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CHAPTER 1

World or Transnational Cinema?

Browse any film store, in the actual or virtual world, and you'll normally find a section, alongside genres like action, horror and science fiction, that's devoted to 'world cinema'. Normally, this section is very neatly or clearly laid out, or browsable, by major film-producing countries, such as France, Germany, or Japan. However, some might be more problematically labelled by area or continent, such as Africa, the Middle East, or Scandinavia. Often the simple designation of cinemas by their country of origin (usually by their predominant language) can mask the complexities of production, funding, and the reception and consumption of films, let alone their engagement with issues of identity and subjectivity. What we generally won't find in the 'world cinema' section are films in the English language, from the UK, the US and Canada. These films will sit more prominently in the main section, usually arranged by genre – they won't be designated by their nationality. They will occupy a more mainstream position, while the films from other areas are situated as more marginal, even if produced in popular genres, for their arthouse appeal.

World cinema remains a relevant category for many film viewers, despite how porous borders have become as globalisation has intensified. Alongside the growth of transnational film studies, we still see the primacy of national cinemas as categories that promote and classify films. But, in these times marked by increased global connectivity, transnational cinema comes to stand as a signifier of a world in which people, capital, ideas and technologies circulate much more freely than they have done previously. Thinking about cinema as a series of transnationally connected industries and as an artform that reflects the experience of individuals and social groups within a transnational system can help us better understand this world and how it operates. This first chapter will frame some of the core issues in the book around the shift in film studies from thinking about the 'us' and 'them' binaries of world or national cinemas to thinking in terms of the transnational. It will unpack some key discourses that define the ways in which world cinema has come to be considered under globalisation.

Why transnational cinema now?

The term 'transnational' has been adopted more and more by film studies recently to discuss films that can't be explained or analysed only in relation to a single national context. As such, the term has come to be applied to cinemas dating back to the inception of cinema, as co-productions developed, individuals moved around the world to make films, or where films were distributed globally. Silent cinema was a transnational phenomenon. Films didn't need to be dubbed or subtitled, and intertitles could easily be changed. Filmmakers were already moving around the world to make films: Alfred Hitchcock served his apprenticeship at UFA in Germany before returning to the UK to direct films like *The Lodger: A Story of the London Fog* (1927). With him he took the expressionist style that had been popular in Germany in the early 1920s. Later, of course, Hitchcock produced films in the US, making him a transnational filmmaker. Some of the movements described under the term 'transnational cinema' are often as old as cinema itself, as is 'transnational', with its earliest uses dating back to the 1910s and 1920s to describe hyphenate or migrant identities: trans-nationalities.

In *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (1999), Aihwa Ong defines *transnationality* as a 'condition of cultural interconnectedness and mobility across space', something which has been 'intensified under late capitalism'. *Transnationalism* she describes as 'the cultural specificities of global processes, tracing the multiplicity of the uses and conceptions of "culture"' (p. 4). Ong's definitions here help us to understand how we might refer to the transnational as a way of talking about the movement of people, capital and culture across borders in an era of globalisation, of 'human practices and cultural logics'. Transnationality 'alludes to the *transversal*, the *transactional*, the *translational*, and the *transgressive* aspects of contemporary behaviour and imagination that are incited, enabled and regulated by the changing logics of states and capitalism' (p. 4). As conceptual terms, 'transnationality' and 'transnationalism' (just as we might distinguish between postmodernity and postmodernism) provide a range of means for considering how culture is affected by the changing dynamics of national boundaries, migration, economic globalisation and the flow of cultural material.

The term transnational has been described by Daniela Berghahn and Claudia Sternberg as 'a generic category that comprises different aspects of film production, distribution and consumption which *transcend* national film cultures' (2010, p. 22; emphasis added). This is an important argument in that transnational cinema does not replace thinking about national cinemas, but supplements it. National cinemas remain an important and relevant emphasis in film cultures, as our example of the film store evidences, but the 'trans-' prefix denotes thinking about how cinema crosses

and transcends national boundaries, just as individuals, capital, films and culture do. As Sonia Livingstone has remarked, it 'has become imperative to examine the transnational flows of media technologies, formats and specific texts, the rise of powerful institutional networks and media conglomerates and the practices of interpretative communities within and across national borders' (2013, p. 417). Hence the study of transnational cinema grapples with a range of both hegemonic, culturally dominant forms and counter-hegemonic, marginal ones.

