

Introduction

“Watching world cinema connects us to something bigger,” said Chris Hamel when introducing the World Cinema Weekend organized by Gateway to promote filmmaking around the world (quoted in Mikesell, 2017). “Something bigger,” an abstract designation, is nevertheless an apt way to describe the increasing dimensions of world cinema. In its second century, cinema is “bigger,” more vibrant, and more global than ever. Film production is burgeoning in all corners of the globe with a wide variety of styles, formats, and technologies. New technologies, new means of distribution, and the proliferation of film festivals have expanded and made filmmakers’ sphere of activity “bigger.” Film viewers, too, have available to them “bigger,” broader choices of films from different cultures, and various platforms through which to access and watch them. The spheres of filmmaking and film viewing are more flexible, more diverse, and closer to each other, marking a cosmopolitan experience embedded in one part of the world yet reaching out for the as-yet unknown and unseen. The term “world cinema” merely names an undisputable reality of the experience of film practitioners, viewers, critics, students, teachers, and scholars. It is a complex cultural and commercial phenomenon with the power to create and connect disparate worlds. The rising acceptance and popularity of the term “world cinema” is therefore a welcome development, accommodating within it a broadening plurality of voices.

As we complete the writing of this stage of a book on world cinema, a paradoxical version of reality is unfolding before our eyes. Myopic forces in the West demand isolationism, insisting on hierarchy instead of dignity among human beings, and crude nationalism attempts to weaken the forces that have brought cultures together. The burden of the current moment poses great dangers to the consciousness cultivated over the past several decades toward cosmopolitanism, even though visions of cosmopolitanism are hardly rosy and acutely aware of the unequal power relations, histories of colonialism, and domination that have defined cross-border and cross-cultural relations. The critical voice carefully nurtured in this cosmopolitan vision of the world now seems drowned by loud pronouncements of derision and exclusion of others.

Yet, it is precisely in moments like these that we must insist with greater resolve on enacting the promise of world cinema that to circulate and watch films from outside of our cultural walls helps us recognize plurality and seek egalitarianism in thought and practice. Practices embedded in world cinema, world literature, and other cross-border art forms carry a powerful potential to build a front against the narrow forces that assert isolationism and superiority over others. To echo Walter Benjamin’s words, it is to “bring about a real state of emergency” against authoritarianism and divisiveness. The vibrant, heuristic energy in producing, watching, and thinking about world cinema has to be sustained to

2 Introduction

do justice to the struggle of filmmakers, to a wide-eyed desire of viewers and students to be exposed to a variety of films, and to all the veins and capillaries of commerce and technology that allow for cross-border traffic of cinematic expression. A continued state of emergency must be in place to welcome strangers' images into our own worlds.

Often slippery and contentious, the currency of the term shows that world cinema is a reality, at the very least denoting a recognition that cinema is a global phenomenon that is produced around the world and circulates in nearly all its corners. Understanding the dimensions of such a global enterprise that contains a plurality of voices, positions, and perspectives is not an easy task, and it smacks of ambitions bound to fall short of their reach. While considering the multitude of cinemas as world cinema is certainly a democratic and inclusive gesture, it risks turning into a vast generality if no coordinates are offered to understand the phenomenon. Thus, to comprehend world cinema is to map it and to identify the pathways to navigate through it. The task of mapping the complex landscape of world cinema is the primary challenge of this book.

To begin this task, we turn to insights from Jorge Luis Borges's fable, "On Exactitude in Science" (1998). In this brief tale, Borges imagines an empire whose cartographers strove to create a perfect map of the world in all its detail and complexity; a representation so exact and vast that it "coincided point for point" with the actual territory. By promising complete coverage, however, such an unwieldy map turned out to be useless and too cumbersome for future generations, ending up in fragments and ruins, its still-discernible shreds a testament both to the vast ambitions and failures of the project. Borges showed in his lyrical wit the hubris of representing totality where the empire tries to map the world in its own image. Writing in hindsight, from the point of view of the future, outside and after the empire's collapse, Borges is aware of the absurdity of a map that tries to take over the territory and replace it. For him, "exactitude" is a false science. More useful is a map made from selection and reduction that can show something relevant about the world without blanketing it. The goal of any method of representation should be not coverage but fleshing out the relations between the parts and the whole. This is a fundamental principle of our approach in this book—that world cinema is not a totality, but rather a grasp, a representation of that totality with defined coordinates.

