

Cinema and the City in History and Theory

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A whole history remains to be written of *spaces* – which would at the same time be the history of *powers* – from the great strategies of geopolitics to the little tactics of the habitat.

Michel Foucault, “The Eye of Power”¹

Cinema and the City

This book is concerned with the relationship between the most important cultural form – cinema – and the most important form of social organization – the city – in the twentieth century (and, for the time being at least, the twenty-first century), as this relationship operates and is experienced in society as a lived social reality.

Since the end of the nineteenth century, the fortunes of cinema and the city have been inextricably linked on a number of levels. Thematically, the cinema has, since its inception, been constantly fascinated with the representation of the distinctive spaces, lifestyles, and human conditions of the city from the Lumière brothers’ Paris of 1895 to John Woo’s Hong Kong of 1995. Formally, the cinema has long had a striking and distinctive ability to capture and express the spatial complexity, diversity, and social dynamism of the city through *mise-en-scène*, location filming, lighting, cinematography, and editing, while thinkers from Walter Benjamin – confronted by the shocking novelties of modernity, mass society, manufacture, and mechanical reproduction – to Jean Baudrillard – mesmerized by the ominous glamour of postmodernity, individualism, consumption, and electronic reproduction – have recognized and observed the curious and telling correlation between the mobility and visual and aural sensations of the city and the mobility and visual and aural sensations of the cinema. Industrially, cinema has long played an important role in the cultural economies of cities all over the world

in the production, distribution, and exhibition of motion pictures, and in the cultural geographies of certain cities particularly marked by cinema (from Los Angeles to Paris to Bombay) whose built environment and civic identity are both significantly constituted by film industry and films.²

The nexus *cinema-city*, then, provides a rich avenue for investigation and discussion of key issues which ought to be of common interest in the study of society (in this case, the city) and in the study of culture (in this case, the cinema) and in the study of their thematic, formal, and industrial relationship historically and today. Indeed, interest in their relationship has been growing significantly of late – particularly with regard to the thematic and formal representation of the city – in the fields of Film Studies, Cultural Studies, and Architecture.³ The central innovative aim of this book is to contribute to the study of the cinema and to the study of society by focusing on the relationship between cinema and the city as *lived social realities* in a range of urban societies of the present and recent past.

Film Studies and Sociology

One of the fundamental premises of this book is that interdisciplinary contact between Film Studies and Sociology (among other disciplines, including Cultural Studies, Geography, and Urban Studies) can be profoundly useful and fruitful in addressing key issues which the two disciplines share (or ought to share) in common at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and which have either emerged in recent years or which have become especially acute in the contemporary cultural and social context.

These include: the perennial issue of the relationship between culture and society, particularly in what is now commonly referred to as the current global postmodern social, and cultural context; the operation of political, social, and cultural power in the urban centers of the present global system; the historical description (“periodization”) of social and cultural change through such categories as “industrialism,” “post-industrialism,” “modernity” and “postmodernity”; and, as a route to the better understanding of these issues, the concept of spatialization as a means of description and analysis in the study of both culture and society, cinema and the city, today.

As Andrew Tudor and other commentators have pointed out, there has been a paucity of positive contact between the disciplines of Film Studies and Sociology.⁴ On the whole, their relationship has been a historically unhappy one, most sociological interest in cinema since the early days of the medium having taken either one of two related forms. One area of sociological interest in cinema has, since the 1920s, focused in a limited and indiscriminating way on “the measurable effects of film” on particular groups in society – typically, young people – and almost always with the conviction that those

effects were bad – as, for example, in the case of the age-old debate over links between cinema and crime, youth delinquency, or violence. Since the 1940s, a second area, particularly informed by the cultural elitism and instrumentalism of the Frankfurt School, has emphasized the status of cinema as just another form of mass communications exercising control in a mass society of unintelligent and unindividuated consumers (a view, of Hollywood cinema at least, which has certainly had many adherents in Film Studies too). Both sociological approaches to cinema have been guilty of mechanical and deterministic thinking which has generated little common ground with the central interests of Film Studies since its inception in the 1960s.

The larger part of Film Studies over the years has concerned itself primarily with the language of cinema and with various approaches to cinema as a powerful signifying system which have focused on the individual, the subject, identity, representation – for the most part, with the *reflection* of society in films – with a strong faith in theory and an almost complete distrust of empiricism. Film Studies has been primarily interested in the film as *text* (comprising visual language, verbal systems, dialogue, characterization, narrative, and “story”) and with the *exegesis* of the text according to one or other hermeneutic (for example, psychoanalysis, Marxism, myth-criticism, semiotics, formalism, or some combination thereof).⁵ Such issues have dominated largely as a result of the discipline’s origins in (and continuing close relationship with) literary studies, while newer subjects such as Media Studies and Communications have been better at developing sociological approaches (for example, to television) precisely because of their origins, in large part, within Sociology, at a “safe distance” from close concern with the text.⁶