In the introduction to their collection *Transnational Cinema: A Film Reader* (2006), Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden state that:

The global circulation of money, commodities, information, and human beings is giving rise to films whose aesthetic and narrative dynamics, and even the modes of emotional identification they elicit, reflect the impact of advanced capitalism and new media technologies as components of an increasingly interconnected world-system. The transnational comprises both globalization – in cinematic terms, Hollywood's domination of world film markets – and the counterhegemonic responses of filmmakers from former colonial and Third World countries. (p. 1)

While Hollywood has always had a stronghold on most of the world's media markets, aside from a few, like India or South Korea, its dominance has often been considered a form of cultural imperialism where its outside influence is considered a threat to the local film culture. Andrew Higson, however, has viewed this as limiting, the national seen only in a binary opposition between 'them' and 'us':

The movement of films across borders may introduce exotic elements to the 'indigenous' culture. One response to this is the anxious concern about the effects of cultural imperialism, a concern that the local culture will be infected, even destroyed by the foreign invader. A contrary response is that the introduction of exotic elements may well have a liberating or democratising effect on the local culture, expanding the cultural repertoire. A third possibility is that the foreign commodity will not be treated as exotic by the local audience, but will be interpreted according to an 'indigenous' frame of reference; that is, it will be metaphorically translated into a local idiom. (2006, p. 19)

The 'foreign' influence therefore may not be seen simply as an 'invader' but subject to localisation. In terms of cultural expression, films can be remade locally, as they routinely have been in Turkey, India and Hong Kong, as discussed in Chapter 7, or appropriated and re-read subject to local customs

and subjectivities. As Koichi Iwabuchi has noted in his book *Recentring Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism* (2002), Japanese and Taiwanese youngsters are likely to see an American brand like McDonald's through their own indigenous frame, and not as 'American'; in this sense transnational commodities can often take on a culturally odourless quality which makes them more likely to be subsumed by a process of localisation (p. 46). Hence they become integrated into a local frame of reference, even though they are transnational products, or even products seen as representing a strong sense of national specificity such as the hamburger (infused with a strong American odour, yet named after a town in Germany).

However, to see transnational flows of culture in these terms can be problematic. Such flows are often uneven and hierarchised. As Iwabuchi argues, Japan can see itself as part of Asia, albeit superior to it, but also subject to strong cultural influence from the US. Likewise, many American films and television programmes are often shot across national boundaries; sometimes these films use international locations to stand in for American ones, such as Toronto with its strong resemblance to several cities in the US. This is frequently a consequence of budgetary necessity, since filmmaking in Canada is often cheaper than in the US, and favourable tax incentives exist to encourage filmmakers to shoot outside the US. Other films, such as the Bourne or Bond films, are shot around the world, something which brings investment to the countries featured, but their content is generally rooted in typically American or western hegemonic concerns about terrorism or cold war politics. However, although these films bring investment into other countries, this is often at the expense of local forms of expression and subjectivity, as the focus of the narrative remains the white male protagonist, with some local characters provided only for supporting purposes. Consequently, these flows tend to return to the top of their respective hierarchies.

In the introduction to the first edition of the *Transnational Cinemas* journal, Deborah Shaw and Armida De La Garza (2010) articulated 15 different categories or themes relating to the study of cinema's transnationalism, each of which we will explore at different points throughout this book:

1. Modes of production, distribution and exhibition
2. Co-productions and collaborative networks
3. New technologies and changing patterns of consumption
4. Transnational film theories
5. Migration, journeying and other forms of border-crossing
6. Exilic and diasporic film-making
7. Film and language
8. Questions of authorship and stardom

9. Cross-fertilization and cultural exchange
10. Indigenous cinema and video and the cinemas of ethnic minorities
11. Cultural policy
12. The ethics of transnationalism
13. Historical transnational practices
14. Interrelationships between local, national and the global
15. Transnational and postcolonial politics (2010, p. 4).

The breadth of themes in the list outlined by Shaw and De La Garza demonstrate the complexities in the study of transnational cinemas, where a singular approach, they argue, would fall into ‘an essentialist trap’ in which complexity is elided in favour of ‘flattened’ and ‘over-simplified answers’ (p. 3). There is no single condition of transnationalism for cinema. Shaw later revisited this list in an article entitled ‘Deconstructing and Reconstructing “Transnational Cinema”’ (2013) in which she revises some of the terminology, but also introduces some new categories (these are italicised):

1. Transnational modes of production, distribution and exhibition
2. *Transnational modes of narration*
3. *Cinema of globalisation*
4. *Films with multiple locations*
5. Exilic and diasporic filmmaking
6. Film and cultural exchange
7. Transnational influences
8. *Transnational critical approaches*
9. Transnational viewing practices
10. Transregional/transcommunity films
11. Transnational stars
12. Transnational directors
13. The ethics of transnationalism
14. Transnational collaborative networks
15. *National films* (p. 52).

