

23 Cinema and Communication

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Cinema has historically been the only mass medium that has managed to "make it" into the realm of high culture, to join opera, ballet, painting, and sculpture. Desjardins points out, however, that as in so many other spheres of life, both the mass and popular cultural dimensions of cinema have to be foregrounded if we are to be able to understand it as a form of communication. In making this argument, she addresses some of the same concerns that animate Negus's discussion of popular music in Chapter 22, Kellner's analysis of advertising in Chapter 19, and Ang's review of the television audience in Chapter 12.

Desjardins begins by reviewing the contested early history of American cinema and its transition to the Hollywood "dream factory"—as sociologist Hortense Powdermaker (1950/1979) once termed it—that began to turn out the immense volume of films, year after year, that still dominate the planet's screens. She shows the important role that was played by immigrant worker audiences in the 1910s and 1920s, and by the rise to prominence of the advertising industry. At the same time, she notes the importance of the cult of individual identity in twentieth-century U.S. culture and its links to the Hollywood star cult.

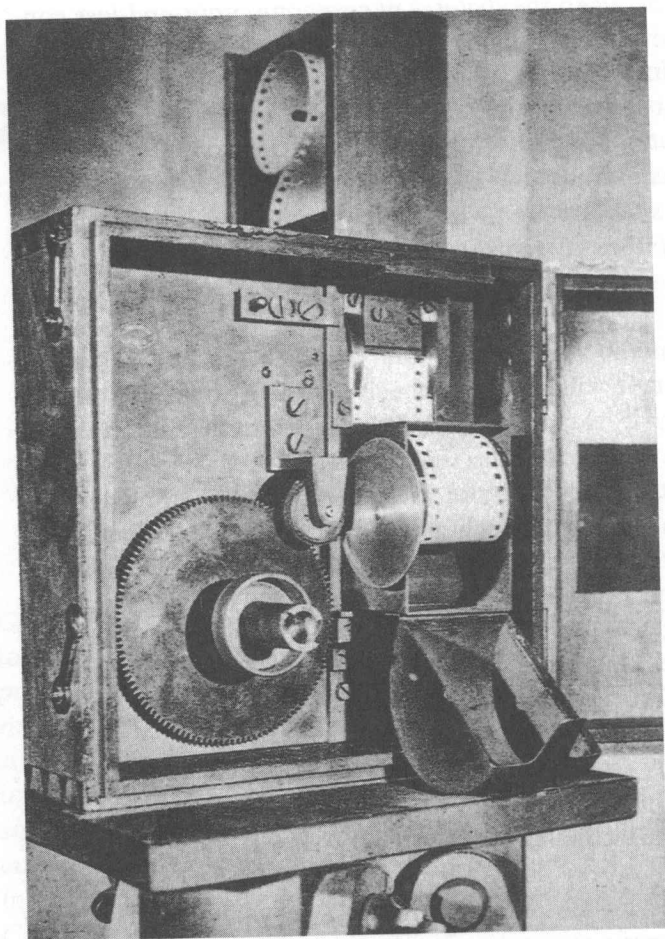
Desjardins also explores further the issues of the "mass" and the "popular," and suggests that in practice Hollywood films quite often

show a tension between the dictates of corporate profit-and-loss considerations involved in financing a film and the need to appeal to a public engaged in debating issues of social equity, whether in terms of class or gender or racism. She concludes the chapter with introductions to the notion of film "language," to types of film (feature, documentary, experimental), and to the global film dominance of Hollywood, and she raises some questions about the future of cinema in an era when interactive media are much debated.

A common lament of the contemporary film lover is that most films today are made with more emphasis on "high concept" than on character or story development. *High concept* is the current term used to describe a film based on an idea that can be summed up in a sentence or two, and that can be packaged as a total commercial onslaught, including ancillary products such as toys and T-shirts, and amazing special effects. On top of this, film viewing is most often experienced in small, cramped theaters in the company of noisy viewers accustomed to talking across the TV. However, the days when film was a pure and simple experience, when films were watched in hushed reverence, may have been just one moment—a blip, as it were—in the history of motion pictures.

A hundred years ago, in the first decade of film production, the film industries of the United States, Britain, France, and Germany were more concerned with the technology of film than with the films themselves. The Edison Company in the United States and Pathé Company in France, for example, made—or felt they could make—most of their profits from developing movie cameras and projectors and securing (and eventually litigating for) their patents and royalties (Elsaesser, 1990). These companies manufactured equipment to be incompatible with that of other companies, just like TV sets, computers, and mobile phones in a later period, so they made films to help market their technology, selling them by quantity (in feet of film) rather than by quality. During this period, films were exhibited in many different locations (vaudeville houses, storefront theaters, converted saloons, churches, lecture halls) and under many conditions, from middle-class decorous to loose and rowdy; audiences were made up of people from diverse ethnic and class backgrounds (Hansen, 1991).