One of the aims of this book is to recognize this history by proposing something of a challenge to Film Studies and Sociology to work to produce a sociology of the cinema in the sense of a sociology of motion picture production, distribution, exhibition, and consumption, with a specific focus on the role of cinema in the physical, social, cultural, and economic development of cities.⁷

This interdisciplinary challenge makes two interdependent propositions. First, it proposes that Sociology has much to gain by building upon its traditional interests in capital, economy, labor, demographics, and other issues by incorporating a greater interest in “culture,” “cinema,” and “films” through an investigation of their impact upon urban development, on the one hand, and their informative and influential allegorizing of objective social realities, on the other. Secondly, it proposes that Film Studies has much to gain by building upon its traditional interests in representation, subjectivity, and the text by working harder to develop a synthetic understanding of the objective social conditions of the production, distribution, exhibition, and

reception of cinema and the mediated production of urban space and urban identity.

This book and the individual contributions in it, it is hoped, make steps in the direction of such a sociology of the cinema, outlining what such a sociology might look like, and what kind of practical and diverse forms it might take.

Culture and Society

This bringing together of Film Studies and Sociology, then, underpins the aim of this book to examine the relationship between cinema and urban societies and, in doing so, to work against the alienation of the study of culture from the study of society which was traditionally explained through the old opposition of “base” (society, wealth, poverty, work, class, race, income, housing) and “superstructure” (culture, text, image, sign), and which fostered little more than mechanistic understandings of the relationship between the two.

The best antidote to the base-superstructure model, as Fredric Jameson has explained, is that of Althusserian structuralism in which base and superstructure are replaced by “structure” and in which mechanistic notions of causality give way to the concept of “over-determination.”⁸ This formulation of the relationship between culture and society, which has informed the editorial logic of the book, recognizes the interpenetration of culture, society, and economics as part of “a whole and connected social material process,” to use Raymond Williams’s terminology.⁹ It allows (even requires) a conception of cultural production as simultaneously different from and yet similar to other forms of (industrial) production in a manner which is particularly appropriate to cinema, more particularly to Hollywood cinema, and most particularly to Hollywood cinema in the contemporary global economy. It opens the way for interdisciplinary investigation and communication as natural and indispensable, tending to undermine intellectual compartmentalization and fostering a view of culture as “a whole way of life.”¹⁰ Finally, it undermines the reifying tendency to speak of cinema simply in terms of the text and its reflection of urban and social change “on the ground,” and fosters instead an understanding of cinema (as a set of practices and activities, as well as a set of texts) as something which never ceases to intervene in society, and which participates in the maintenance, mutation, and subversion of systems of power. Althusserian structuralism identifies the cooperation of Film Studies and Sociology not as a mere academic experiment or interdisciplinary trifle, but as a natural and proper pooling of resources in the name of a synthetic and rounded understanding of culture and society as culture and society can only be properly understood – in their *relation* to each other.

Space and Spatiality

If a significant and stubborn discrepancy between the study of culture and the study of society often remains in evidence today, one crucial and positive area which the two have increasingly held in common in recent years is what has become known as the “spatial turn” in social and cultural theory on the Left (broadly defined) since the 1970s which has involved a growing recognition of the usefulness of space as an organizing category, and of the concept of “spatialization” as a term for the analysis and description of modern, and (even more so) of postmodern, society and culture. This spatial turn has been driven by a wide range of critical thinking from the work of Henri Lefebvre (*The Production of Space*, 1974), Michel Foucault (*Discipline and Punish*, 1977), and Ernest Mandel (*Late Capitalism*, 1975) in the 1960s and 1970s to the work of Marshall Berman (*All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*, 1982), David Harvey (*The Condition of Postmodernity*, 1989), Fredric Jameson (*Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 1991), Edward Soja (*Postmodern Geographies*, 1989), and Mike Davis (*City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*, 1990) in the 1980s and 1990s.¹¹

On the one hand, in the social sciences, this spatial turn has helped us to understand, as Edward Soja has explained, “how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology.”¹² On the other hand, in the study of culture, it has helped us to understand how power and discipline are spatially inscribed into cultural texts and into the spatial organization of cultural production – as, for example, through what Jameson has described as the “geopolitical aesthetic” of contemporary world cinema.¹³

One of the key presuppositions of this book is that the increasing prominence given to space and spatialization in the recent study of culture and society has been a profoundly important development and that cinema is the ideal cultural form through which to examine spatialization precisely because of cinema’s status as a peculiarly spatial form of culture.

Cinema is a peculiarly spatial form of culture, of course, because (of all cultural forms) cinema operates and is best understood in terms of the organization of space: both *space in films* – the space of the shot; the space of the narrative setting; the geographical relationship of various settings in sequence in a film; the mapping of a lived environment on film; and *films in space* – the shaping of lived urban spaces by cinema as a cultural practice; the spatial organization of its industry at the levels of production, distribution, and exhibition; the role of cinema in globalization. Thus, one of the major contentions of this book is that cinema is primarily a spatial system and that, notwithstanding the traditional textual emphasis of much Film Studies, it is

more a spatial system than a textual system: that spatiality is what makes it different and, in this context, gives it a special potential to illuminate the lived spaces of the city and urban societies, allowing for a full synthetic understanding of cinematic theme, form, and industry in the context of global capitalism.