Perhaps most interestingly, Shaw adds ‘national films’ to this list. This final category emphasises the continuing relevance of national cinema for a transnational frame of interpretation and study, that the national retains its prominence in terms of cultural policy, identity, economics and ideology. The imagined communities of nation-states remain prominent in ideologically constructed discourses around immigration, national identity, religion and regional politics. The UK’s relationship with the European Union has repeatedly engaged with conceptions of nationhood and sovereignty, especially in media reporting about the relationship, its renegotiation or its end,

and those discourses continue to have a relationship with cinema that is reflected on the screen.

All of the categories mentioned by Shaw and De La Garza span the range of themes and practices that engage with the flow of individuals (exilic and diasporic filmmaking; transnational stars and directors; questions of authorship and stardom), the circulation of texts and their influences (cultural exchange; transnational influences; modes of production, distribution and exhibition), and texts that engage with the condition of living in a transnationally interconnected world (the cinema of globalisation; stories of migration, journeying and other forms of border-crossing; and the transnational modes of narration that express the condition of living as a transnational subject). These two lists therefore give us a broad set of core concepts through which we can explore the range of expressions, on industrial, individual and political levels, that span the field of transnational film studies.

Challenging the centrist model

World cinema has been a problematic term, one that continues to circulate in film cultures. The national cinemas it describes can be transnational in nature, although that doesn't necessarily mean that transnational cinema is considered the same thing. Indeed, as Chris Berry has pointed out, for "transnational cinema" ... to have any value, it needs to be more than just another way of saying "international cinema" or "world cinema" (2010, p. 112), and there needs to be clear difference in what those terms articulate. World cinema is often seen through a lens of Otherness. The term often relates to cinemas not in the English language, and therefore generally subtitled. It has also often been used as a term to refer to a cinema characterised by humanist realism, such as that of Italian Neorealist films following the Second World War, or those from Iran or Senegal. What is often not included in the term 'world cinema' is Hollywood, against which all world cinemas are considered to struggle, resist and/or oppose. While Hollywood might be highly transnational, border-crossing in practice and in its influences, it has traditionally been posited as outside, even above, world cinema, and as such has been the way in which value is assigned to world cinemas. This constructs a binary opposition between Hollywood and the rest of the world, a dominant centre against a struggling Othered periphery.

This viewpoint has been challenged. In her book chapter, 'Towards a Positive Definition of World Cinema,' Lúcia Nagib problematises the binaristic conception of world cinema as split between the cinema of Hollywood and all other cinemas; while world cinema might seem an 'all-encompassing, democratic vocation', its conceptualisation has tended to be 'restrictive and negative, as "non-Hollywood cinema"' (2006, p. 30). Consequently, Nagib

argues, the dominant form of Hollywood cinema has been conceived as a method of assessing the value of a world cinema that sees Hollywood as a means of 'viewing world cinema as "alternative" and "different"' (p. 31). 'A truly encompassing and democratic approach,' she concludes, 'has to get rid of the binary system as a whole' (p. 33), escaping the them-and-Other approach to the understanding, categorisation and evaluation of world cinemas as a homogenised block. She proposes 'a method in which Hollywood and the West would cease to be the centre of film history ... [so that] once the idea of a single centre is eliminated, nothing needs to be excluded from the world cinema map, not even Hollywood' (p. 34). This inclusive approach would be 'polycentric' in the sense that it would be pluralistic rather than binaristic, posing no us-and-them scenario so typical of Othered art forms. Finally, Nagib gives us a series of points for discussion:

- World cinema is simply the cinema of the world. It has no centre. It is not the other, but it is us. It has no beginning and no end, but is a global process. World cinema, as the world itself, is circulation.
- World cinema is not a discipline, but a method, a way of cutting across film history according to waves of relevant films and movements, thus creating flexible geographies.
- As a positive, inclusive, democratic concept, world cinema allows all sorts of theoretical approaches, provided they are not based on the binary perspective. (p. 35)

Nagib's call for a positive definition of world cinema aims to see it recuperated from the margins of cultural expression, as defined by its opposition to Hollywood since the early twentieth century. Such a move would see norms set via a more inclusive, democratic methodology, especially as film history is concerned. The focus on flexible geographies allows us to understand the flow of influence and ideas in the history of global cinema as more interconnected and diverse than simple binaries of cultural imperialism and resistance. Therefore, one might not see the New German Cinema of the 1960s and 1970s simply as a rejection of the norms set by a dominant Hollywood system, but through its relationship with the Third Cinema films of Glauber Rocha and Brazil's *Cinema Novo*. Seeing these channels of flow as more open and inclusive can help us understand how transnational cinemas are connected, not from a Hollywood centre outward, but in multidirectional and polycentric directions.