It is important to understand that the current forms of film production and exhibition—which some may feel trash their ideal cinematic



experience—are as much tied to historical shifts in technology, industrialized capitalism, and the consumer and leisure habits of film audiences as they were almost a hundred years ago. Of course, film audiences were attentive to films' meanings even in historical periods when technological and screening practices seemed to define so much of the cinematic experience. Despite valuable studies that examine cinema as "art," films have a longer and more pervasive existence as popular culture, the products of the beliefs, practices, and fantasies of ordinary people.

This chapter looks at cinema as popular culture, with special attention to the implications of its emergence in a historical moment when a number of industrialized countries were establishing mass consumption patterns. Films and filmmaking in industrialized countries are part of a popular culture that is, above all, a mass culture. Historians studying the technological development of motion pictures or their historical content (re-creations of the Spanish-American War, or footage of the bombing of Hiroshima or President Kennedy's assassination, for instance) like to point out that the history of cinema is also the history of the twentieth century. This is equally true if we think of cinema in terms of its mass production by giant corporations and its consumption by a mass audience. Once these corporations realized the profitable worth of the film product itself, they worked very hard to consolidate their "vertical integration" of the total cinema process (owning and/or controlling production, distribution, and exhibition) and so creating all the conditions for a truly mass cinema audience (Elsaesser, 1990; Musser, 1990).

The Beginnings of Mass Cinema and Mass Audiences

What was this environment and how has it been sustained? This question has to be answered differently according to the specific national context in which cinema has flourished, even though striking similarities exist among the earliest movie industries and products of industrialized Europe and the United States. The American context is especially interesting in the early years of the motion picture industry, however, because mass reception had to be organized among a population that then too was very diverse in terms of ethnicity and race (because of the immense wave of labor immigration from eastern and southern Europe in the years 1880-1920) and in which a number of individuals could improve their social and economic status more quickly than in Europe. In other words, the creation of a mass audience, meaning a relatively homogeneous public for a new cultural product, was a major challenge for an industry still creating and litigating technological devices, yet embedded in a rapidly changing and diversifying nation (Elsaesser, 1990).

This pre-World War I period of U.S. film history is one of the most widely studied and hotly debated among current film historians. All seem to agree, however, that securing the mass audience was related to a confluence of factors, including the industry's moves toward the use of straightforward plots, establishment of business practices that would ensure a steady flow of film product and standardized movie theater practices, and the publicizing of filmgoing as superior to other forms of popular entertainment, giving it more respectability (Elsaesser, 1990, pp. 153-168). I will elaborate on the first of these factors later in the chapter; but first, regarding the industry's business practices and the boosting of filmgoing as socially acceptable, several points may be made.

The increasing vertical integration (i.e., the increasingly corporate organization) of the film industry was the necessary practical foundation for what it provided, namely, fantasy scenarios. In a consumer society that appealed through advertising and product design to new U.S. citizens' supposed desires for individuality and modernity, while still staying safely within the bounds of middle-class morality, these scenarios enabled the film industry to unify (some might say homogenize) a large and diverse population. Consumption of films and other products enhancing one's self-identification as an "individual" and "modern" united this population. Even if the working class could not afford all consumer products, buying on credit and the dreams evoked by advertising sustained desire for middle-class lifestyles while smoothing out previous class and ethnic loyalties.

The film industry contributed to this new environment in ways that resulted in cinema's ascendancy over most other popular public entertainments. By 1915, several picture palaces—large, grandiosely ornamented movie theaters—had opened in urban areas, and even the smaller cities and towns had theaters just for movies, separate from the venues for live entertainment and more stable financially—and architecturally!—than the theaters built during the nickelodeon boom that began in 1905 (Musser, 1990).

Significantly, most movie theaters shifted business sense and sensibility from that typical of the wandering showman to one that emphasized predictable experiences for employees and audiences. Norms of behavior familiar to middle-class venues were imposed—silence during the movie, clean and tidy surroundings, and, in the South, audience segregation, with Blacks in the balconies or in separate theaters altogether. In other words, the cinematic experience was

understood by producers and exhibitors as socially appropriate for the middle class, and it was advertised as such, just as other industries were promoting the social legitimacy of their products—from deodorant to how-to books—on the basis of their therapeutic qualities (Marchand, 1985).