Geographical Description and Uneven Development

On this basis, the analysis of the relationship between cinema and urban societies in this book in a comprehensive range of global contexts, and with an emphasis on cinema as a social and material practice, may be seen as an exercise in what Jameson, with reference to the peculiar spatial character of cinema, has termed “cognitive mapping” – that is, the attempt to “think” a system (today, postmodern global capitalism) which evades thought and analysis. The book aims to map culture as a lived social reality which enacts and articulates relations of power, as these are evident in core–periphery relations both *within* cities and in the current global system *between* the cities and the cinemas of Los Angeles, of former European colonies, and of former European colonial powers.¹⁴

The emphasis throughout the book is on international diversity, and a conceptual organization which attempts to map out different relations of power in the geopolitical system in terms of dominance, subordination, mediation, and resistance, and their articulation in cinema and its political economy. This geographical diversity encompasses many types of city and urban society, whether these are classified according to Saskia Sassen’s typology of “global,” “transnational,” and “subnational” cities or according to Mike Savage and Alan Warde’s classification of “global cities,” “Third World cities,” “older industrial cities,” and “new industrial districts.”¹⁵ It also encompasses many types of cinema, including the dominant commercial forms of Hollywood, the European co-production, IMAX, documentary, and low-budget video in West Africa. As such, the book’s large geographical spread – attempting to keep equally in focus at all times the local, regional, and global levels, or micro- and macro-perspectives – serves to highlight the important realities of “uneven development” between various urban societies and various cinemas historically and in the present day, realities which are foregrounded both through the various representations of objective urban social and economic conditions discussed in relation to particular films and cities in the book, and in terms of the uneven development of particular national or metropolitan film industries *vis-à-vis* the global dominance and technological and financial superiority of Hollywood cinema.¹⁶

This description of urban society and of cinema globally in terms of a relationship between cities (and cities alone) corroborates the view held by

large numbers of social commentators today that the city – more so than the “nation,” perhaps less so than the “transnational corporation” – is *the* fundamental unit of the new global system which has emerged since the 1960s, of which the mobility of capital and information is the most celebrated feature.¹⁷ Thus the book presents a global portrait of a network of semi-autonomous cities and megacities, many of which (just as Sassen said they would) relate primarily to other cities in the network rather than to the particular national or regional space in which they are physically located.¹⁸

The positioning of Los Angeles at the beginning of the book, then, endorses the characterization of that city (and its larger metropolitan region) by many social commentators as *the* paradigmatic city space, urban society, and cultural environment of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries – “the place where it all comes together,” as Edward Soja has described it, “a World City, a major nodal point in the ebb and flow of the new global economy” and, almost needless to say, the home of the massively, globally dominant Hollywood cinema and larger US entertainment industry.¹⁹ But this notional positioning of Los Angeles as some kind of global core to which the rest of the world can be viewed as periphery must be balanced by the recognition that if Los Angeles is a paradigm, it is so not merely because it can be proposed as one of the world’s most “advanced” urban societies but also because it can be proposed as one of the world’s most “backward” urban societies – a tense and often violent combination of First and Third World realities in one (albeit highly segregated) space. Thus, Los Angeles contains uneven development internally while accentuating it on the world stage.

This internal and external unevenness places Los Angeles in an illuminating and problematic relationship with postcolonial cities and film cultures in both the First World and the Third World, all to one degree or another emerging or struggling to emerge from broadly shared histories of colonization, exploitation, dependency, and economic and political instability. On the one hand, postcolonial agendas for self-determination – in cinema as much as in other areas of society – have been expressed primarily in national terms, and the problematization of the concept of “nation” by globalization and the rise of cities is rarely more visible than in the now almost quaint notion of “national cinema.” On the other hand, the encounter between cinema and postcolonial urban societies in the Third World which remain beset by massive poverty and endemic social injustice may sometimes seem a strange one, given the natural capital-intensive and technology-intensive character of cinema as a cultural practice, and is often a particularly fraught one, given cinema’s ability to intervene in particularly charged social and political environments in frequently unwelcome and even dangerous ways.²⁰

The postcolonial urban societies, finally, remain closely related, for better or worse, to the capital cities of former colonial powers of which two – Paris

and London – are dealt with in detail in this book. Paris and London, of course, have not only long served as archetypal city environments for cinema (London for Hitchcock or David Lean; Paris for Renoir or Godard) and been important as centers of film production, but in their nineteenth-century imperial heydays were the sites in which the first shocked recognitions were made of the definable features of modern urban society, whether by Dickens or Engels in the case of the former or by Flaubert, Hugo, Balzac, or Baudelaire, in the case of the latter.²¹ Though today, in cinematic terms, they occupy an arguably subordinate position to Los Angeles, as urban societies, Manuel Castells and Peter Hall remind us, they “remain among the major innovation and high-technology centers of the world,” despite their relative age.²²

The regional–metropolitan conceptualization of the relation between cinema and urban societies which underpins this book, then, recognizes uneven development, diversity, and local specificity as an important antidote to, or safeguard against, the temptations of totalization – either by way of premature celebration of the benevolent leveling power of free-market capitalism (some form of the post-industrialism thesis or the end-of-ideology argument), or by way of defeatist resignation in the face of its unstoppable homogenizing and neutralizing tendencies. But it also suggests a contingent and always provisional macro-geographical contextualization and synthetic understanding of the relation between cinema and urban societies more generally.²³ The name for that macro-geographical context as it emerges in this book is “globalization,” a historical and geographical process in which Film Studies and Sociology ought to be equally and cooperatively interested.