Among multiple models of mapping world cinema proposed in film studies, one of the most influential and exemplary models is Dudley Andrew's "An Atlas of World Cinema," where world cinema is approached in the form of an atlas, further systematized through maps, zones, and networks (2006). Andrew's multitude of maps—political, demographic, linguistic, topographical, and orientation maps—chart cinemas around the world cautiously and selectively, developing along the way criteria for navigating the cinematic world, although his presumed cartographer is still anchored in the West. Andrew values the wide cross-border circulation of films that open up unfamiliar worlds to students. The pedagogical value of his model comes from the need to provide a "different orientation to unfamiliar terrain," putting in place a recognition that the complexity of world cinema requires multiple perspectives (2006: 19).

Andrew (2010) later increases the dynamism of his model in two steps. First, he accepts Franco Moretti's proposition for world literature that global knowledge is better understood as a dynamic system, where each component develops and maintains itself in an energetic relationship with other elements, each affecting the other. To think of world cinema as a system where each component is in a dynamic relationship with the others provides an improvement over fragmentary and self-contained insights of earlier decades in film studies. The singular gift of the systems approach comes from its flexibility in

approaching the smallest component to show its dynamic relationship to the largest and most powerful one. A second step that energizes Andrew's model comes from the added dimension of time in systemic changes. The trans-border, cross-cultural transactions of cinemas take place in a world of differentiated conditions, where global experience is shared across different time zones and through jet lags. The map of world cinema thus has a dynamic across the axes of time, as films travel and viewers receive them beyond their borders.

It is no secret that in cinema (as in many other spheres), the empire envisioned by Borges's fable that blankets the world and shapes it in its own view is represented by the West, especially its most dominant cinematic expression, Hollywood. In the face of Hollywood's power aligned with its capital, and the reach of its vision forming the borders of the world, the impetus behind developing a concept of world cinema comes in part as resistance to the self-proclaimed ambitions of Hollywood to equate itself with world cinema. Eurocentrism undergirds not just the dominance of Hollywood but also academic discourse, which arises from the embers of the same soil and provides an air of legitimacy to its patrons. In one of the most comprehensive and groundbreaking attempts to "unthink Eurocentrism" and challenge the dominant perspective of the West, Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (1994) tuned into a world radically altered after the demise of colonialism. They do not see the world as simply a negation of Eurocentric paradigms, but rather in its pluralistic fertility and the heterogeneous ways of thinking and seeing that reign from Africa to Asia, from India to the indigenous cultures of the world. Their clarion call to "de-center" the world still echoes in various fields, from literary studies and anthropology to film studies and the debates on world cinema, and *Unthinking Eurocentrism* has rightfully been seen as the first and key textbook on world cinema. Indeed, the emergence of world cinema as a discipline owes much to its impassioned advocacy of polycentric perspectives.

Following Shohat and Stam's foundations of polycentric multiculturalism, *Theorizing World Cinema* (2012) by Lúcia Nagib, Chris Perriam, and Rajinder Dudrah provides a positive definition of world cinema by recognizing and putting on equal footing multiple cinemas around the world, where Hollywood is merely one cinematic expression among many that are all interconnected. Comparative film history of world cinema illustrates that various cinemas emerge and become influential in different places and different moments in history. Nagib et al. guide scholars to emphatically recognize a multi-centered world that includes Hollywood and its interactive dependence on other cinemas. Several academic studies of world cinema, panels at academic conferences, journals, and websites concur with the proposition of presenting a multi-centered world, yet this proposition presents a quandary about how such a multi-centered world should be mapped. Most of these efforts fall short of the promise, invoking the effort and ideas behind it without putting them into practice. It seems impossible indeed to navigate a world where the unseen should remain satisfied with a promise but not a place.

Building our effort on the foundations built by Andrew, Nagib et al., and Shohat and Stam, we go beyond the promise of de-centering the world to show what such a map may look like and how it can be conceived. Too often, adapting a polycentric perspective works as an idealist aim, rarely practiced in the actual mapping that gives voices to different perspectives. Fragmented studies of various parts of world cinema assembled together in a survey-like manner, no matter how thorough and exhaustive, still show a gap between the promise and practice. This book develops a method of studying world cinema, a method of mapping a truly multi-centered world that not only makes room

for divergent perspectives, traditions, and positions in world cinema, but also charts their interconnectedness and relationships of meaning.

