chapter on Mizoguchi (pp. 224–6); the account of the functions of shot (or, more accurately, set-up) repetition in Western cinema during the discussion of Ishida's *Fallen Blossom (Hana Chirinu)* (pp. 204–5).

8. In social theory, the *locus classicus* of this kind of move is Louis Althusser's 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)' in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (1971: 170–82). For what might be read as working through some of the subtleties and difficulties of such an approach, see Elsaesser (1984): 59–81. A critical account of Althusser's formulations in the above essay from the viewpoint of psychoanalytic semiotics can be found in Stephen Heath's 'The Turn of the Subject' in *Cine-Tracts* 7–8 (1979).

9. See Freud (1939): Pt 3, section 1.5, esp. pp. 125–30. It sometimes seems as if Freud is giving us a wild, hazy anticipation of the discovery of DNA coding carried in the direction of an eccentric sociobiology. For some of the contradictions and difficulties he encounters, see Coward 1983: 212–18.

10. From a large body of work, two influential examples are Metz (1982) and Laura Mulvey (1975), 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen* 16 (3).

11. See the entry under 'Sublimation' in Laplanche and Pontalis (1973). On sociolect, see Barthes 1970: 21–2, 86–8 (where it is called 'idiolect') and 'Change the Object Itself: Mythology Today', in Barthes (1977).

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2   The National Revisited[1]

Paul Willemen

Notions of the national and the international are inextricably linked because they define each other. But they do not do so symmetrically, because over the last three hundred years or so, each side of that coin has become embroiled in its own history. Meanings have shifted as they entered new sets of cultural and political constellations. As Perry Anderson noted in a recent account of those shifts and changes: 'The meaning of internationalism logically depends on some prior conception of nationalism, since it only has currency as a back-construction referring to its opposite' (Anderson 2002: 5). The relation between these mutually defining opposites not only changed its class connotations.[2] Towards the end of the twentieth century it changed even more drastically: now, 'internationalism' has become equated with, as Anderson put it, a display of 'limitless loyalty to another state', that is to say, to the US's 'fervent cult of the homeland or for a missionary redemption of the world' (Anderson 2002: 15, 23–4). The often invoked international community is today simply a code word for a call to submit to the policies pursued by the American state. In the cultural realm, a similar shift has been in operation for some years: the national popular is now equated with the consumption of US cultural exports, while critiques of such export products is stigmatised as elitist. At the same time, any film that is not in English has become an example of 'world cinema', something reserved for intellectuals and other culture vultures.[3] These changes in meaning of the national and the international underscore that both terms delineate a symbolic field within which, today, an appeal to the national is located as a political ideology designed to achieve a specific goal: to delineate a bounded geographical space that a particular powerbloc, in this case a coalition that constitutes a national bourgeoisie, can reasonably expect to restructure to its own benefit on a long-term basis. In other words, national*ist* bourgeoisies sought to establish a specific 'political economy' within the limits of a bounded terrain which they could govern under conditions of relative independence and autonomy, with the range of cultural and administrative institutions needed for managing this, and an army capable of defending it (Nairn 1997:133).

The motivation for that sea-change and the supplier of the necessary energy to achieve it was what historians call 'modernisation'. Ernest Gellner put it more trenchantly in the now famous essay on nationalism in his book *Thought and Change* (1964). For Gellner, in

the paraphrase provided by Tom Nairn (Nairn 1997:1), 'Modern philosophers . . . may believe that they have been ruminating upon universal standards, the Soul, God, Infinity and other capital-letter constructions. In truth, all they have been trying to do is cope with *the after-effects of the steam-engine.*' But Nairn then points to a key implication of Gellner's insight: not only is all modern philosophy's true subject industrialisation, but 'its immensely complex and variegated aftershock – nationalism'. While accepting Nairn's radical extension of Gellner's thesis, Anderson's examination of the conceptual pair's history re-situates better the recent wave of preoccupation with two themes characteristic of late twentieth-century film and cultural studies paradigms: multiculturalism and the (modernising, modern and even modernist) concern with 'specificity'. Briefly, I want to argue that there is a crucial difference between national*ism* and a concern with the ways a particular social formation functions . . . in order to change it.

I would like to start by making three linked suggestions. The first is that 'nationalism' is a term that should be reserved for the range of institutionalised practices seeking to define and impose a particular, reductive, politically functional identity. To oppose, criticise, subvert or otherwise challenge the kind of restrictive straitjacket which nationalism seeks to impose upon the 'subjects' of the nation-state cannot also be called nationalism, even though it plays on the very same terrain of the existing or anticipated nation-state. In such a contest, the forces seeking to define and impose a notion of identity are opposed by a concern with the complexities of that other aspect of modernisation and industrialisation: individuated subjectivity.