Describing History

If this book is structured spatially according to a model of core–periphery relations between different types of cinemas and urban societies in diverse parts of the world, it is simultaneously structured according to a historical description of the development from monopoly capitalism, imperialism, the nation-state and modernity in the nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth centuries to transnational capitalism, postcolonialism, the city, and postmodernity in the mid- to late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Thus we have a spatial description (spatiality being central to most theorizations of postmodernity) which is also a historical description (history having long underpinned traditional Marxism) of the development of society and culture through “stages” of capitalism variously identified with the terms modernity, postmodernity, modernism, postmodernism, Fordism, post-Fordism, industrialism, and post-industrialism. “Uneven development,” then, reminds us that the recent turn toward geography and spatialization, which in the present context highlights the spatial character of cinema and the distinctive spatial typology of the city,

necessarily exists in tension in cultural and social theory with more traditional concerns with and approaches based upon history and temporality.

Of particular relevance to cinema on a number of counts is the important debate in postwar social theory over the concept of “post-industrialism” – that is, the insistence by many liberal and conservative thinkers, from David Riesman to Francis Fukuyama, that since the 1950s, society (either globally or specifically in the West) has moved into a qualitatively new phase of its development, with the displacement of production and manufactured goods by consumption and the sign.

First, of course, an important part of the very thesis of post-industrialism is that culture has become increasingly important in society and, indeed, the development of post-industrialism as a concept in Sociology may now be identified as one of the first steps in what David Chaney has termed “the cultural turn” in social history and theory since the 1950s.²⁴ Many theorizations of “post-industrialism” have attended to this increasing prominence of culture and have been expressed in primarily spatial terms – for example, the work of theorists as diverse as Daniel Bell (“the post-industrial society”), Marshall McLuhan (“the global village”), or Jean Baudrillard (“the political economy of the sign”).²⁵ Secondly, while post-industrialism as a thesis is based upon a presumption of the increasing dominance of sign and image over manufactured goods, cinema has always been “paradoxically” both sign and image *and* manufactured goods. Thirdly, cinema has mostly been imagined primarily as a collection of filmic texts rather than as a spatially-configured industry comprising banks, multinational corporations, distributors, producers, exhibitors and exhibition spaces, various technology manufacturers, workers, consumers, and so on. The often integrally-related prioritization of sign, image, and text in discussion of cinema, together with the neglect of issues of production, capital, and labor, has always been an inherently conservative operation through which, in a sense, cinema has been thought of “post-industrially” even before “post-industrialization.”

In contrast, however, to the implication of the concept of “post-industrialism” that the world has moved beyond such things as modernity, industrial society, ideology, or even history itself, this book understands postmodernity not as the end of something but as a period of even more complete and total modernization than in any preceding period – a period (as proposed by writers such as Lefebvre, Mandel, Harvey, and Jameson) which involves the thorough incorporation of rural space by urban space, the thorough colonization of daily life (including most areas of culture) by capital, and the globalization of urban society, economy, and culture as part of a process which has accelerated *qualitatively* since the late 1960s.²⁶

This now global postmodern environment, with all of its uneven development, may best be understood in terms of Nicos Poulantzas’s characterization of a “social formation” as a complex and dynamic coexistence of

overlapping and contradictory modes of production, or in terms of Raymond Williams's explanation of the importance of perpetual interaction and conflict in society and culture between dominant, residual, and emergent elements.²⁷ Williams's explanation that any hegemony is in practice "full of contradictions and unresolved conflicts" then brings us to the question of the possibility or not of conflict and resistance in the current global context and its operation in cinema and urban societies.²⁸

Globalization

Cultural production, both high and low, both supportive and critical of capitalist values, has now become so commodified that it is thoroughly implicated in systems of monetary evaluation and circulation. Under such conditions, the varieties of cultural output are no different from the varieties of Benetton's colors or the famous 57 varieties that Heinz long ago pioneered. Furthermore, all oppositional culture (and there is plenty of it) still has to be expressed in this commodified mode, thus limiting the powers of oppositional movements in important ways.