That is not say that this move away from a centre/margins model has been unchallenged. In a later introduction to the book *Theorizing World Cinema*, Nagib, with Chris Perriam and Rajinder Dudrah, defines an 'important part of the conversation between transnational and world cinema [as] the

restitution to the former of a radical potential that the latter embodies, but whose negative definition in opposition to the mainstream has all too often elided' (2012, p. xxiv). Whereas world cinema 'includes and takes forward radical elements of filmmaking and film critique, including the questioning of imposed ideas of national cinemas', transnational cinemas can be more conservative by nature. The major centres of global filmmaking – Los Angeles, Mexico City, Bombay and Hong Kong – they allege, might incorporate mechanisms relating to transnational modes of production or identification, but their expression can often be seen as less challenging, more hegemonic in nature: 'they almost certainly have not been consistently interstitial, alternative, resistant or troubling of the status quo' (p. xxiv). So, while a world cinema will tend to be more radical, a mainstream transnationalism may not be interstitial (as coming from a space in-between borders or states), challenging or opposed to ideological norms relating to nation or to politics.

This view is one echoed by John Hess and Patricia R. Zimmerman in their manifesto for transnational documentaries. They draw a distinction between corporatist and adversarial transnationalisms. In the corporatist sense, there is movement towards homogenisation and deterritorialisation, although that deconstruction of the territory is one that reconstructs a space that is a product of globalised capital. Within this matrix, 'racial, gender, and sexual identities are to be dematerialized, depoliticized, declawed and corporalized into new, further segmented markets for the new accelerated capital growth. The conflicts that mark and define these ... are neutralized within commodity fetishism' (2006, p. 99). The media landscape of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, of MTV, Disney/ABC, Sony-Columbia, has appropriated the radical oppositional politics of race, sexuality and gender into advertising campaigns, alongside the depoliticisation of rap music and courting of gay audiences. Capital's fluid, state-less travel online controls and minimises difference by making the globally disenfranchised invisible or abject; Hess and Zimmerman's examples include: AIDS patients without access to affordable healthcare; immigrant sweatshop workers; victims of genocide in Europe and Africa; ethnic communities in the US.

Adversarial transnationalism therefore 'wrenches the notion of the transnational away from its corporatist location, moving it instead into the disruptive realms of bodies, people, movements and representational practices that dislodge corporate influence by creating new places for social justice on a global scale' (p. 99). Since the epochal shifts of the end of the twentieth century, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Tian'anmen Square protests in China and the first Gulf War, that marked a restructuring of capitalism and global politics, Hess and Zimmerman identify not only a growth of a different kind of documentary, but also an explicit need for one; one that

opposes the traditional relationship between nation and documentary first seen in the work of John Grierson and the GPO film unit in Britain in the 1930s. These necessary documentary films, such as *Handsworth Songs* (John Akomfrah and Black Audio Collective, 1986) and *Obsessive Becoming* (Daniel Reeves, 1995), for Hess and Zimmerman, employ alternative representational strategies to interrogate the notion of nation through their engagement with history, power, diasporic identities and the transgression of borders, both actual and metaphysical. Such films, they argue, 'refuse the fragmentation, isolation and nationalism that is the corollary of corporatist transnationalism by looking for and imagining new social and aesthetic alliances ... They are acts of refusal and hope' (p. 105). As this shows, we can see more than one kind of transnationalism: a type that adopts the strategies of corporatist transnationalism, the more conservative mode that Nagib, Perriam and Dudrah demonstrated, and the more adversarial type called for as a necessity by Hess and Zimmerman.

World cinema at the margins

Challenges such as these to the construction of a binary way of seeing the separation between a hegemonic, often western, cinema and the rest of the world viewed as being at the fringes of view, contest the Eurocentrism of viewing world cinema in oppositional terms. Eurocentric viewpoints proliferate globally, not just in Europe but in cultures described as neo-European, such as in North America or Australia. In their seminal text, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (1994), Ella Shohat and Robert Stam argue that:

[So] embedded is Eurocentrism in everyday life, so pervasive, that it often goes unnoticed. The centuries of axiomatic European domination inform the general culture, the everyday language, and the media, engendering a fictitious sense of the innate superiority of European-derived cultures and people. (p. 1)

The tendency to see world cinema through the lens of a method that assigns value to texts, movements and national cinemas only through their difference from the hegemonic norms of Hollywood echoes Shohat and Stam's point that opponents of multiculturalism represent a 'procrustean forcing of cultural heterogeneity into a single paradigmatic perspective in which Europe is seen as the unique source of meaning' (pp. 1–2). Europe is therefore offered as an originator of civilisation, through which all others can be measured and assigned value. This is like the ways in which an English-language western cinema can be posited as a Eurocentric overarching criterion of value

through which all other cinemas can be measured in opposition or in relation. The corporatist transnationalism of Hess and Zimmerman is one such way of retaining a Eurocentric focus on the colonisation of people and territories, to depoliticise and integrate them into a pre-existing homogenising subjectivity, excluded as Other or defined by lack, or through a 'mania for hierarchy' that sees marginalised groups as inferior (Shohat and Stam, 1994, p. 23). This retains colonialist discourses that expel those outside hegemonic norms to the margins, just as world cinemas are banished to the periphery in traditional ways of thinking about national cinemas.