Taking Borges's caution seriously, ours is not an exhaustive map in terms of coverage; rather, it is a representation of the layered topography of world cinema, produced through selection and reduction without attempting to blanket the world. As such, the map is open for others to re-chart or expand. Although our examples come from very diverse production contexts—they include major, smaller, emerging film industries, films circulating both in art house and commercial networks, as well as those outside of formal networks—our main, although not exclusive, focus is on fiction feature films. This is not to say that animation, documentary, short film, or other film forms present a less important or vital site of world cinema. In fact, crucial and transformative developments have taken place since the 1980s in the production, circulation, and exhibition of animated films, short films, and documentaries across the world. The focus on fiction feature films is therefore partly just that—a focus—but it is also justified because feature films' circulation and influence in popular culture elucidate the nodes and lines that connect specific cinema sites to their global context more clearly. Once traced, we hope these highlighted connections can serve as an invitation for others to include other forms and areas of production in an expanded map of world cinema.

The contemporary moment

The current phase of world cinema begins sometime in the late 1980s, when tectonic changes in geopolitical situations affect filmmaking industries in profound ways, and when the new technologies and global networks of distribution and exhibition radically alter the landscape in which films circulate. In some parts of the world, changes took place before the 1980s, while in other parts the main transformations have occurred since the 1990s. Whether dictatorships gave way to democracies or neo-colonial regimes loosened their grip, these changes were worldwide. We elaborate on the specific aspects of these changes in different parts of the book but, broadly conceived, they bear the following main features:

- Neoliberal economic policies in various guises, from free trade to marketization of all cultural production, created conditions that transformed film production, circulation, and exhibition. Fewer and fewer parts of the world faced restrictions and imposition of borders familiar in the earlier decades after the Second World War. While the effects of neoliberal policies were highly uneven and varied in different parts of the world, it is important to link them to the same global system set in place since the 1980s.
- New technologies, from digital to the web, increased and transformed the practices of cinema, from production, distribution, and exhibition to reception. Films that were inaccessible in distant parts of the world now moved across borders with greater ease, expanding the cinema audience, redefining cine-literacy, and offering new opportunities and exposure to new filmmakers. Cheaper, more accessible technology, combined with expanded international networks of financing, radically widened the zones of production and enabled more filmmakers and emerging film industries to enter the global circulation of films.
- Globalization after the 1980s may seem like it marches without political ideologies, but it has profound political implications. The global flow of capital and new technologies allowed the already-powerful industries in the West to embellish their

productions with flair and spectacle, and strengthen their dominant position in the film market. The combination of free capital and new technologies created conditions for globalization, a phenomenon that brought the world together, but with uneven flows of influence, where the powerful asserted their position more effectively while the powerless witnessed the distressing gap that separated them from the wealth and resources out of their reach. The study of any element of world cinema is deeply affected by the vectors of this global dynamic; therefore, all cinemas must be seen as interdependent and connected to a larger socioeconomic system rather than as isolated entities.

The periodization used in our work is marked by the three features outlined above, which were absent in either geopolitical conditions or in cinematic production of the earlier decades. For example, the national cinema approach practiced widely in earlier models of world cinema conceived world cinema as little more than an aggregate collection of various national cinemas, approached in relative isolation and without a systemic connect-edness. The overwhelming influence of globalization eclipses such approaches, opening up the borders of a nation in economic and cultural terms. The framework of this book thus moves beyond both the fragmentary concept of international film (revolving around coverage and aggregates of national cinemas), the divisive notion of “foreign” film (falling back on the world division between *us* and *them*), or the instantly-generalizing concept of global cinema.

We need to emphasize in the strongest possible terms that our focus on “new world cinema” after the 1980s is not to be mistaken for the amnesia of film history of earlier decades. In many ways, “world cinema” is as old as cinema itself. Films have always circulated across borders and viewers have encountered “foreign” films in all parts of the world. Our project is not to negate the fundamentally transnational nature of film, but rather to respond to a radically different set of relationships and discourses that have emerged after the age of globalization. If we take a global view of the conditions of production and circulation of films after the tumultuous events of the late 1980s, it is clear that cinema, like other cultural forms, began a radical transformation. Many of our older conceptions, such as the centrality of Hollywood, the dominance of the national cinema model, the distinctions between art cinema and popular cinema, or the role of Third World cinema, acquired new coordinates. To be mindful of this rupture is to account for the responsiveness of academic discourses to the changing conditions around us. We accept that the gaps in our model are likely to be addressed by others or that it is possible to write an account of world cinema before and after the 1980s. We hope that the turn toward perspectives developed here will set markers for future comparative studies.