David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*²⁹

Cinema, of course, is an excellent means to an understanding of globalization for a number of reasons. Since the early twentieth century, it has always operated through a sophisticated organization of film production, distribution, and exhibition internationally – and, particularly, radiating from Southern California and Hollywood to the rest of the world through the expansionist activities and vision not only of the major American film studios, but also of such agencies as the Motion Picture Association of America and the Motion Picture Export Association. Today, cinema exists as part of a much larger global entertainment industry and communications network, which includes older cultural forms such as music and television, and newer forms of technoculture such as digital, the internet, and information technology. Studies of the political economy of cinema almost invariably begin by pointing out that cinema has long been one of the United States' most important export industries and that debates over cinema and national culture have been critical to globally-felt international negotiations such as those surrounding the 1993 General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT).³⁰

Indeed, if cinema may be said to have been one of the first truly globalized industries in terms of its organization, it may also be said to have long been at the cutting edge of globalization as a process of integration and homogenization. The hugely disproportionate dominance of the United States historically in many areas of culture, economics, and politics has rarely been more tangible and overt than in the dominance of Hollywood cinema, which has for decades now been widely recognized as a threat to discrete national and

regional cultures and which, in its frequent articulation of the values of free-market enterprise and individualism, and its formal manifestation of those values in its high production values and visual style, has been described by Jameson as “the apprenticeship to a specific culture” – Western (or, American) consumer capitalism.³¹

In this sense, not only may cinema – particularly Hollywood cinema – be described as having always been postmodern, even before postmodernity, because of its peculiar combination of both sign and image (culture) and manufactured goods (industry, technology, capital), it may also be recognized as central to, rather than merely reflecting, the process known as globalization. In today’s context, it isn’t that films or the Hollywood film industry *reflect* globalization but that films and the Hollywood film industry *effect* globalization. Films *are* globalization, not its after-effects.

In response to this realization, of course, the conflict between incorporation and autonomy becomes an acutely urgent issue of common interest to both Film Studies and Sociology. For if one of the most important issues in Sociology, particularly in the face of globalization (Americanization), is the ability or inability of social groups (either locally or globally) to challenge or resist dominant social structures, institutions, and cultures, so has Film Studies long been concerned with the ability or inability of historically and geographically diverse types of cinema – say, for example, American underground film, European art cinema, Third World filmmaking – to challenge or resist the dominance and saturation of Hollywood and American popular culture more generally.³²

Globalization – as most of the chapters in this volume demonstrate almost regardless of their precise geographical and historical contexts – is one of the overriding concerns arising in the relationship between cinema and the city as evident since the 1970s. This is especially evident in the increasing tendency in disparate societies around the world for individuals to be struck more by, and for cultures to demonstrate more, their sameness rather than their difference, and for that sameness, rather than being arbitrary, to appear primarily American.

As such, much of this book is concerned with what Manuel Castells has described as the threatened status of “place” – for example, nation, city, neighborhood, or street – in a world which is more and more defined and experienced in terms of “flow” – for example, the flow of transnational capital, or the flow of information in a highly technological society.³³ The realities of what Don Mitchell explains as “deterritorialization” recur insistently and manifest themselves perhaps most clearly in the increasing ubiquity of what the French cultural theorist Gilles Deleuze, in his major study of the spatial and temporal characteristics of cinema, termed the *espace quelconque* – the *any-space-whatever*. This space, whether taking the form of a shopping mall, a corporate headquarters, a hotel lobby, a downtown street, or, indeed,

a multiplex cinema, is not notable simply because of its ubiquity or familiarity but more particularly because if, as Foucault suggests, all space is controlled, the any-space-whatever is a space in which the source of control, the center of power, is curiously difficult to apprehend.³⁴ It is a space in which the intangibility of global capitalism is particularly apparent.

But if the ubiquity of the *espace quelconque* might appear as a metaphorical justification of the totalizing visions of the various theorists of post-industrialism or consumer capitalism and its supposed global triumph, the diversity of cinematic and urban contexts presented in this book also demonstrates the degree to which globalization remains incomplete and “uneven” and possibly demonstrates the degree to which globalization can be or is resisted.

With regard to the former, this book is particularly concerned with those areas where global capitalism has not yet been quite able to reach or which have fallen out of the global capitalist “loop” altogether – whether these are identified as what Miles, Hall, and Borden call “informal settlements” such as slums, tenements, and temporary communities in Third World cities, or what Marcuse and vanKempfen term the “excluded ghettos” of major Western metropolises, or even vast swathes of what Portes, Castells, and Benton have described as the “informal economy” which exists in many cities around the world alongside or in open defiance of official economy.³⁵ These spaces certainly exist and must be identified as different if not resistant to globalization.

