drawing of new conclusions. In the case of *Hero*, for example, we are inevitably drawn to ask to what extent critics and scholars should pay more attention to technical roles in film-making. Consider in this regard the fact that many followers of Chinese cinema will no doubt be able to recognise the presence of continuing working relationships among the core team of 'artists' supposedly responsible for *Hero's* production. Such viewers might be aware as a result that two of the film's stars, Maggie Cheung and Tony Leung, previously appeared together in the Hong Kong martial arts epic *Ashes of Time* (*Dong Xie Xi Du*, Wong Kar-Wai 1994), and that the cinematographer on that title was none other than *Hero's* Christopher Doyle. (Indeed, commentators frequently draw attention to certain aesthetic similarities between the two films.) Viewers may also appreciate the fact that, prior to *Hero*, actor Zhang Ziyi and composer Tan Dun both worked on *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, and such knowledge may similarly spark connections in viewers' minds between the two films.

Yet what happens once we start thinking about how core teams of technicians work together? Forget Zhang Yimou and Jet Li for a moment. While marvelling at *Hero's* thrilling audio-visual dynamics, who on earth would ever guess that its visual effects co-ordinator and its sound editor had previously worked together on *Babe: Pig in the City*? Who would have thought that cinematographer Christopher Doyle and sound editor Steve Burgess worked together on *Rabbit-Proof Fence*? Or that, in the very same year that they were all working together on *Hero*, cinematographer Doyle, visual effects co-ordinator Armstrong and sound mixer Simon Leadley all collaborated on the Australia/US production *The Quiet American*?

The acquisition of such insight demands that we pause and reconsider the extent to which both publicity and critical commentaries frame *Hero* as the work of 'artists' rather than also 'technicians'. If responsibility for the film's authorship is placed firmly on the shoulders of Zhang Yimou and Jet Li, then one is left with no choice but to comprehend the film through the prism of the intertexts provided by the director and the lead star's previous films. However, if we also pay close attention to

the careers of many of the other talented professionals who lent their skills to the production of the movie, a different story begins to emerge. Critics have and will continue to read *Hero* in the light of its perceived links with Zhang Yimou's other famed directorial efforts, such as *Raise the Red Lantern* (*Da hong denglong gaogao gua*, PRC 1991) and *To Live* (*Huozhe*, Hong Kong/PRC 1994), and in the light of star Jet Li's other celebrated leading roles in titles such as *Once Upon a Time in China* (*Huang Feihong*, Hong Kong 1991) and *Fong Sai Yuk* (*Fang Shiyu*, Hong Kong 1993). Armed with the knowledge revealed above, though, perhaps it is also legitimate to read *Hero* in the light of its aesthetic links with such alternative intertexts as *Babe: Pig in the City*.

Conclusion

We would conclude from all this that there is a need to approach *Hero* through a new critical paradigm. Behind the scenes of the film's production lies a large team of highly skilled Hollywood technicians whose mere presence blows out of the water any naïve assumption that the film is a Chinese blockbuster aspiring to challenge and compete with the image empire of global Hollywood. The film may be a 'Hong Kong-China co-production' that was 'backed' by US money. However, it was also made with high levels of involvement from overseas creative personnel. The 'hidden hand' of Hollywood forged *Hero* at more than just the level of economics.

Hero thus symbolises a fascinating moment of interaction between the existing and emergent superpowers of the US and Chinese film industries. Its production reveals much about the shifting power relationships between these two empires at the turn of the millennium. As we hope to have shown, it would be wrong to conclude from this case study that upon the birth of this 'first Chinese blockbuster' a baton was passed between Hollywood and the PRC. And it would also be wrong to claim that Hollywood is still sprinting far out in front in the race to conquer the world's markets while China doggedly tries to catch up behind it.