One of the most significant appeals to the filmgoing public as consumers, not only on the level of products and dramatic experiences, but also on the level of notions of modernity and unique personal identity, was the industry's development of a star system. The cultivation of stars for audience identification and adulation is still one of the most important cultural activities of cinema worldwide (an activity it shares with the television and recording industries), and has proven to be one of its most financially stable ways of funding and promoting films, even amid enormous changes in star-industry relations. In the late 1910s and early 1920s, the industry's promotion of films through the promotion of stars was part of a larger cultural trend; the industry utilized not only stage-star discourses available since at least the nineteenth century, but also new definitions of the individual as a unique personality.

This new understanding of the self was different (though never completely separate) from the individual as a moral character, a notion that had driven the farmer- and factory-oriented culture of America's past. This individual-as-personality was unique, yet could continually transform or update him- or herself by keeping pace with the changes of modernity, which meant, in practice, changing through the acquisition of material goods and style. Stars were the new gods of the personality, as they fulfilled notions of modern transformation not only through acting parts but by living myths of success. They were (and are) at once ordinary and extraordinary (de Cordova, 1990; Dyer, 1979).

Yet stars had to live up to middle-class standards of propriety and morality, even as they enjoyed spectacular wealth and some intangible appeal, which some might call charisma or simply "It" (as novelist and tastemaker Elinor Glynn dubbed silent-era star Clara Bow's defining quality). After a number of sex scandals involving stars in the 1920s, the American film industry actually took control over their behavior, which it successfully maintained (with the occasional exceptions, as when Ingrid Bergman became pregnant during an adulterous affair with Italian director Roberto Rossellini in 1949) until the 1950s, when changing norms of moral behavior and the studios' waning economic

power combined to give stars more autonomy in the creation of their public selves (today's supermarket tabloids show how far we have traveled since then). Until this point, however, star images needed tending because of the continual importance to the consumer industries of stars' films balancing out unruly sexual desires with middle-class morality.

As noted, the films themselves were created within, and helped to sustain, a consumer culture that was also a popular culture for a mass audience. Even though now many advertisers and film companies define audiences as "segmented" (see, e.g., Ang, Chapter 12, and Gandy, Chapter 13)—by income, age, gender, and ethnic status—and even though film must now compete economically with video, this generalized consumer culture still holds sway (see also Kellner, Chapter 19).

One indication of the sustained place for films in popular culture today is their position as targets of commentary and critique. Many of the social critiques of films today are motivated by the same or similar concerns as in the past: the negative effects of sex and violence on the youth audience, stereotypical depictions of race and gender, escapist and predictable plot formulas, and spin-off purchases, such as toys, that "sucker" audiences at home and abroad. Whether centering on their encouragement of immoral behavior or their implicit endorsement of authoritarian government, the social criticism of films in past and present has arisen largely because of the discomfort many critics have as they observe a supposedly authentic popular culture seemingly drowned out by a shoddy, dollar-conscious, corporate-driven mass culture (see O'Connor and Downing, Chapter 1).

Popular social commentators and special interest groups of the 1930s, like those in the 1990s, were understandably concerned about increased violence in civil society and looked to movies as a possible cause, because of their seductive power to provide fantasy scenarios of power and freedom. The intellectual historians and critical thinkers of the 1920s-1930s known as the Frankfurt school were painfully aware of the power of the mass media (in their experience, film and radio) to manipulate audiences and to encourage uncritical thinking, whether to serve the aims of Nazi propaganda or simply for escapism. They were responding not only to the commercial motives behind the media industries' reach to the masses in the United States and industrialized Europe, but also to the annexation of the German film industry to Hitler's Fascist regime in 1933-1945. The Nazi leadership

not only could force the film industry into service of their political party through an organizational takeover, but knew how to use the powers of the media in terms of their forms of expression.

Likewise, thinkers and film scholars of the 1970s and 1980s were rightfully concerned about the legacy of U.S. domination of the world film market (see Mohammadi, Chapter 21) and the reproduction of class and gender inequities when they analyzed how Hollywood films "position" film spectators as upper-status white males—in other words, how these films address spectators as if that were what they all were, and thus steer them into viewing their lives through that narrow lens. However, it is important to sustain a notion of films' political impact without also idealizing supposedly "authentic" popular culture forms from a precapitalist past, like the carnival (Russo, 1986; Stallybrass & White, 1986), or overestimating films' power to unify the diverse desires and temporary or partial identifications of their audiences with the action or the characters (compare, again, Ang, Chapter 12).