The second suggestion is that nationalism seeks to bind people to identities. That is to say, it mobilises cultural-political power and institutionalised weight primarily through the deployment of a broad-ranging array of modes of address organised not just rhetorically, but also embodied in the very organisation and policies of institutions. It is a mode of address carefully nurtured, reproduced and policed, ensuring that a specific cluster of assumptions is written into our social bodies from early childhood and repeated with ritualised regularity thenceforth. Nationalism is a question of address, not of origin or genes. As Tom Nairn also points out, 'nationality is not in the genes; but it is in the structure of the modern world' (Nairn 1997: 206). It is my contention that the formation, imposition, and indeed the acceptance of or consent to 'a national identity', is to be tracked in the addressing dimensions of institutions set up and maintained to select a cluster of 'differentiae', as Nairn calls them, decreed to be 'our' inheritance by those social groups or power blocs who seek to perpetuate their dominance.

The third suggestion is that there is a diametrical opposition between identity and subjectivity. The former, being what the institutionally orchestrated practices of address seek to impose, constitutes a never-quite-fitting straitjacket; the latter is an ambiguous term designating individuals as the crossroads or condensation points of multiple sets of institutionally organised discursive practices. As such, subjectivity delineates a 'space' where the plethora of grammatical subjects activated in language fold into and over each other to form what any of us might call his or her 'subjective world'. Subjectivity always exceeds identity, since identity formation consists of trying to pin 'us' to a specific, selected sub-set of the many

diverse clusters of discourses we traverse in our lifetimes, and that stick to us to varying degrees. Subjectivity, then, relates to what we may think and feel to be the case regarding 'our' sexuality, kinship relations, our understanding of social-historical dynamics acquired through (self)education, work experience and so on. Some aspects of our subjectivity may be occupied or hijacked by the national identity modes of address, but there always are dimensions within our sense of 'subjective individuality' that escape and exceed any such identity straitjacket.

The rest of this essay seeks to explore the ramifications of these distinctions for the way(s) in which we conceptualise the relationships between industrialised cultural practices such as cinema and the always pre-existing, but never fixed, institutionally organised social formations we inhabit.

In each socio-cultural formation, the tensions between the national and the international as well as those between identity and subjectivity must, by definition, be played out in different ways. But the terms in which these tensions are presented will have a family resemblance. Nevertheless, the issues of the national and the international, and indeed of the colonial and the imperial, are present in film studies in specific ways that are different from those adopted, for instance, in anthropology or in comparative literature. Film and media studies have responded to the wave of massive population migrations that resulted from the accelerated circulation of Anglo-American and Japanese finance capital, by adding cross-cultural or multicultural flavours to its standard menu. But both the terms 'cross-cultural' and 'multicultural' already point to the first problem, in the sense that they suggest the existence of discrete, bounded cultural zones separated by borders which can be crossed. The term 'multicultural' also suggests that cultural zones continue to exist within a given country as small, self-contained pockets or islands, miniature replicas of an alleged community's allegedly original national culture, as repositories of some cultural authenticity to be found elsewhere in time and space. In Ukania – Tom Nairn's suggestive term for the ossified, incompletely modernised monarchical state known as the United Kingdom (Nairn 1988) – one hears references to, say, the Bangladeshi, or the Irish or indeed the Asian communities, as if a given 'ethnic' community had simply transposed a national culture from 'there' to 'here'. This transposition can then be narrativised in terms of contamination and disease, as it is in Ukania today in the light of 'foreigners' seeking to escape from economic and/or political distress, or, as it was a decade or so ago, as the development of a 'multicultural society' that is ever so 'tolerant' of 'others'. This multicultural ideology has some positive, but also some exceedingly negative consequences for a country's cultural life and policies. One very negative result is that 'ethnic' groups will be imprisoned, by arts funding bodies and local government practices, within a restrictive and fossilised notion of culture. In this way, such groups are condemned to repeat the rituals of ethnic authenticity, regardless of how uncomfortable many members of those so-called communities may feel with them. One of the political effects of such policies is that administrators and local politicians tend to recognise 'community' spokespeople who represent the more conservative and nostalgically 'traditionalist' sectors of 'the communities' in question. A further consequence is,

perhaps ironically, to encourage the practice of a 'traditional' culture separated from the social conditions by and for which those cultural forms were shaped and, in so doing, to fetishise the separateness of the cultures thus called into being. In this respect, multicultur-alist policies end up creating a kind of cultural apartheid. By insisting on the discreteness and the separateness of the 'other' cultures, the host culture conspires with the conservative upholders of an imagined 'ethnicity' to draw lines around those 'other' cultural practices, ghettoising them. And in that way, the host culture can reaffirm its own imaginary unity and the illusion of its own specialness and authenticity.

Although we can all agree that cultural zones are far from unified, homogeneous spaces, this should not lead us to deny or unduly relativise the existence of borders. The existence of borders is very real, and although their meaning and function are changeable, their effec-tiveness has not diminished in the least. At one level, it does indeed make sense to try to construct a notion of national culture by way of a spatial commutation test. The culture would then be defined in terms of the things that change in 'the whole way of life', to use Raymond Williams' phrase, when a national frontier is crossed. For instance, abortion may be legal on one side of a border and not on the other; or legal and other institutional arrangements, such as those relating to film and television finance and censorship, may be vastly different. In federal structures such as India, the United States, the former USSR or Australia, there are different inflections to this problem because of the imbrication of national and state institutions, but the problem of the nation-state's borders remains, as is demonstrated by the importance of passports for bestowing a national identity upon indi-viduals, with the consequent legal regulation of immigration, the search for asylum under a network of governmental institutions 'elsewhere' and the whole panoply of issues implied by the notion of citizenship.