We propose three levels of approaching the new world cinema. The first, a **polycentric** level, shows the comparative strength and influence of five cinematic centers. The polycentric perspective defies the idea of a single center (most frequently Hollywood or European art cinema), presenting a field of uneven and constantly shifting “hot-spots” that gain prominence at different points of history, from Hollywood to Bollywood and Nollywood, from European to Asian cinema—each significant in its own moment and context. Second, world cinema is **polymorphic**, an interconnected assemblage of various forms: national, transnational, postcolonial, diasporic, small and minor cinemas. These traditional paradigms, far from being obsolete, still provide a necessary framework but now have to be reoriented or reconfigured from different vantage points and within the larger context of world cinema. For example, Estonian cinema as national cinema

is simultaneously local/national (both in its address and circulation) and a part of world cinema, suggesting alliances and utterances in a global context. Finally, world cinema is **polyvalent**, requiring an understanding of how each film is viewed and interpreted differently in different parts of the world. A film that travels across national and cultural borders is not dictated by a definitive or dominant interpretation, let alone one produced by Western theoretical models. Watching a film from a certain position in the world generates an interpretation that bears the imprint of the viewing conditions and the viewer. A polyvalent perspective thus requires an awareness of a geopolitical orientation, a “perspective of perspective,” or the fact that “every film is a foreign film somewhere” (Egoyan & Balfour, 2004: 22).

Polycentric world cinema

In most open definitions, world cinema is the cinema of the world, without a center. We understand polycentrism not as an absence of, but rather an uneven and constantly shifting multiplicity of cinematic power centers that gain prominence at different points in history and different topographic zones. A center in world cinema presents substantial activity in its comparative influence on other cinemas, characterized by the following distinguishing features:

- A high level of cinematic activity, and a significant strength in the annual film production. Although numbers do not tell the story in terms of influence, the sheer size of the industries, as well as the sizes of their audiences, such as those of Indian cinema, Nollywood, or Asian cinemas, cannot be ignored.
- A formation of their own spheres of influence; substantial cultural and/or cinematic influence outside of its borders. Each one of the centers, besides its strong production numbers, produces films that circulate in other parts of the world and have considerable influence on other film cultures, diasporic cultures, as well as on cinematic styles of its filmmakers.
- The creation of independent perspectives and scholarship on their own cinemas, a distinct theoretical-philosophical-cultural approach to the image, thus representing de-centering also in terms of Western film studies and philosophy. European film theory has formulated dominant paradigms for perceiving and analyzing images, now enshrined in much of the Anglo-American film studies. Other centers boast similar traditions, which remain inaccessible partly due to lack of translation but also a lack of attention to alternative theoretical models and approaches to image-study. A truly de-centering enterprise must also bring Western academic theory into focus to make room for multiple models that emerge from other cinematic traditions.

Following these criteria, we find that along with Hollywood’s power, Indian cinema, Asian cinema, Nigerian cinema or Nollywood, and European cinema present other cinematic centers, offering only one kind of a collective snapshot of world cinema since the 1980s. Indian cinema, with 1,600–2,000 films produced annually, is one such significant center, its distribution covering large territories from West to South East Asia, with a greater share now taken by its diasporic audiences in North America, Africa, and Far East Asia. Nollywood, producing well over 1,000 titles a year, forms another center, not merely because of its numbers, unique aesthetic, and circulation, but also because of its complex influence on African cinema in general. A similar case can be made about Asian

cinema (Japanese, Chinese, Taiwanese, Hong Kong, and South Korean cinemas) that, while exerting influence over Asia, also has a significant influence on others, both popular and art cinemas around the world, including on Hollywood and European cinema. Mapping world cinema through such centers does not eclipse their internal diversity and complexity, nor should it consider these centers as isolated from each other. Power among them is not equal, and their differentiated status speaks of a number of factors such as financial power, aesthetic influence, cultural reach, technological dissemination, and a range of complex influences of political and social histories.

It is important to note that the model/map proposed in the book follows the principle of *mapping by representation*, rather than exhaustive inclusion. A model of Asian or European cinema, for instance, does not accommodate a detailed account of particular cinemas within a center (for example Taiwanese, or Hungarian). A way around the problem of grasping the totality in its expansive essence, Borges's tale tells us, is to approach it in terms of microcosms that bear a relation to the whole. That breadth has its limits is a known pedagogical lesson in world and comparative literature programs. Breadth may be a desired goal of broad intellectual inquiry but in effect, any learning exercise cannot fully grasp the landscape by accumulating content from one end to the other. Instead, an attempt to "think globally" is to understand the power relations between different parts. The idea of "world systems" itself invokes a totality approached through the examination of the dynamic between its constitutive parts. Kristin Ross's enduring insight into teaching world literature is that to study multiple fields of knowledge is to focus on the networks of relations, relative visibilities, and structures of power across various realms of interests and topics (1993). If a cumulative model always leaves gaps and promises that cannot be fulfilled, a representational model of world literature, Ross argues, aims to engage in the process of constituting its object without presuming the elements making that totality.