Shohat and Stam suggest a shift from monocentric Eurocentrism to a form of polycentric multiculturalism. 'Within a polycentric vision,' they argue:

the world has many dynamic cultural locations, many possible vantage points. The emphasis in 'polycentrism,' for us, is not on spatial or primary points of origin but on fields of power, energy, and struggle. The 'poly,' for us, does not refer to a finite list of centers of power but rather introduces a systematic principle of differentiation, relationality, and linkage. No single community or part of the world, whatever its economic or political power, is epistemologically privileged. (p. 48)

In many ways, this call for a multiple, hybrid and pluralist manner of seeing the world is echoed in Nagib's view of world cinema as having no centre, 'positive, inclusive, democratic' without Otherness. To see a world cinema as having Otherness or being Other is to posit a norm against which those criteria are defined, which would be to retain a Eurocentric way of seeing and therefore to epistemologically privilege a community or part of the world, even if that part of the world might be defined as loosely as 'the west'.

Drawing on Shohat and Stam's ground-breaking work, Dina Iordanova, David Martin-Jones and Belén Vidal have argued, in their collection *Cinema at the Periphery*, that 'the relationship between center and periphery is no longer necessarily a straightforward, hierarchical one, where the center seeks to subsume its margins' (2010, pp. 6–7). In the age of globalisation and the political upheavals of the late twentieth century mentioned by Hess and Zimmerman, the oppositional geography of centre and margin, like that of Nagib's argument, becomes less relevant as transnational forms of cinema and storytelling emerge. Central to their book's project is the understanding that:

many new films from the periphery subvert traditional hierarchies of location, as they come from, and/or are set in, places traditionally deemed remote, dependent, subaltern, minor, small or insular. Their key themes and narratives are defined by a growing awareness of instability or change,

by homelessness or incessant journeying and border crossing, counteracting the certainty of fixed coordinates. (Jordanova, et al., 2010, p. 7)

This final point is an important one for considering some of the key themes of transnational cinema, which is often marked (as Shaw and De La Garza mentioned) by homelessness, journeying and border-crossing. Marginal cinemas of Scotland, New Zealand, Quebec and Aboriginal Australian filmmaking provide a polycentric and flexible conception that go beyond the dichotomous homogenising of 'the rest' in a way that causes the editors to ask (polemically) if the periphery might now constitute a new centre (Jordanova, et al., 2010, p. 17).

Jordanova also offers an overview of a transnational mode of distribution that is hybrid, often unofficial and diasporic, that might be driving towards a model that displaces the traditional centre of world cinema. Traditionally, Jordanova points out, global distribution has been difficult to measure, whereas it has been easy to track Hollywood box office grosses through trade papers like *Variety* or *Screen International* or latterly with tracking websites like the Amazon-owned *Box Office Mojo*, which has only partial international data. She points to research that has shown that Hollywood controls 'less than 70 per cent of the international market' (Jordanova, 2010, p. 29), while global audiences might now be 'more susceptible to new, alternative models that may come from elsewhere', challenging the presumed longevity of the Hollywood hegemony and bringing us 'a more flexible vision of the future' (p. 30). Non-Hollywood films are facilitated by a set of transnational channels that straddle official and unofficial distribution to offer films to audiences in ways that challenge perceived hierarchies. The festival network forms an official channel that offers non-Hollywood films exposure to distribution and exhibition by supporting different kinds of filmmaking, such as the Berlin Film Festival's support of Fatih Akin's *Head On* (*Gegen die Wand*, 2004) that brought focus to the Turkish-German filmmaker's exploration of diasporic Turkish communities in Germany, or festivals that cater to diasporic audiences like the annual Polish Film Festival in Los Angeles. Local distribution of films to diasporic audiences, such as that offering Indian films to British-Indian and South Asian audiences in England, also broadens the range of films available, both officially in cinemas and unofficially through the ease of importing DVDs via the internet over the last 15 years. Likewise, internet streaming and downloading has facilitated the expansion of film distribution, again through both official and unofficial methods, with platforms including Netflix offering a range of films that cover global genres such as anime, martial arts, Bollywood or films from Nigeria, colloquially known as Nollywood, such as *October 1* (Kunle Afolayan, 2014) or *Onye Ozi* (Obi Emelonye, 2013). Access to such films remains limited through such

platforms; through unofficial channels the range expands, with peer-to-peer sharing or YouTube's selection of segmented and whole classic films, via which the swiftness of exchange is generally much faster than through official channels. This is something to which we'll return in Chapter 8, but is important to highlight at this stage, as, for Iordanova, the growth of decentred or hybrid channels for transnational distribution offers a flexible way of considering the growth of global hubs and distribution networks that challenge the centrist model that promoted the supremacy of the Hollywood model. This enables the movement of films across borders in ways unseen even 20 years ago.