Instead, the truth is that *Hero* provides an example of simultaneous competition and co-operation – on multiple levels of activity – between the Chinese film industry and Hollywood. It is a Chinese movie because it was made by famous Chinese film-makers. Yet it is also a Hollywood movie because it was made with Hollywood money and professional know-how. Yet cultural prejudices separating 'artist' from 'technician' in the film-making process have stood in the way of a proper understanding of how these two sets of personnel came together on *Hero*. While Chinese

'artists' like Zhang Yimou and Jet Li are famous and thus visible, US 'technicians' such as Charlie Armstrong and Steve Burgess are unknown and hence 'invisible'. However, in the case of *Hero*, both groups of people have been running on the same team.

In managing to bring together Chinese and Hollywood expertise, *Hero* is certainly not without historical precedent.⁸ Yet if it is indeed true that we are currently witnessing a period of transition between the American and Chinese centuries, then the existence of *Hero* demands that we pay close attention to some of the changes that are actually taking place. If this example of blockbuster cinema is anything to go by, dialogue between the Hollywood and PRC film industries may in the future proceed along some unexpected, intriguing and above all mutually beneficial lines.

Notes

1. For an example of the former critical position, see Zhang 2005. For an example of the latter, see Evans 2004. *Hero* may be based upon the old legend of Jin Ke assassinating Qin Shihuang (first Emperor of Qin), but it rewrites it. In the film, Jin Ke is replaced with Nameless (Jet Li), a low-ranking official in the Qin kingdom and actually a descendant of Zhao people. In order to get the chance to get close to the Qin Emperor (Chen Dao-ming), Nameless claims to have killed the Emperor's most-feared enemies, Broken Sword (Tony Leung), Flying Snow (Maggie Cheung) and Long Sky (Donnie Yen). In the end, Nameless willingly abandons his mission to kill the Emperor because, persuaded by the idea that the Emperor's unification of six kingdoms by force can bring about a permanent peace, he comes to believe that would-be assassins should renounce personal hatred for the good of the masses and the state. At the end of the film, Nameless is himself killed by countless arrows fired by the Emperor's army.
2. Jet Li made his first films in the PRC in the 1980s but became a star with his Hong Kong productions of the 1990s. He moved to Hollywood towards the end of the decade, taking a supporting role in *Lethal Weapon 4* (Richard Donner 1998), and then leading roles in *Romeo Must Die* (Andrzej Bartkowiak 2000), *Kiss of the Dragon* (Chris Nahon 2001), *The One* (James Wong 2001), and *Cradle 2 the Grave* (Andrzej Bartkowiak 2003). For discussions of Li as a transnational figure who crosses over between Asian and Hollywood stardom, see Stringer 2003; and Qiong Yu, 'The Changing Meanings of Jet Li', PhD thesis (in progress), Institute of Film and Television Studies, University of Nottingham.
3. On *wuxia* in general, and Jet Li's martial arts and action films in particular, see Hunt 2003.
4. *Cause* is widely available on Chinese DVD and VCD versions of *Hero*.
5. In this context, 'yellow earth' is a symbol of the Chinese nation.
6. We are grateful to Gianluca Sergi for making further insightful comments in conversation.

7. The point we are making here is that Lee is, among other things, a 'Hollywood producer'. However, as Kim Soyoungh has pointed out in conversation, one of *Hero's* other producers, Bill Kong, has a record of producing titles for a trans-Asian market. While *Hero* may be viewed as a film engineered with the Chinese and US markets in mind, it should also therefore be understood as a film simultaneously designed for the broader regional Asian market as well. (This observation is supported by Yingjin Zhang's observation that by February 2003 *Hero* had set an 'extraordinary record' in the East and Southeast Asian box offices.) Such knowledge complicates any perception that *Hero* is a Chinese blockbuster engaged in dialogue with Hollywood because it adds a regional Asian dimension, thus triangulating this relationship. We would like to thank Kim Soyoungh for drawing our attention to this important issue which deserves fuller consideration.
8. For example, it is well known that *Zu: Warriors from the Magic Mountain* (*Shu Shan: Xin Shushan Jianxia*, Tsui Hark 1983) was an attempt technologically and aesthetically to upgrade the viability of the Hong Kong cinema industry by hiring Hollywood 'technicians' to work on this *wuxia* production. For more information, see Ho and Ho 2002; and Schroeder 2004.

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