But with regard to the latter, sources of resistance are harder to identify. Most of Film Studies and most of Sociology seem to have now long since lost faith in the possibility that the individual nation or nation-state might be able to significantly resist globalization. This recognition has informed the acknowledgment of the growing importance of cities to Sociology and has underpinned recent theorizations of the demise of the power of national governments and structures in the global system. In Film Studies, it has more or less extinguished debate over “national cinema” (that is, the ability of individual nations to achieve cultural self-determination in cinema), a debate which came to the fore in the “window of opportunity” between the end of colonialism in the 1960s and the full realization of globalization in the 1980s when small national cinemas, most excitingly in the Third World, produced films such as *Battle of Algiers* (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966) or *Memories of Underdevelopment* (Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, 1968), and were looked to as sources of a utopian and dynamic opposition to the dominance of Hollywood.³⁶

Today, resistance is hard to identify. Fredric Jameson, for example, speculating on the possible source of any likely future alternative to the dominant forms of American society and culture which drive globalization, has ruled out Japan, Western Europe, and Eastern Europe as sources of coherent opposition or challenge.³⁷ Manthia Diawara has lamented the difficulty experienced by African nations and cities in developing a sustained, coherent,

and viable “regional imaginary” of its own both because of the legacy of European imperialism and newer problems associated with globalization.³⁸ Leslie Sklair has proposed that, in the absence of any comprehensive or widespread and coherent alternative to American urbanism and American cinema, “effective opposition to capitalist practices” must manifest itself locally and around specific issues if at all despite the undeniable reality that “capitalism is increasingly organized on a global basis.”³⁹ Manuel Castells has proposed that – despite the absence of any comprehensive, mass movement for substantial social change – resistance to the homogenizing tendencies of global capitalism is possible but only in a limited way, by atomized groups at a grass-roots level with largely defensive agendas or, possibly and more hopefully, through the development of localized networks of individuals, agencies, and communities brought together by the liberatory and democratizing potential of information technology and the internet.⁴⁰

Sameness and Difference

The picture of globalization which recurs insistently in this book, then, consists of an opposition between homogenization and blandness, on the one hand, and pluralism and richness, on the other. While it is certainly important to point to and praise difference and heterogeneity where they appear – especially in resistance to the globalizing homogenizing tendencies of “high concept” Hollywood cinema or Western consumer capitalism – there is often a tendency to confuse “unevenness” with “heterogeneity” or “difference” with “resistance” (perhaps arising out of some felt need, particularly understandable since the 1980s, to believe resistance possible). But there is nothing necessarily radical about unevenness. One has the feeling that those areas in the global economy which are unevenly developed are probably those areas where global capitalism hasn’t quite managed to settle in yet or which it has already decided to bypass altogether. Difference is not resistance. Global capitalism will allow heterogeneity, or even foster it, if to do so serves the interests of the free market and wealth generation, but heterogeneity is not an aim of global capitalism.

Although one is reluctant to speak of global capitalism in intentionalist terms as if it were a clear and identifiable thing with a defined plan for the world, one suspects that ultimately it prefers homogeneity because it is easier to manage and more efficient but that it will tolerate difference to the extent to which difference is necessary for the generation of profit – a project which is, after all, the one identifiable and certain characteristic of global capitalism. One thus comes to see global capitalism as a process of constant negotiation between homogeneity and difference, played out locally and globally, which makes itself especially manifest in the changing physical and cultural

geography of cities. Thus, for Manuel Castells, the persistence of local difference is often a function of globalization, one half of a dual process which simultaneously involves “the globalization of power flows and the tribalization of local communities,” while for Jameson, globalization *both* facilitates difference (cultural diversity) *and* ensures homogenization (the universality of the free market).⁴¹

Here, finally, we can find another way in which Film Studies and Sociology might usefully communicate. For in the key concept of “genre” in cinema (a genre being a particular “type” of film such as the Western, the romantic comedy, the melodrama, or the war film) we find an analogy to this tension between sameness and difference which may help toward the understanding of global capitalism as a process of constant conflict and negotiation: that is, in those theories of genre which explain it as a process of negotiation, within the context of industrial film production (particularly in Hollywood from the 1930s to the 1960s), between the competing interests of film studios as financiers, producers, and primary investors, on the one hand, in a rationalized and efficient system of production based upon a limited and homogenous range of product lines and, on the other hand, the needs of film audiences as consumers for a constant and regular supply of individuated and varied entertainment product (individual films such as, let’s say, *Stagecoach*, *Bringing Up Baby*, *Written on the Wind*, or *The Guns of Navarone*).

This, of course, is a structural understanding of the political-economic meaning of genre in cinema, just as the construction of this book in terms of tension and conflict in globalization between sameness and difference suggests a structural understanding of that larger process. But here, perhaps, we can strike an appropriate balance between *realism* – the recognition of homogeneity, of the apparent stability of the structures of global capitalism (for now), of the current relatively unchallenged dominance of Hollywood cinema – and *aspiration* – the recognition of the persistence and potential of difference, the historical inevitability of challenges (hopefully sooner rather than later) to global capitalism and future destabilization of the ascendancy of Hollywood cinema.

Whatever happens, this book has been developed in the certainty that the processes of globalization, nationalism, identity, inequality, social, economic and cultural power, domination, and resistance raised throughout it will play themselves out in particularly dramatic and illuminating ways in the relationship between cinema and urban societies.

Notes

- 1 Michel Foucault, “The Eye of Power,” preface to Jeremy Bentham, *La Panoptique* (1977), reprinted in Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other*

Writings, 1972–1977, ed. C. Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980), p. 149.