Our mapping of world cinema through multiple centers points to a similar method that begins to grasp the complexity of world cinema, rather than present a total sum of its components. If some parts of world cinema are not given an extensive treatment, it is because the criteria proposed here leave room to apprehend their existence through other methods. For instance, a strong case can be made for Latin American cinema as another one of the cinematic centers. Latin American cinema boasts an impressive regional profile, stylistic diversity, and connections to many cinemas around the world. With different yet connected manifestations in Brazil, Argentina, or Cuba, the Third Cinema movement in the 1960s and 1970s brought Latin American cinema to worldwide attention and was a major influence on the cinematic and theoretical developments elsewhere in the world. It explored film language in radical new ways and presented a formidable—ideological and cinematic—alternative to both the dominant Hollywood cinema and the European new waves.

However, in a constellation that we identify as the "new world cinema" after the tumultuous events of the 1980s, the relative profile and influence of Latin American cinema remains diffused. The regional and political promise of Third Cinema, which was diverse but nevertheless unified and operating under international solidarity, is now dispersed across various cinematic developments around the world. Its revolutionary practices and aesthetics, its critique from below of the conditions of postcoloniality, its positioning of the "aesthetics of garbage" (Stam, 2003) as resistance to the dominant discourses, have been absorbed into the unique idiom of Nollywood cinema. As we argue in the chapter on Nollywood, Third Cinema's militant and oppositional aesthetics of

trash are re-positioned and transformed in Nollywood into an aesthetic rooted in popular culture. On the other hand, the political project of Third Cinema has been taken up by various practices of subversive aesthetic, from experimental film and anthology film to different minor cinema movements that foreground issues of class, gender, race, or ethnicity. There is no doubt that Latin American cinema remains a significant and vibrant part of contemporary world cinema, but its post-1980s developments—from the resurgence of popular genre cinemas and the renaissance of Argentinian cinema to the revival of the Mexican film industry and the strong emergence of women's cinema in various Latin American countries—are best approached through our polymorphic model, as a transnational cinema of the region that displays a complex dynamism of national, regional, and global identities on the levels of production, circulation, and textual negotiation.

Despite this position, our polycentric model by no means forecloses the possibility of students, teachers, or scholars making a case for Latin American cinema as one of the cinematic centers. The energy generated by their efforts will be a major step ahead of the current uncertainty and abstraction in the meaning of world cinema. The three criteria we propose in polycentrism (strength in numbers, realms of transnational influence, and indigenous theoretical traditions) are only a step toward theorizing the phenomenon of polycentrism. As Jacques Rancière points out in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1991), the beginning of the inquiry is not the promise of knowledge; it is only an entry into exploration. The aim of proposing a polycentric model is to destabilize, once and for all, the hegemony of the Eurocentric model, with tangible steps toward identifying a vision of world cinema that is not confined to a single, privileged vantage point.

Finally, although our polycentric model includes five centers (Hollywood, European cinema, Indian cinema and Bollywood, Nollywood, and Asian cinema), *the book provides extensive accounts of only three of these cinemas*: Indian cinema and Bollywood, Nigerian cinema/Nollywood, and Asian cinema. Because of the limited scope of the book format, European and American cinema/Hollywood do not appear in the book. The exclusion may appear startling and to contradict our position that world cinema cannot be a concept defined in opposition to Hollywood, Europe, or the West. But as we began mapping, we found that the accounts of these cinemas as significant and powerful players in world cinema (not as mere alternatives to Hollywood or European cinema) are absent in the studies of world cinema. While the scholarship on these cinemas is extensive, Indian cinema/Bollywood, Nigerian cinema/Nollywood, and Asian cinemas are studied in isolation and without a comparative framework, despite the fact that they provide a formidable front of their own, based on their strength, reach, and ingenuity in cinematic traditions. If we change our perspective from Eurocentric film studies to any of these other centers, it becomes clear that in terms of presence, influence, and power, these cinemas are second to none. Their diasporic strength is immeasurable after the 1980s, defying the notions of national cinemas and challenging a generalizing notion of transnational cinema. We found that expansive accounts of these cinemas, an actual treatment of them as power centers, had to be accommodated in the book—and seemed more urgent than a more superficial account of all five centers—at the expense of European and American/Hollywood cinemas (which have been traditionally assumed and approached as centers). Despite this gap, we hope that a polycentric map and the specific criteria proposed here will encourage students to include and extend their studies to European and American/Hollywood cinemas as additional centers of world cinema.