On the other hand, the construction of a cultural matrix in such a geo-structural way does not account for the sense of temporal continuity that is attributed to national cultural formations. The comparative study of, say, independent British cinema in the 1930s and in the 1970s would not be regarded as a form of cross-cultural studies. The intervention of World War II, and of a host of other socio-political and economic changes, apparently does not constitute a sufficient temporal boundary for us to be able to talk of different cultural formations.

Perhaps we should begin by becoming more aware of the complicity between periodi-sation in history and the drawing or the crossing of geographical boundaries. The invasion of Australia, and the declaration of a bicentenary period, is only one example of this com-plicity. The tendency to date England back to the invasion of 1066 is another, as is the tend-ency to regard World War II and its large-scale redrawing of the world map as the most significant temporal watershed of the twentieth century. It would be foolish to deny that the war is indeed a very significant marker in all kinds of respects. The point is that in other respects, such as, for instance, the periodisation of capitalism, World War II is not that sig-nificant a marker at all. The liquidation of nineteenth-century absolutist empires took over fifty years, and the consolidation of capitalism on a global scale happened sometime between the mid-1950s and the late 60s, while the triumph of finance capital over industrial capital

took even longer and, although accelerating in the early 1970s, was not consolidated until the 80s. With luck, some of the gigantic financial frauds that have come to public attention around the turn of the millennium, such as the dotcom scams, the Enron scandal, the Sav-ings and Loan frauds and the US financial assault on its East Asian competitors, may signal the imminent end of finance capital's catastrophically destructive period of hegemony. This point is worth making to show that there are temporal rhythms and periods which, although implicated in and affected by geographic changes, do not coincide with them. The syn-chronicity of geographical and temporal periods at work in most national histories has to be produced at some cost: the loss of perspective on the very forces that construct the vicissi-tudes of 'the national' in the era of international dependency.

The notion of cultural specificity that may be deployed against the universalising eth-nocentricity at work in film studies operates at the level of this geo-temporal construction of the national. The question of cultural specificity can be posed on other social community levels and these may themselves be transnational, as are some constructions of gender- and class-based politics. But in film studies, the issue of specificity is primarily a national one: the boundaries of cultural specificity in cinema are established by governmental actions imple-mented through institutions such as the legal framework of censorship, industrial and financial measures on the economic level, the gearing of training institutions towards employment in national media structures, systems of licensing governed by aspects of cor-porate law, and so on. For the purposes of film culture, 'specificity' is a term derived from the vocabulary of modernism applied in the realm of political economy. Specificity thus becomes a territorial-institutional matter, and coincides with the boundaries of the nation-state, that is to say, it designates cultural practices and industries on the terrain governed by the writ of a particular state.

As a rule, the effectiveness with which national socio-cultural formations, that is to say, state-bound unities, determine particular signifying practices and regimes, is not addressed. This is a problem for a number of reasons. One result is that it encourages confusion between, on the one hand, the discourses of nationalism as objects of study or as a political project, and, on the other hand, the issue of national specificity. Compared to Afro-American films made in the US, black British films are strikingly British, and yet in no way can they be construed as nationalistic. They are part of a British specificity, but not of a British nationalism: especially not if we remember that British nationalism is in fact an imperial identification, rather than an identification with the British state. To complicate matters further, an identification with the British state is, in fact, an English nationalism, as opposed to Welsh, Cornish or Scottish nationalisms, which relate not to a state but to nations, and are recognisable by their demand for autonomous governments, even if that autonomy may be qualified in various ways.

A second area of confusion is the relation between a concern with national identity and the specificity of a cultural formation. For instance, the concern with notions of Aus-tralianness and with national identity was a temporary component of the dominant registers of Australian cultural specificity. That concern started to decline after the so-called bicen-tennial celebrations and resurfaced, in a different form, in the early 1990s, around notions

of republicanism and, more (in)famously, around the 'One Nation' political movement which helped to set in place the Australian government's current, murderously ruthless attitude towards refugees. This simply means that the specificity of the Australian cultural formation has changed over the last decade and now generates other motifs and discourses. In that sense, the concern with socio-cultural specificity is different from identity searches and debates. The specificity of a cultural formation may be marked by the presence but also by the absence of preoccupations with national identity. Indeed, national specificity will determine which, if any, notions of identity are on the agenda.

So, the discourses of nationalism and those addressing or comprising national specificity are not identical. Similarly, the construction or the analysis of a specific cultural formation is different from preoccupations with national identity. I would go further and suggest that the construction of national specificity in fact encompasses and governs the articulation of both national identity and nationalist discourses. Nationalist discourses forever try to colonise and extend themselves to cover, by repressively homogenising, a complex but nationally specific formation. Thankfully, they are also doomed to keep falling short of that target. In that sense, nationalism is the shadow side of imperialism: it is an ideology generated by imperialism as its own counter-body, and it is in some ways even more repressively homogenising than that of the empire it seeks to undo – perhaps necessarily so.