Hybridity has become an important focus for thinking about how transnational cinema engages with border-crossing and the ways in which culture engages with globalisation, such as the challenge to 'the west' and 'the rest' opposition posited by Koichi Iwabuchi, following Stuart Hall's argument regarding post-colonial hybridity in 'When was the Post-colonial? Thinking at the Limit' (Hall, 1996, p. 247):

[Hybridity] fruitfully displaces our conception of clearly demarcated national/cultural boundaries, which have been based upon a binary opposition between 'us' and 'them,' 'the West' and 'the Rest,' and the colonizer and the colonized, with a postcolonial perspective that 'oblige(s) us to re-read the binaries as forms of transculturation, of cultural translation, destined to trouble the here/there cultural binaries forever'. (Iwabuchi, 2002, p. 51)

Once more we encounter ways in which the transnational has been conceived as a concept that destabilises former binaries and the neat borders between nations and identities that Eurocentrism constructed so problematically. Iwabuchi's analysis of the ways in which Japanese cultural products move and are localised around East Asia demonstrates how 'global cultural flows have decentred the power structure *and* vitalized local practices of appropriation and consumption of foreign cultural products and meanings' (p. 35). Thus there is no longer a top-down flow to the ways in which cultural products and their meanings circulate around the world – this need not be thought of as a process of cultural imperialism, but a process of localisation through which cultural products are indigenised. As Iwabuchi demonstrates:

Transnationally circulated images and commodities ... tend to become culturally odorless in the sense that origins are subsumed by the local transculturation process. By appropriating, hybridizing, indigenizing, and consuming images and commodities of 'foreign' origin in multiple unforeseen ways, even American culture is conceived as 'ours' in many places. (p. 46)

Processes of hybridisation and appropriation localise products across borders, just as film remakes might do (something we'll explore in more detail in Chapter 7), so that those texts and images become odourless. For Iwabuchi, it is the lack of culturally specific odour or sensibility, as seen in the lack of ethnicity in the design of anime and manga characters, that allows for this rewriting of the text to happen in the moment of transculturation as the text or product travels across global cultural flows.

The notion of 'global cultural flows' upon which Iwabuchi draws comes most strongly from the work of Arjun Appadurai. In his article, 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy' (1990), Appadurai argues that the 'new global cultural economy has to be understood as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order, which cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models' (p. 296). While this centre/margins argument has been discussed earlier in the chapter, Appadurai's foundational contribution to the theoretical background of this subject can't be understated. His overarching contention was that the global economy at the time he wrote his article was becoming complicated by 'fundamental disjunctures' and disconnections between economics, culture and politics. To further explore the disjunctures between these areas, Appadurai proposed looking at the issue through five facets of 'global cultural flow':

- *Ethnoscap*es: the people whose movement across borders reflects the shifting boundaries of the world that are challenging the politics of and relationships between nations: 'tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guestworkers and other moving groups and persons' (p. 297);
- *Mediascap*es: the spread of the electronic means by which images of the world can be disseminated and produced, as well as the images created by such technologies across a range of genres: documentary, fictional, news, print, cinema;
- *Technoscap*es: the global distribution of technologies across borders and industries;
- *Finanscap*es: flows of global capital, electronic and actual;
- *Ideoscap*es: like mediascapes, an interrelated series of images in the service of ideologies of nation, or in opposition to such ideologies.

Each of the aspects that categorise cultural flow is subject to a 'fluid, irregular' formation (p. 297), and the push towards deterritorialisation creates fertile grounds for the disjunctures between the different aspects of cultural flow to be exploited. For instance, films are made for, and about, diasporic communities, as Appadurai argues is the case with Mira Nair's *India Cabaret* (1985), a documentary about a group of women who work in a strip club in Mumbai. The film examines the disjuncture between the everyday respectability of the

women's daytime roles and the scandalous immorality of their nighttime personas as dancers and prostitutes. For Appadurai, it is telling that some of women are economic migrants from the southern, and less cosmopolitan, area of Kerala:

These tragedies of displacement could certainly be replayed in a more detailed analysis of the relations between the Japanese and German sex tours to Thailand and the tragedies of the sex trade in Bangkok, and in other similar loops which tie together fantasies about the other, the conveniences and seductions of travel, the economics of global trade and the brutal mobility fantasies that dominate gender politics in many parts of Asia and the world at large. (p. 303)