Polymorphic world cinema

Students, teachers, and scholars may find that a polycentric model of five centers does not include multiple other cinemas in the world. It is meant to focus on the most influential centers of activity, and as such does not include many other formations and cinemas of the world, for which we need a different way of conceiving totality. For example, most smaller national, regional, or ethnic cinemas, such as Cuban, Malaysian, Romanian, Estonian, or Indonesian cinema, need to be examined in their own right. Many of these cinemas transformed, expanded, and made themselves visible after the events of the 1980s, and they are important players on the world cinema stage. World cinema, particularly after globalization, is a vast and interconnected entity. It is impossible for anyone to understand the totality and its complexity in a single attempt. This may be one of the reasons why the very mention of world cinema raises eyebrows. The idea of understanding a vast system from our own limited space in the world is a daunting task indeed, yet we claim to provide access to that totality. To address the state of bewilderment about the vastness of world cinema is to use multiple approaches to look at totality.

The paradox may be best addressed through an old tale, “The Elephant in the Dark,” also known as “Blind Men and an Elephant.” It is an old Indian parable, told by the Sufi poet Rumi among others, disseminated through many parts of the world, and absorbed into many different cultural traditions. The story describes a group of men standing in the dark (or blind men) who touch an elephant to learn what it is like. Each visitor is asked to describe the creature after touching a certain part. “The creature is like a water-spout”; says one, feeling the elephant’s trunk. “It is a pillar,” says the other, touching its legs. None of the individual descriptions are in agreement with others, but taken together they nevertheless produce a large creature with some features. The tale offers a popular lesson that reality is never entirely comprehensible since all we have is a limited perspective on this reality. Transposed onto the perception of world cinema, a creature of unknown dimensions, all we have to describe it are multiple, often incongruous perspectives. In film studies, there are many forms of cinematic models and paradigms. Some prefer to see cinema through the lens of a nation; others believe this national framework is obsolete and has been surpassed by transnational approaches; still others prefer gender, ethnicity, or other categories as primary frameworks. Some models focus on cinemas that are small in size or marginal in their position in relation to the behemoths around them. All of these perspectives and categories of analysis constitute a part of our polymorphic approach, each exists in its own sphere, and each provides a partial image of the totality. The tale of an elephant tells us that at some point, however, we need to bring these multiple perspectives together to arrive at a larger image. National cinemas, for example, are imbricated simultaneously in local and global contexts; or, small cinemas are increasingly implicated in transnational relationships of production and multiple narratives, with their “smallness” a contextual significance as well as a geo-cultural identity.

The polymorphic level of analysis recasts some of the existing models in film studies to orient them to a systemic, interconnected vision of world cinema, where various parts are related to a totality that is grasped as a complex, uneven and dispersed formation—not a generalized universality. In their introduction to *Cinema at the Periphery* (2010), Dina Jordanova, David Martin-Jones, and Belén Vidal advocate for a view of world cinema seen from the periphery. Rejecting a binary, oppositional view of centers and margins, the

dominant and the powerless, they ask that we shift our perspective. Conceived from the periphery, world cinema appears quite different, the canons disappear, and various local practices assume focal points. The previously unseen becomes seen. In a similar gesture, a polymorphic model asks that we adjust our perspective with an awareness of totality. Thus, we take some traditional categories of analysis—national, transnational, diasporic, small, women’s cinema—and rather than proclaim them obsolete, show how they can be recognized in their fluidity and a renewed configuration in the systemic construction of world cinema. Each of the models places an emphasis on a specific perspective and position held by the observer, but also emphasizes its interconnections within a larger system.

The most enduring, although often eagerly dismissed, category of national cinema allows us to focus on industries or cinemas that struggle to maintain a distinct identity even in the age of globalization. We argue that the national still maintains its importance, but now as a locus from which to examine its relationship to world cinema. Similarly, small cinema is a concept born out of the desire to safeguard the cinemas of smaller nations and sizes whose relative significance is threatened either by the forces of globalization or other political and economic forces. These two categories are grouped under the national level of polymorphism. Part of the narrative of world cinema includes a movement from the once-dominant national cinema model to the ubiquitous transnational cinema model. But transnationalism indicates more than simply a transformation of national cinema into a broader, global configuration; it also includes a complex transformation of categories such as postcolonial, diasporic, or women’s cinema, which are sometimes dispersed and sometimes nestled within another (national) cinema. Avoiding transnational as a slippery category, we deploy the concept of critical transnationalism, which allows for a clearer delineation of relationships on various axes of identification such as colonialism, ethnicity, race, or gender.