At the same time, in art and media studies, insufficient attention is paid to the determining effects of the geographically bounded state-unity, and this encourages a kind of promiscuous or random form of alleged internationalism, which I would prefer to call an evasive cosmopolitanism masking (US) imperial aspirations. Another, more polemical way of putting this is to say that the discourse of universalist humanism is in fact an imperial and a colonising strategy in the service of US national(ist) policies. If we accept that national boundaries have a significant structuring impact on national socio-cultural formations (please note that I have written 'a significant impact' and not that these boundaries are the only determinations, nor necessarily the most important ones in all circumstances: merely that they are real and significant), this has to be accounted for in the way we approach and deal with cultural practices from 'elsewhere'. Otherwise, reading a Japanese film from within a British film studies framework may in fact be more like a cultural cross-border raid, or worse, an attempt to annex another culture in a subordinate position by requiring it to conform to the raider's cultural practices (Willemen 1994: 56–84 and Willemen 1995: 101–29).

Such practices are an acute problem in film studies for three main reasons. The first is that academic institutions are beginning to address the film cultures of non-Western countries.[4] This expansion in academia's disciplinary field creates job and departmental growth opportunities. The result is that scholars formed within the paradigm of Euro-American film theory are rushing to plant their flags on the terrain of, for instance, Chinese, Japanese or Indian film studies. In that respect, those scholars and departments are actively delaying the advent of a genuinely comparative film studies by trying to impose the paradigms of Euro-American film and aesthetic theories upon non-Euro-American cultural practices. In the process, the very questions concerning the production of specific socio-cultural formations mentioned earlier are marginalised or ignored.

The second reason for film-theoretical malpractice can be found in the assumed universality of film language. This illusion is promoted to ignore the specific knowledges that may be at work in a text, such as shorthand references to particular, historically accrued modes of making sense (often referred to as cultural traditions). As an example, we might remember the controversy generated by Antonioni's use of the close shot in his film on China (Rohdie 1990), or the different ways in which notions of realism are deployed in relation to various types of melodrama in Asia. Further examples can be found in films which engage with the connotations generated by particular landscapes or cityscapes within particular cultures, or with the differing meanings attached to, for instance, images of industrialisation. It is regarding this set of issues that notions of Third Cinema can most productively be deployed. Similarly, since the Hollywood model of character narration is accepted as the norm in Euro-American film studies, the modes of studying Hollywood narrative and its counter-cinemas have been presented as equally universal and normative, duplicating and confirming the position of the economic power enjoyed by Hollywood.

The third reason is the forced, as well as the elective, internationalism of film industries themselves. The capital intensive nature of film production, and of its necessary industrial, administrative and technological infrastructures, requires a fairly large market in which to amortise production costs, not to mention the generation of surplus for investment or profit. This means that a film industry – any film industry – must either address an international market or a very large domestic one. If the latter is available, then cinema requires large potential audience groups, with the inevitable homogenising effects that follow from this, creating an industrial logic which, if played out at a national level, will benefit from the equally homogenising project of nationalism. The economic facts of cinematic life dictate that an industrially viable cinema shall be multinational or, alternatively, that every citizen shall be made to contribute to the national film industry – mostly by way of tax and/or subsidy legislation – regardless of whether they consume its films or not.

These aspects of the film industry and of the cultural sector(s) corresponding to that industry's production processes raise two important issues, one concerning the national, one concerning cinema itself. I will return to the problem of cinema itself at the close of this essay in the form of a caveat. As to cinema's industrial nature, that means that if the question of national specificity is posed in its proper context, the issue must be addressed at the level of national and governmental institutions, since these are the only ones in a position to inflect legislation and to redistribute tax revenues. That fact has unavoidable consequences for the social power relations that govern the kind of cinema thus enabled. Consequently, a cinema which seeks to engage with the questions of national specificity from a critical, non- or counter-hegemonic position is by definition a minority and a poor cinema, dependent on the existence of a larger multinational or nationalised industrial sector (most national cinemas operate a mixed economic regime, but that does not alter the argument: it merely creates a little more breathing space for film-makers). This is a cinema that has to work 'in the interstices' of the industry, an area the dimensions of which can and do change depending on the effectiveness of cultural-political campaigns.[5] It is, of course, true that industrially made films always must *register* the pressures at work in the 'national configuration', but

that is not at all the same as a cinema that seeks to address the issues that constitute and move the 'national' configuration. By the same token, and somewhat paradoxically, a cinema addressing national specificity will be anti- or at least non-nationalistic, since the more it is complicit with national*ism*'s homogenising project, the less it will be able to engage critically with the complex, multidimensional and multidirectional tensions that characterise and shape a social formation's cultural configurations. The exception here is the national*ist* propaganda film, invariably sponsored by government institutions and increasingly relegated – or delegated – to television anyway. National*ist* propaganda may well address divisions within the national formation. But it does so in order to delegitimise them and to stimulate attacks ranging from institutional to mob violence against the divisive, 'alien' or contaminating agents, thus hoping to enhance the repressive power of specific social-economic blocs within the national institutional network controlling the levers of governance.