- 2 For a fascinating case study of the social production of the contemporary city, and the crucial role of cinema and popular culture therein, see M. Gottdiener, Claudia C. Collins, and David R. Dickens, *Las Vegas: The Social Production of an All-American City* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999).
- 3 A number of important studies of the relationship between cinema and the city have appeared in recent years including, from an architectural perspective, François Penz et al. (eds.), *Cinema and Architecture* (London: BFI, 1997); from the perspective of film aesthetics, David Clarke (ed.), *The Cinematic City* (London: Routledge, 1997); and from a broad cultural studies perspective, James Donald, *Imagining the Modern City* (London: Athlone, 1999).
- 4 Andrew Tudor, “Sociology and Film,” in John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (eds.), *Film Studies: Critical Approaches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 188–92.
- 5 Indeed, as theorists such as Richard Maltby and Thomas Schatz have explained, the traditional concern of Film Studies with film as text has become increasingly problematic since the 1980s – particularly where Hollywood cinema is concerned – because Hollywood has become relatively open and fluid in formal, thematic, and industrial terms since the 1960s (during what is known as post-classical cinema), and because many contemporary Hollywood films arguably exist less as cinematic texts than as attenuated and complex commodities across the wider consumer cultural and global economic system as a whole, involving television, video, multimedia or online presentation, popular music, fashion, advertising, and merchandising. See Maltby, “Theses on the Philosophy of Hollywood History,” in Steve Neale and Murray Smith (eds.), *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema*; p. 2; and Thomas Schatz, “The New Hollywood,” in *Film Theory Goes to the Movies* (London: Routledge, 1993).
- 6 On the history of the close relationship between Film Studies and film as text, and the strengths and limitations thereof, see also Graeme Turner, “Cultural Studies and Film,” in Hill and Church Gibson (eds.), *Film Studies*, pp. 193–9. Also of relevance is Don Mitchell, *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 43–9.
- 7 Of course, it should be said that significant work has been carried out in Film Studies in relation to the economics and socioeconomics of cinema as an industry which can contribute to a social understanding of cinema: see, for example, on Hollywood cinema, Janet Wasko’s *Movies and Money: Financing the American Film Industry* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corp., 1982), and *Hollywood in the Information Age: Behind the Silver Screen* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988); and Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (London: BFI, 1992). On European cinema, see Pierre Sorlin’s *European Cinemas, European Societies 1939–1990* (London: Routledge, 1990); and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and Steven Ricci’s *Hollywood and Europe: Economics, Culture, National Identity, 1945–95* (London: BFI, 1998). As Andrew Tudor notes, books arising out of genuine engagement between Sociology and Film Studies have been few and far between: Tudor cites, for example, George Huaco, *The Sociology of Film Art* (New York: Basic Books, 1965); Ian Jarvie, *Towards a Sociology of the Cinema: A Comparative Essay on the Structure and Functioning of a Major Entertainment Industry*

- (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970); Tudor, *Image and Influence: Studies in the Sociology of Film* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1974); and Norman Denzin, *Images of Postmodern Society: Social Theory and Contemporary Cinema* (London: Sage, 1991). See Tudor, "Sociology and Film," p. 191. On the impact of cinema on modern urban society in the early twentieth century, one might add to this list Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz (eds.), *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).
- 8 See Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 17–102; Louis Althusser et al., *Reading Capital*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 1979 (1970)), pp. 91–118, 158–64; Althusser, *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 1990); Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London: New Left Books, 1971), pp. 123–73.
 - 9 Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 140.
 - 10 *Ibid.*, pp. 11–20.
 - 11 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991; orig. Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1974); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (London: Allen Lane, 1977); Ernest Mandel, *Late Capitalism*, trans. Joris De Bres (London: Verso, 1978; orig. London: New Left Books, 1975); Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air* (London: Verso, 1983); Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991); Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London and New York: Verso, 1989); Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London: Vintage, 1992 (1990)).
 - 12 Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, p. 6.
 - 13 Fredric Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press and BFI, 1995 (1992)).
 - 14 Important in this formulation has been Saskia Sassen's argument that the prominence of the city in the current global system problematizes traditional notions of "centrality and marginality" according to national or regional geographies, and according to the opposition First World–Third World. Sassen argues that "a new geography of centrality and marginality" is now in place, based upon centrality/marginality between cities and centrality/marginality within cities. See Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 1994), pp. 119–24.
 - 15 See *ibid.*, pp. 1–8; and Mike Savage and Alan Warde, "Cities and Uneven Economic Development," in *Urban Sociology, Capitalism and Modernity* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1993), pp. 39–40.
 - 16 For an excellent examination of the political economy of Hollywood cinema and resistance to it by non-industrial cinemas, see David James, *Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 3–28.
 - 17 For an excellent introduction to the rise of the city, and to many of the key texts in Urban Sociology, see Richard T. LeGates and Frederic Stout (eds.), *The City Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), and Malcolm Miles, Tim Hall, and Iain Borden, *The City Cultures Reader* (London: Routledge, 2000).