This conjunction of *mediascape* and *ideoscape* in Nair's film and in the related politics of the global sex trade that intersect in the deterritorialised global cultural economy demonstrate the complications and consequences of the disjunctures between the different dimensions of cultural flows. So, while Iwabuchi uses the term to describe the ways in which Japanese or Taiwanese youngsters might adopt or relate to a potentially foreign product as 'local', this doesn't mean that the transculturation of products across cultural flows is leading us into utopian territory, nor ultimately an equal playing field. As Iwabuchi himself argues, it 'does not mean that the United States has lost its cultural hegemony' (p. 41). And likewise, discussing the common practice of Hollywood remaking films from Japan and South Korea, Gary Xu has stated that 'Hollywoodization is irreversible' (2007, p. 158). He argues that there is an '[o]veremphasis on multidirectional ... flows of cultural production ... If all cultural productions were interconnected, deterritorialized, and freely exchanged, then Hollywood would have been dispersed and would have lost its special interests deeply rooted in American hegemony'. The 'biggest irony is that the more transnational national cinemas become, the more dominant Hollywood is' (p. 151).

During this section of the introductory chapter, we've looked at ways in which the centrist/marginal model in world cinema is challenged as we shift towards notions of transnational cinema. Historically, the relationship between 'the west' and 'the rest' has been defined as a binary, with difference from a hegemonic norm demarcated by Eurocentric or Hollywood standards against which all other cinemas or film movements draw their value. As we've seen, there are different ways of considering the meaning of the centre and the margins, and how hybridity and polycentrism are changing the way we (can) think about cinemas at the periphery or the movement of texts, products and people within cultural flows. The section ends with a note of caution, however, that while there is a struggle to recognise a changing

system, this doesn't mean that the current system has no centre or that Hollywood doesn't retain a prominent place with that system, despite a shift away from binaries towards hybridity; the terrain is still uneven and cultural flows are unequal. This is something to which we'll return throughout the book as we consider how power relations are reconsidered or reconfigured in transnational cinema.

'Below-global/above-national'

The final section of this chapter considers some of the ways in which the study of world, nation and transnational cinemas are interconnected. Although the consideration of transnational cinema is a fairly recent development in film studies, it doesn't automatically overwrite other modes of analysis; that is to say that it does not do away with thinking about cinema at the level of nation and national cultural policy, nor how it expresses aspects of national identity or local concerns. As Nataša Ďurovičová has remarked, in the preface to the important edited collection *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives* (2010a), transnational is an 'intermediate and open term' that 'acknowledges the persistent agency of the state' while 'the prefix "trans-" implies relations of unevenness and mobility' (Ďurovičová, 2010a, p. x). She identifies two broad methodologies through which the transnational can be located: the first is geographical, charting the border-crossing that has become a political factor of emerging globalisation (such as that discussed by Appadurai) in which mismatched or unequal spaces are brought into one another's spheres of influence and negotiation; the second is a historical approach, locating narratives that position the transnational as 'below-global/above-national' (p. x). Since 'global' denotes a totality, the analysis takes place at the level of the supranational; like the 'trans-' prefix, the 'supra-' prefix also denotes an organisation that goes above or beyond the level of the national. The sub-global, supranational level of analysis that Ďurovičová describes assigns important agency to the national as a component of transnational analysis; therefore we'll begin the next chapter with an overview of approaches to national cinema. We'll see how modes of analysis that consider the nation have developed into more transnational modes that explore the 'contact zones' of world cinema, as Kathleen Newman calls them, in relation to cultural exchange between national cinemas. Like other critics we've examined in this chapter, Newman positions the transnational interactions between different zones as a way of 'moving beyond any tendency to reduce the centers and peripheries of present-day capitalism to the past familiar binary of cultural imperialism' (2010, p. 9). Like so many of the other commentators in this chapter, Newman is aware of previous discourses of nation and subjectivity that come from binaristic Eurocentric points of

view. Thinking in terms of transnational cinema can explore the fluidity and polycentrism of world cinema's system with multiple centres, its unidirectional but imbalanced lines of flow, and the ways in which globalisation has shaped it. Therefore:

What is now at stake in film studies is the question of how motion pictures register, at formal level of narrative, broad and long-term social transformations, that is, changes in the capitalist world-economy at the regional and global scales and over multiple decades. While this is a question of recognizing ongoing inequalities and how they may articulate one with another, it also must be a question of how film registers, and therefore serves as evidence of, equality among and between peoples over and against the hierarchies of capitalism. (p. 9)

Once again, Newman returns us to questions of power and imbalance and how cinema represents and engages with these questions of inequality that have emerged because of changes in the global economy. As we'll see throughout the book, this has been imagined in a few ways, not just at a formal level of narrative, but in terms of industrial organisation, as well as in the transnational stories that filmmakers choose to tell.