This leads us to the ironic conclusion that a cinema positively yet critically seeking to engage with the multilayeredness of specific socio-cultural formations, is necessarily a marginal and a dependent cinema: a cinema dependent for its existence on the very dominant, export and multinationally oriented cinema it seeks to criticise and displace. This too is a paradox worthy of Archibald, because this marginal and dependent cinema is simultaneously the only form of national cinema available: it is the only cinema which consciously and directly works with and addresses the materials at work within the national cultural constellation. The issue of national cinema is then primarily a question of address, rather than a matter of the film-makers' citizenship or even of the production finance's country of origin.

For the Soviet cultural theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, there are three kinds of interpretation which correlate with three different ways of framing relations with other socio-cultural networks (Bakhtin 1986).

The first is a kind of projective appropriation (my term). This happens when the reader/viewer projects him or herself, his or her belief world, onto the texts. The most common example of this practice happens when a theoretical or interpretative framework elaborated for and within one cultural sphere is projected onto the signifying practices of another cultural sphere. To project early twentieth-century Western novelistic criteria of psychological verisimilitude onto 1940s commercial Indian films would be one such example. Another would be the assumption that Leavisite or Baudrillardian aesthetic ideologies are universally applicable norms. Projective appropriation accompanies efforts to internationalise a restrictive regime of making sense. It is concerned with conquering markets, eliminating competition and securing monopolies.

The second type is what I would call ventriloquist identification. This is the obverse of projective identification and happens when someone presents him/herself as the mouthpiece for others, as if the speaker were immersed in some ecstatic fusion with the other's voices and were speaking from within that other social or cultural space. The fantasy at play here, in the realm of film studies as well as in film-making, is that of the middle-class intellectual or entrepreneur who is so traumatised by his or her privileged education and access to
expensive communications technology that s/he feels compelled to abdicate from intellec-

tual responsibilities and to pretend to be a mere hollow vessel through which the voice of the oppressed, the voice of the people, resonates. The attitude remains the same regardless of whether those other people are defined in terms of class, gender, ethnicity, religion, nationality, community or whatever. Ventriloquism is the monopolist-imperialist's guilty conscience: it allows him or her to remain an authoritarian monopolist while parading one's crocodile tears.

The third type, predictably, avoids both these undesirable but very widespread attitudes. It does not appropriate the other's discourse, it does not subordinate itself to the other's discourse and neither does it pretend to be fused with it. With increasing frequency, this third practice is described with the Bakhtinian phrase: the dialogic mode. Unfortunately, this is a complete misunderstanding of Bakhtin's notion of dialogism, which is in fact an inherent characteristic of all language and of all communication. In other words, it is completely meaningless to try to distinguish one practice from another by calling one dialogic and the other, presumably, monologic. It is worth pointing out that Bakhtin revised his work on Dostoevsky in the light of this insight into the social nature of language itself, and tried to distinguish between the ways in which texts activated their inherently dialogic aspects.

More useful is the notion of creative understanding and the crucial concept of alterity, of otherness, which he introduces into his theories. To clarify this point, I would like to repeat the quote from Bakhtin on creative understanding, or, as Raymond Williams called it, diagnostic understanding:

> There exists a very strong, but one-sided and thus untrustworthy idea that in order better to understand a foreign culture, one must enter into it, forgetting one's own, and view the world through the eyes of this foreign culture [this is what I called ventriloquist identification]. Of course, the possibility of seeing the world through its eyes is a necessary part of the process of understanding it; but if this were the only aspect, [i]t would merely be a duplication and would not entail anything enriching. Creative understanding does not renounce itself, its own place and time, its own culture; it forgets nothing. In order to understand, it is immensely important [t]o be located outside the object of creative understanding, in time, in space, in culture. In the realm of culture, outsideness is a most powerful factor in understanding. [W]e raise new questions for a foreign culture, ones it did not raise for itself; we seek answers to our questions in it; and the foreign culture responds to us by revealing to us its new aspects and semantic depths. Without one's own questions, one cannot creatively understand anything other or foreign. Such a dialogic encounter of two cultures does not result in merging or mixing. Each retains its own unity and open totality, but they are both enriched. (Bakhtin 1986: 6–7)

My own conclusion from Bakhtin's discussion of creative understanding is that one must be 'other' oneself if anything is to be learned about the meanings of other cultures, of another culture's limits, the effectiveness of its borders, of the areas where, in another memorable phrase of Bakhtin's, 'the most intense and productive life of culture takes place'. It must be stressed that for Bakhtin, creative understanding requires a thorough knowledge of at least two cultural spheres. It is not simply a matter of engaging in a dialogue with some other

culture's products, but of using one's understanding of another cultural practice to re-per-
ceive and rethink one's own cultural constellation at the same time. If the critical study of,
say, Chinese or Indian cinemas is not also aimed at modifying our Euro-American notions
of cinema, then why study these cultural practices at all? Simple curiosity does not sound
like a persuasive answer.