Polyvalent world cinema

It is axiomatic wisdom that films are perceived differently in different parts of the world, that each interpretation is the product of a subjective position. From reception theory to postcolonial theory, a recognition that different interpretations are products of a complex set of conditions is a given. When we accept that world cinema circulates freely across borders and influences viewers in different parts of the world, we are tacitly accepting that films acquire different meanings in different contexts. A mere admission of this fact on a global scale first challenges the hegemony of interpretations produced by academic discourses in the West then complicates the picture of understanding the numerous ways in which films are watched, absorbed, and interpreted, questioning the simultaneity and homogeneity often assumed in the global circulation of images. While it is impossible to track varying interpretations of films across the world, it is important to be aware of this polyvalence, the fact that every film, no matter how global its claim, embodies a specific geopolitical orientation, and that every viewer is situated differently.

As we suggest in the first chapter, polyvalence is not so much about uncovering suppressed voices, either in the filmmaking or academic sphere, as it is about *reorientation*, seeing the world from a different perspective to bracket commonplace assumptions about meanings and relationships between films. Given both the dominance of Western academic discourse in film studies and the difficulty of gaining access to scholarship on some of these cinemas (often due to lack of translation), the task of allowing for the full articulation of these polyphonic voices is often an impossible one, but efforts in this direction are

an essential part of world cinema. Part of this exercise includes not privileging any reading of films or cinema over others and tuning into the vibrant but often ignored voices in other parts of the world.

Since the first and primary encounter of a viewer with world cinema is through individual films, the process of mapping often begins with watching specific films, which are then examined, as Andrew suggests, as a map, while being placed on a map (2006: 24). Thus, establishing the film's coordinates on the map of world cinema is also about locating the orientation that is inscribed in the film itself, recognizing how a film from a different corner of the world orients us to its place in the world, and what the world looks like from its perspective. This double process of cognitive mapping, whereby a film simultaneously exhibits its relation to world cinema, as it is also an embedded map of the world itself, *begins* with a polyvalent view, an awareness of how the viewers, as well as a given film, are situated in a specific context. Only with this awareness can we begin to successfully chart a film's relationships within a systemic totality of world cinema and ask questions about its positioning: How does a film achieve its visibility? What are the mechanisms that affect its discourses of recognition? What are the financial, social, institutional, and cultural networks associated with the film?

Teaching world cinema

Instructors who teach world cinema are often “faced with a considerable dilemma in simply determining the object of study,” and this terminological instability plagues textbooks as well as scholarly material in the field of world cinema (Talbot, 2014). While there are numerous ways of approaching the study of world cinema, or its specific elements, the organization of this book follows a logic that we believe best represents the pressing issues in the field of world cinema, as well as one that brings different cinemas, contexts, and debates surrounding them into a productive and systematic dialogue. Our polycentric, polymorphic, and polyvalent maps both systematize a vast and often indeterminate object of study and emphasize that the study of world cinema has to begin with specific films. Film viewing is a world-making activity, a gesture toward “worlding” that attempts to comprehend the expanse and the limits of the world seen from one's locus. A map of world cinema is thus a map that presents “the global as a local utterance, for any attempt to represent ‘the world’ inevitably bespeaks the mapmaker's own placement” (Cooppan, 2001).

These two broad principles—to reduce the terminological instability, and to place the viewer/student and her encounter with specific films at the center of mapping/understanding world cinema—guide the structure of the book. We begin with conceptual issues, followed by extensive accounts of three different cinematic centers, and polymorphic configurations of various paradigms—which teachers, students and scholars can deploy in a variety of classes, contexts, and approaches.

Chapter 1 offers a conceptual framework that navigates existing and emerging ideas in the field of world cinema, situated firmly in the context of its world literature and world music precedents. This chapter should allow students to gain an understanding of world cinema as a concept. Discussing some of the dominant theoretical perspectives in film studies, the chapter outlines a clear definition of world cinema as a polycentric, polymorphic, and polyvalent formation. Since all cinemas are shaped in some way or other by the forces of globalization and neoliberal economy, it is possible to construct a comparative model where world cinema is no longer everything for the sake of everything, but a systemic multiplicity of cinemas from around the world.