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- 18 Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy*, pp. 50–1.
- 19 See Allen J. Scott and Edward J. Soja, *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), p. 12. See also Davis, *City of Quartz*; Roger Keil, *Los Angeles: Globalization, Urbanization and Social Struggles* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1998); Norman Klein, *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory* (London and New York: Verso, 1997); Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, Chapter 8, “It All Comes Together In Los Angeles” and Chapter 9, “Taking Los Angeles Apart.”
- 20 See, for example, Julianne Burton (ed.), *Cinema and Social Change in Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986).
- 21 See Burton Pike, *The Image of the City in Modern Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).
- 22 Manuel Castells and Peter Hall, “Technopoles: Mines and Foundries of the Informational Economy,” in *Technopoles of the World: The Making of Twenty-First Century Industrial Complexes* (London: Routledge, 1994), excerpted in LeGates and Stout (eds.), *The City Reader*, p. 481.
- 23 As Miles, Hall, and Borden warn, in *The City Cultures Reader*, a balance must be achieved between the opposed tendency to exaggerate the future of the postmodern, post-industrial or electronic city, on the one hand, and the realities of massive global uneven development, on the other. See *The City Cultures Reader*, p. 4.
- 24 See David Chaney, *The Cultural Turn: Scene-Setting Essays on Contemporary Cultural History* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 27.
- 25 See Daniel Bell, *The Coming of a Post-Industrial Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1974); and *The End of Ideology* (New York, Free Press, 1962); Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964); Jean Baudrillard, *Toward a Political Economy of the Sign* (St. Louis, MO.: Telos Press, 1981 (1972)); *The Mirror of Production* (St. Louis, MO: Telos Press, 1975); and *America* (London and New York: Verso, 1988).
- 26 On the emergence of global postmodernism in the early-1970s, see Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p. 40.
- 27 Nicos Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes*, trans. Timothy O’Hagan (London: New Left Books, 1973), pp. 13–16; Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, pp. 115–23.
- 28 Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 118.
- 29 Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 84.
- 30 See, in addition to Wasko, *Movies and Money* and *Hollywood in the Information Age*, Tino Balio, *The American Film Industry* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); Colin Hoskins, Stuart McFadyen, and Adam Finn, *Global Television and Film* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); and Jean-Pierre Jeancolas, “From the Blum-Byrnes Agreement to the GATT Affair,” in Nowell-Smith and Ricci (eds.), *Hollywood and Europe*, pp. 47–60.
- 31 Fredric Jameson, “Notes on Globalization as a Philosophical Issue,” in Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyashi (eds.), *Cultures of Globalization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), p. 63. With reference to contemporary Hollywood and consumerism, the reader is particularly referred to Justin Wyatt, *High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1994).

- Wyatt (p. 20) defines the “high concept” film, which he argues has been the dominant type in Hollywood over the past twenty years, as “a product differentiated through the emphasis on style in production and through the integration of the film with its marketing.”
- 32 The most comprehensive study of the relationship of dominance and resistance between US (or Western) cinema and Third World filmmaking is undoubtedly Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).
- 33 See Castells, “The Reconstruction of Social Meaning in the Space of Flows,” in *The Informational City: Information Technology, Economic Restructuring and the Urban-Regional Process* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), pp. 348–53. See also Castells, *The Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).
- 34 On deterritorialization, see Mitchell, *Cultural Geography*, pp. 273–4; on the any-space-whatever, see Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 272.
- 35 Miles, Hall, and Borden, *The City Cultures Reader* p. 4; Peter Marcuse and Ronald van Kempen, *Globalizing Cities: A New Spatial Order* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 19; Alejandro Portes, Manuel Castells, and L. Benton (eds.), *The Informal Economy: Studies in Advanced and Less Developed Countries* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).
- 36 On the nation-state in the present world system, see Mitchell, *Cultural Geography*, pp. 262–73. Of course, many commentators argue that globalization does not have to mean the end of the nation-state but may simply mean a new phase of challenge to and constant transgression of it. In this case, at the very least, the extent to which globalization “disrespects” and transgresses national boundaries and identities is keenly evident and popularly experienced in cinema, particularly fuelled by the hybridizing influences of international co-production as a standard procedure in (especially European) cinema and of offshore production (the production of Hollywood films outside the US) as a common practice in Hollywood cinema.
- 37 Jameson, “Notes on Globalization,” p. 67.
- 38 Manthia Diawara, “Toward a Regional Imaginary in Africa,” in Jameson and Miyashi (eds.), *Cultures of Globalization*, pp. 103–24.
- 39 Leslie Sklair, “Social Movements and Global Capitalism,” in Jameson and Miyashi (eds.), *Cultures of Globalization*, p. 291.
- 40 Castells, *The Informational City*, p. 353. It must be admitted, however, that the hopes for democratic, even anti-systemic liberation through information technology held by Castells and others from the late 1980s to the late 1990s now seem somewhat dashed against the rocks of both the ascendancy of e-business on-line and the recent merger of AOL and Time-Warner, one of the largest corporate mergers in history, sealing the “incorporation” of the internet.
- 41 Castells, *The Informational City*, p. 350.