Bakhtin's three ways of relating to other cultural practices can be neatly illustrated by
the way in which many film critics approach, for instance, the Hindi cinema. The first and
most widespread approach is a demonstration of Bakhtin's first type of interpretation: pro-
jective identification. It deploys a scornful amusement at Indian commercial cinema, mar-
velling at the infantile eccentricities of an intellectually underdeveloped mass audience
supplied with entertainment by a film industry that matches its quaintly simple-minded
naiveté. The criteria used to justify such a discourse invariably erect a mid-twentieth-cen-
tury European bourgeoisie's notions of art into a self-evident, universally applicable norm
against which to test the rest of humanity's degree of civilisation. Increasingly, a variant of
this approach can be found in the writings of advocates of the postmodernist persuasion,
who project the modalities of finance capital's corporate cultural forms (corporate raiding
and short-term investments in diversified portfolios for quick profits), operative in some
large urban conurbations, onto 'the global culture' in general.

The second approach mirrors this process of projective identification, but simply oper-
ates an ethical inversion of the terms. Anglo-American notions of popular culture are pro-
jected onto the Indian cinema and, suddenly, the products of the Hindi film industry
become examples of 'the people's culture' in exactly the same way that, for instance, Hol-
lywood is said to be a site of the people's culture in the West. That is ventriloquist identi-
fication. It validates the Hindi cinema by pointing to the vast box-office takings of its more
lucrative products. Something that such large numbers of people want to pay for must be
popular culture. To dismiss the cultural products involved is to dismiss those who derive
pleasure from them. On the other hand, to validate the products is to identify with the
downtrodden people who enjoy them. An unfailing characteristic of this populist position
is the constant reference to pleasure in its discourses. In fact, such a position equates units
of pleasure with units of the local currency as they appear on the balance sheet of a business
enterprise. It also fails to distinguish between the various types of pleasure that can be
derived from cultural practices or objects: the pleasures of mastery, of submission, of repe-
tition, of difference, of narcissism, and so on. Consequently, the populist position is also
blind to the way in which particular cultural-economic practices seek to bind specific pleas-
ures to specific types of product, while ruling other pleasures out. In discussions of popular
culture in Britain and in the US, the pleasures of understanding are nearly always outlawed
or stigmatised by associating them with, for instance, 'white middle-class male values', a
phrase deployed as a kind of ritual curse, but which has little if any explanatory value.
Indeed, in nearly all Hollywood's films, the pleasures of understanding are simply dismissed
as forms of psychosis likely to turn you into a serial killer. Spot the character who reads or
writes books, the one with an interest in some form of culture other than television or
'entertainment', and you will have found the psycho of the story. The odd sentimentalised
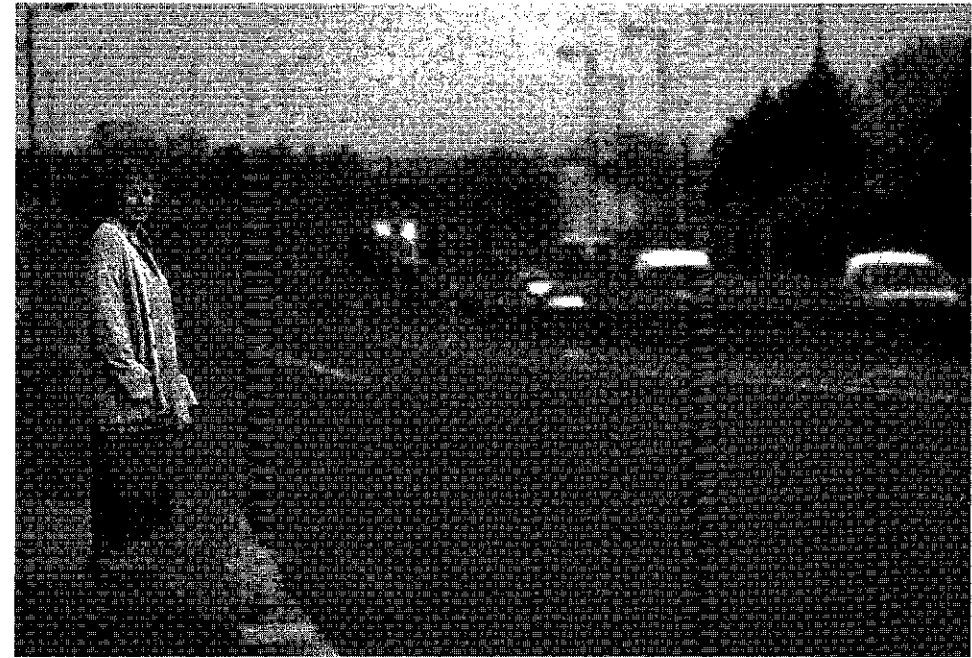
Iris (Richard Eyre, 2001)

hagiography of a canonised artist merely confirms that this is the rule (see, for instance,
Richard Eyre's banal *Iris*, US/UK, 2001).