Similarly, Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim's article in the first issue of *Transnational Cinemas* journal, entitled 'Concepts of Transnational Cinema: Towards a Critical Transnationalism in Film Studies' (2010), reiterates these points, albeit with an important warning, in their suggestion that:

the term 'transnational cinema' appears to be used and applied with increasing frequency as both a descriptive and conceptual marker, it also tends, for the most part, to be taken as a given – as shorthand for an international or supranational mode of film production whose impact and reach lies beyond the bounds of the national. The danger here is that the national simply becomes displaced or negated in such analysis, as if it ceases to exist, when in fact the national continues to exert the force of its presence even within transnational film-making practices. Moreover, the term 'transnational' is, on occasion, used simply to indicate international co-production or collaboration between technical and artistic personnel from across the world, without any real consideration of what the aesthetic, political or economic implications of such transnational collaboration might mean – employing a difference that, we might say, makes no difference at all. (p. 10)

Ultimately, 'transnational' is a term whose use we must be wary about. As has been demonstrated repeatedly during this chapter's introduction to the discourses of transnational and world cinema, the value in engaging with

notions of transnational cinema in film studies is its ability to interrogate questions of power, inequality and ideological negotiation across borders that can function not only on a global basis, but within nations and between nation-states in more regional and continental formations. As Higbee and Lim note here, the deployment of the term in film studies has the 'potential to obscure the question of imbalances of power (political, economic and ideological) in this transnational exchange' (p. 9) rather than to engage fully with them as a descriptive, rather than critical, term.

The final issues to draw from Higbee and Lim's overview of approaches to transnational cinema are the three strands of transnational analysis that they identify in ongoing work about concepts of transnational cinema in film studies. Synthesising work to date, they define three themes of analysis that we will pick up in a variety of ways throughout the rest of the book:

1. The analysis of the movement of films and filmmakers across borders in terms of production, distribution and exhibition;
2. The development of regional cinemas, 'examining film cultures/national cinemas which invest in a shared cultural heritage and/or geo-political boundary';
3. 'Work on diasporic, exilic and postcolonial cinemas, which aims, through its analysis of the cinematic representation of cultural identity, to challenge the western (neocolonial) construct of nation and national culture and, by extension, national cinema as stable and Eurocentric in its ideological norms as well as its narrative and aesthetic formations' (p. 9).

In each approach, they argue, there are drawbacks and limitations. In the first, the consideration of films' movement across borders, their adoption by local audiences, and the flow of individuals in production, broader questions of inequality and disparity might be elided in favour of questions of production and localisation, whereby important political questions of difference go answered. Whereas the approach to the national might be 'limiting,' using Andrew Higson's term (2006), such a method has the danger of making the notion of the transnational 'no difference at all'. The second approach, one that might be used to explore issues relating to Scandinavian cinema, may not significantly benefit from being considered transnational, where a term such as supranational might sufficiently demonstrate how a regional cinema functions at a level above the national. The final method, which draws strongly on the work of Hamid Naficy (2001) and Laura Marks (2000) (both of whom we'll encounter later, particularly in Chapter 5), engages with the political questions of difference and cultural identity potentially overlooked by the first, but can, Higbee and Lim argue, tend to focus only on cinemas on the margins, such as the Maghrebi-French or Algerian émigré cinemas that

examine the place of migrant communities *within* France (*cinéma beur*), and therefore the experience of displaced or migrant communities positioned somewhere between home and host communities within nations. We will return to these three themes throughout the book, although it's important to note that each has potential drawbacks and limitations, and the study of transnational cinema can fall into the trap of potentially minimising the significance of questions of difference and inequality that recur time and again in the study of national, world and transnational cinemas. Finally, however, as Higbee and Lim note:

a critical transnationalism does not ghettoize transnational film-making in interstitial and marginal spaces but rather interrogates how these film-making activities negotiate with the national on all levels – from cultural policy to financial sources, from the multiculturalism of difference to how it reconfigures the nation's image of itself. (p. 18)

The concept of transnational cinema therefore allows us to view the spectrum of ways the national interacts with the transnational, from local concerns to more global ones, and with the place of the nation-state in an increasingly borderless world. We'll look at these issues from a series of perspectives across the rest of the book.

Discussion questions:

- How useful do you think terms like national, world and transnational cinemas are in considering contemporary cinema?
- In what ways might the terms be too broad?
- What kind of difficulties do you think we might encounter when studying cinemas across borders?
- How much do you think we should try to 'think globally' and see beyond mono-cultural points of view?

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