Chapter 2 traces different, and unevenly developed, practices and habits of watching films around the world, examining a potent confluence of technological changes and cultural discourses that inform the ways in which we encounter films, whether it is in movie theaters (multiplex cinemas, art house cinemas, traveling theaters, film societies), on television, through physical media (VHS, VCD, DVD), or via smaller, portable screens. It also addresses other issues related to watching world cinema, such as piracy, with its various industrial and social manifestations, and subtitling. Despite new technologies that have radically changed the way we watch films, we find that theater persists as one of the most important forms of viewing, even as it is in decline in some countries or is being transformed by digital technology.

Chapter 3 offers an account of the main production models around the world. Film production since the 1980s is distinguished from earlier periods by a slow fading of the national-industry model and an emergence of various models of local, regional, and transnational collaborations. Based on our proposition of the five cinematic centers, we provide five different paradigms of production, exploring emerging transnational, global, and regional production patterns. The US dominates the production of films based on its ability to inject capital and offer the most lucrative distribution market. The European Union model, the most well-developed and formalized model of transnational structures with organizations such as the MEDIA Programme and Eurimages, shapes film production through formal alliances and the stability of state support. Asian countries offer far less formal but strong financial structures buoyed by the increasing power of distribution markets in China, South Korea, and Japan. Production patterns in India are increasingly formalized while those in the Nollywood film industry remain informal and unorganized, but generate significant revenues for the domestic, regional, and diasporic markets.

Chapter 4 addresses the most salient feature of world cinema after the 1980s: the global boom and influence of international film festivals, which have become one of the biggest growth industries. The diversity and expansion of film festivals are as daunting as their multidimensional role in shaping world cinema. Film festivals have consolidated the once marginal role of art cinema into one of the strongest and most influential modes of filmmaking. While the chapter acknowledges the complicated web of functions performed by film festivals, our emphasis is on the crucial role that festivals have played in the production of knowledge that guides our understanding of world cinema. This chapter explores the ways in which festivals are not only exhibition and distribution platforms, but play an active role in *shaping* the very landscape of world cinema, and by implication our understanding of it.

A course in world cinema, we hope, will include aspects set out in the first section of the book to form a conceptual framework that accommodates various manifestations of world cinema, from local to global, art cinema to popular cinemas. An illustration of how world cinema exists in different parts of the world, from modes of watching and producing film to exhibition, should build a useful foundation that allows students to access each cinema in relation to worldwide developments. With this conceptual model in place, we proceed with extensive accounts of three cinematic centers—Indian cinema and Bollywood, Nigerian cinema and Nollywood, and Asian cinema—that discuss in a substantive way the varied dynamic of each center, both its internal as well as cross-border influence and its interconnections to other cinemas. Learning from the accrued wisdom in world literature and world cinema courses at various universities, a course in world cinema may approach polycentrism through a study of one or two cinematic centers; that is, teaching by example rather than coverage. The criteria provided for identifying a

center here serve as a basis for comparison between different cinemas rather than a fixed and hermetic strategy of classification.

In the section on polymorphic world cinema, specific case studies are approached through various national and transnational manifestations or paradigms—diasporic cinema, small cinema, women’s cinema—not only to offer an overview of these frameworks used in the study of world cinema, but to show how they can be grasped in broader, global spheres of influence. Individual case studies are discussed less through the films’ narrative or formal meanings or as instances of particular paradigms, but as utterances existing in a network of various local and global forces (economic, institutional, cultural) that determine their position on the map of world cinema, which may be prominent, marginal, or invisible.

The final chapter, on polyvalence, is an equally significant step in a course on world cinema. Recognizing that films are always “read” from the vantage point of the viewer’s position in the world, it reinforces the de-centering project of the book. No longer should cinema studies consider interpretations and scholarship from the West as more valid or legitimate than others. Efforts at “de-Westernizing” must develop an awareness that every interpretation, every theoretical model, is specifically situated and bespeaks a particular view of the world.

As scholars, our aim was to do justice to the depth, dynamism, and complexity of the phenomenon of world cinema. We have also found this structure and proposed model useful and productive as teachers, and have been successfully using it in our world cinema classes. However, we believe that the flexibility and openness of the model allows the book to be deployed in various contexts. Whether it is a class on world cinema structured around different case studies than those found in a book, a class that focuses on a particular national cinema, a class on film festivals, or a class on specific world cinema auteurs, the book offers a blueprint, a way of mapping, that will enable a teacher or student to situate and map any specific cinema site they want to explore to its global coordinates.

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14 *Introduction*

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