Before going on to talk about necessary outsideness, a transitional subcategory has to be
taken into account. This subcategory corresponds to the traditional scholarly approach to the
history of cinema in India, chronicling trends and formulating historical narratives, while
avoiding, to some extent at least, legitimising or instrumentalising positions. The value of
this approach depends on the quality of the historiographic skills deployed. Admittedly, these
narratives are often riddled with elements of both the populist and the projectivist tenden-
cies, which does not make life any easier for the reader who has to unravel the useful leads
from a hopelessly tangled discursive web. However, this scholarly approach is still to be wel-
comed for its efforts to provide much-needed information, even though its narratives must
be treated with extreme caution. This is a transitional moment in the process of engagement
with otherness, because it still maps the familiar Western reductive paradigms onto, for
instance, the development of the Indian film industry. But to the extent that the effort is
genuinely scholarly, this type of historiography is also bound to register areas of difference
where the object of study resists the interpretative framework projected upon it. For instance,
Barnouw and Krishnaswamy's history of the *Indian Cinema* (1963; revised edn 1980) uses
Lewis Jacobs' *The Rise of the American Film* (1939) as its main model. But whereas Jacobs
offers a standard romantic version of the way in which the industry destroys individual genius
(Chaplin, Stroheim, Welles), Barnouw and Krishnaswamy find themselves stuck for indi-
vidual geniuses in the Western mould (until Satyajit Ray). Consequently, they promote

powerful actors and studio bosses as the individuals of genius: genius-entrepreneurs, rather than genius-artists. In this way, they have difficulty assessing the value of Guru Dutt or of Ritwik Ghatak, since both operated in relation to India's commercial and (already industrially inflected) traditional aesthetic practices.

Bakhtin's third type of encounter is only now beginning to be attempted in the form of arguments around the mutually defining relationship between historiographic, economic and cultural analyses. One such approach was formulated in the context of debate around notions of Third Cinema in the later 1980s and early 1990s (Willemen 1994: 175–205; Shohat and Stam 1994). It is an approach which concentrates on the need to understand the dynamics of a particular cultural practice within its own social formation. However, that social formation is simultaneously taken as a historical construct, and thus as an object of transformation rather than a given essence hiding deep within the national soul. In this way, the analyst's own socio-cultural formation is brought into focus as a historical construct, equally in need of transformation. The engagement with other cultural practices can (and in my view must) thus be geared towards the unblocking, or the transformation, of aspects of the analyst's own cultural situation. In a way, we are talking here about a double outsideness: the analyst must relate to his or her own situation as an other, refusing simple identifications with pre-given, essentialised socio-cultural categories. At the same time, such identifications with group identities 'elsewhere' must be resisted as well, since the object of study is precisely the intricate, dynamic interconnections of processes which combine to form a socio-cultural constellation (a Benjaminian notion quoted in Buck-Morss 1981: 57). Some of the forces at work in such a constellation will tend towards the containment of elements likely to challenge its fragile and always provisional cohesion; others will tend towards the consolidation of unequal balances of power; still others will promote collusion with, or resistance to, the reigning balance of power. Identities, whether individuated or group ones, are riven as well as constituted by such tensions. Indeed, identities are the names we give to the more or less stable figures of condensation located at the intersection of psycho-social processes. It is, then, perfectly possible to ask questions outlawed by populist instrumentalism as well as by projectivist appropriation. In the case of Indian cinemas, it allows us to address questions regarding the mobilisation of pre-capitalist ideologies and capitalist but anti-imperialist tendencies among urban workers and underclasses; about the operative differences between central and regional capitals, and so on. Thirdly, this type of approach allows us to envisage the possibility that in some circumstances, bourgeois cultural trends may have a greater emancipatory potential than anti-capitalist ones which hark back to an idealised fantasy of pre-colonial innocence.

More importantly, the outsideness approach requires us to conceptualise texts and other practices as potentially comprising many different, even contradictory strands: some aspects of a text may pull in one direction, while others will pull in a totally different one, with yet others exerting pressure in diametrically opposed vectors. For, from a historical critical perspective, the fundamental question to ask of a film is: in which direction does this particular bundle of discourses seek to move its viewers or readers? Obviously, answers to that question will always be provisional and context-dependent, that is to say,

dependent on the context within which these questions and answers are meant to achieve a degree of productivity.

Finally, two caveats may be in order. The first one is that although it is necessary for Western intellectuals to address, for instance, the cinema in India, with one eye on their own situation, their other eye must remain focused on the potential effects of their discourses within the Indian situation. This uncomfortably cross-eyed mode of operation is absolutely vital if Western intellectuals, however well-intentioned, are to avoid obstructing the work of Indian allies. The unfortunate facts of imperialism mean that the power relations between Indian and Western intellectuals are still uneven. This is clearly evident, for instance, from the fact that Indian film-makers can secure production finance at least partly on the strength of their reputation in the West. Consequently, in their efforts to draw attention to particular aspects of cultural practices in India likely to assist desirable developments in Western cultural practices, Western intellectuals must be careful not to lend inadvertent support to work which, in India, obstructs the very positions they are trying to support. Differences between, say, Ireland and Britain, or Korea and Japan, require a similar approach. If this cross-eyed dialectic is forgotten, the term 'specificity' loses any meaning and any notion of creative or diagnostic understanding. That would be unfortunate, since a position of double outsideness, that is to say, of in-between-ness, is the precondition for any useful engagement with 'the national' in film culture.

The second caveat concerns cinema itself as a so-called medium and as an industry. In many respects, the very unitarian, homogenising notions of 'the' nation and of 'the' cinema are complicit with each other: each demands its own historicising narratives, founding or originary moments, linear string of periodisations, and so on. And just as national boundaries are both a fact and a process – making the 'national' emerge in the process of addressing the compexities, failures and effectiveness of a geographically bounded network of institutions that constitutes any given 'state' – so are the boundaries of cinema itself as 'a medium', both a fact and a process. The fact of cinema is bounded by the network of industrial institutions which govern and define specific ways of producing and circulating specific objects: films. These institutions are most commonly identified as studios, production companies, distributors, exhibitors and the like. The histories of these companies may be narrated as regional sub-sets or sectors of a national industry. To ignore the effective ways in which a particular film industry is stitched into a state's institutional network amounts to depriving oneself of the means to understand the dynamics which, although rarely governing the film industry directly, at least decisively shape its options, procedures, and thus its products. At the same time, cinema is a process the boundaries of which are not reducible to those of any national industry. Different temporalities and histories of perception, rhythms of modernisation and technology, trade routes, not to mention the equally transnational dimensions of adjacent cultural industries such as publishing, theatre or music, affect the functioning of any given cinema. All of these factors are caught in the encompassing dynamics of industrialisation and in its consequent versions of cultural modernisation. Cinema itself emerges as an object in the same way that the nation becomes manifest: in the process of addressing the specific dynamics underpinning and regulating power relations

between and within institutional networks. That process is never neutral; as a process, it always seeks to move in a particular direction, towards an arrangement of power-relations that is to be identified and calibrated as somewhere along the continuum between absolute democracy and absolutist authoritarianism. In the same way that 'the nation' is configured in the process of addressing the terms and consequences of a particular system of cohesion among a geographically bounded set of institutions, so is 'cinema' only an 'object' that emerges in the interactions between a loosely bounded industrial sector and that sector's complex relations to a 'national' institutional configuration.

Consequently, what may be cinema in one country may not be so in another one, a conclusion that must have some implications for film theory as well as for film history. A prominent example of such a problem is presented by the notion of cinema in Britain. Having tried to foster a 'national' cinema in the aftermath of World War II by means of quota legislation, the British government found itself being frowned upon by Washington and quickly took steps to reassure the USA of its submission. Having allowed British cinema to become a colony of Hollywood, the British government sought to regain some measure of cultural hegemony within its own territory by way of television. As the history of, and the debates around, both censorship and production in Britain demonstrate, the domestic film industry was subordinated to, and controlled via, an adjacent industry: television. One of the peculiar results of this development is that British cinema went from being a promise to being a ruin without ever having become anything much in its own right, except perhaps in the decade from the late 1930s to the late 1940s and, subsequently, only in areas that escaped television's reach – for instance, the exploitation cinema practised by Hammer or Amicus, or by the avant-garde and independent cinema sectors prior to their (voluntary) subordination to television from the early 1980s onwards. In other countries, film industries were caught within, and defined by, different kinds of institutional dynamics. In France or to some extent in the US, it would be absurd to write a history of cinematic production dominated by telefilms, whereas in Britain, it has become impossible to do otherwise. What cinema is varies according to the dynamics at work within and between industrial and governmental institutional networks. This does not entitle us to ignore cinema or to declare it dead. It merely requires us to 'think' cinema not as an immutable object, but as a historically (institutionally) delineated set of practices caught within, among others, the dynamics besetting and characterising a national configuration.

Notes

1. Parts of this essay were first given as a paper in Canberra (1989), then published as 'The National' in Willemen 1994: 206–19.
2. After 1945, internationalism migrated from the sphere of socialist and working-class politics to that of the now fully hegemonic bourgeoisies, both in Europe and in most of the decolonising independence movements, while socialist politics began to emphasise a national, even nationalist, political rhetoric.
3. In 2004, the Northern Irish representative of the UK Film Council unashamedly declared, in public, at a conference held at a university, that one needed to be mentally in top condition to

be able to deal with subtitles, and that this was not something that the UK Film Council could be expected to address since its remit was to cater for the majority of the UK's population.
4. See, for instance, the proliferation of conferences devoted to Asian film studies in 1989–90, not to mention many of the contributions published in film journals and the proliferation of 'introductory' books on non-Euro-American cinemas. This development may well be one of the main reasons why the more productive contributions to film studies are increasingly to be found in cultural studies journals such as *Positions, UTS Review, Journal of Arts and Ideas, Traces* and *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*.
5. In this respect, the European Union constitutes a massive obstacle. Previously it was difficult but possible to create breathing spaces and a basic economic infrastructure for an independent cinema determined to address the complexities of a national socio-cultural formation by seeking to mobilise the democratic potential available in national institutions. Now the European Union's media policies have been put into place to minimise that democratic potential and to enable a few European industrialists with multinational aspirations to compete better with Hollywood's globalising project. Today in Europe, in order to bring about better opportunities for independently minded film-makers, it has been made necessary to organise a campaign for change capable of persuading a significant number of European governments to change their policies and representatives in the secretive media committees tucked away, with lavish funding, in the recesses of the European Union's labyrinthine structures.

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