Cultural Studies and Understanding Cinema

A cultural studies model for understanding films, the film industry, and audiences is helpful in this regard because it examines films in terms of both their mass, consumer appeal (which benefits corporate capitalism) and their roots in popular culture. In turn, popular culture potentially expresses desires and fantasies deeply important to many social groups and definitions of ourselves that can be at odds with the logic of consumerism, and not fully held in check by it.

For example, in the popular 1955 American melodrama *All That Heaven Allows*, the female protagonist ultimately opts out of the consumerist lifestyle that has her "keeping up with the Joneses" in purchases and propriety for a "simple" life with a younger man in the country. Similarly, perhaps some of the appeal of the surprisingly popular *The Piano* (1993), directed by Jane Campion, is in its female lead's rejection of a life that would deny creative expression and female sexual desire in order to build instead a repressive and imperialist middle-class society in the wilds of nineteenth-century New Zealand.

To look at films in terms of the distinctions between, as well as the similarities among, the "mass" and the "popular" is to see them as products of competing and overlapping priorities among and within

the industry, culture, and the stories the films tell. Even if we understand the industry as having a profit-driven agenda (or a propagandistic one in cases where film industries serve this function for the government), to be able to attract audiences' attention repeatedly, it has had to adjust its story codes to conform to "ever shifting criteria of relevance and credibility" (Gledhill, 1988, p. 76). This means that the industry, in the name of short-term profit, may produce some films that question the long-term goals of capitalism and/or male dominance, and/or white dominance.

The 1991 film *Thelma & Louise*, directed by Ridley Scott, is a good example of this process. Attempting to solicit the female audience, which many critics suggested it had been losing since the 1960s, the American film industry was willing to take a chance on producing a film written by a woman who was "fed up with the passive role of women" in American movies (Callie Khouri, quoted in Schickel, 1991, p. 55). The film is about two women friends on the run after one has shot dead a man who was attempting to rape the other. In other words, the industry had to acknowledge and incorporate a feminist critique of their own product in order to produce films of continuing relevance and credibility to (at least a portion of) their audience.

But in hiring Ridley Scott, who reportedly added more violent imagery and cut some scenes between the two women characters, to direct the movie, the industry created a tension within the production, revealing the extent to which competing agendas exist within the industry itself. Also, the movie probably would not have been produced in the first place if it had not fit into familiar U.S. film genres—the outlaw/gangster film and the "road" film. Another level of dissonance in meaning, then, existed within the text, as it carried a "feminist critique"—men's readiness to rape, women's right to self-defense—within historically developed genres and iconography (the visual landscape) that historically had connoted expression of the individual's will through (a) violence and (b) travel at will.

Furthermore, the film text was released, promoted, and discussed in U.S. culture, where not only gender roles are in a process of revision owing to feminist movements, but where there are very contradictory notions of feminism itself and of "progressive" versus "regressive" media representations of women. Consequently, a variety of passionate debates were carried on in other popular media (radio, television, and mass publications) concerning the status of the characters of *Thelma and Louise* as feminist heroines.

The preceding discussion suggests that one task of the film scholar or critic is to investigate the conditions under which audiences read and understand those film worlds constructed by an industry trying to adjust textual codes to changing cultural notions of relevance (Gledhill, 1988; Staiger, 1992). But an associated task is to understand the language of film itself, how it operates as what some critics call a "textual system." A number of theories have been developed over the years to explain how film communicates by functioning like a language, but semiotics, which is concerned with the composition of signs and sign systems, is probably the most thoroughly argued theory.

The Language of Film

The sign, which is the smallest unit of meaning in semiotics, is composed of the *signifier* (in the case of sound films, the image and sound) and the *signified* (the concept that the signifier represents). Ferdinand de Saussure (1966), one of the founding theorists of semiotics, argues that the relation between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary, so that the word *dog* (or the letters *d, o, g*) have no natural relationship to the four-legged domesticated mammal that barks and wags its tail.

But what is complicated when we talk about signs in cinema is that the photographic image does have an indexical relation to the object photographed. This means that the photographed object was once present in front of a camera containing raw film stock and, through a chemical process, left its "imprint" on the celluloid. Consequently, many theorists have discussed the *reality effect* of film—how much more it seems like a recording of "real life" than does written language. Furthermore, the object photographed and the way it is photographed (including camera angles and distance from the camera) "signify" jointly, as a total package, so it is almost impossible to say filmic signs are simply *denotative*, that is, that film images have a single, obvious content.

Filmic signs seem highly *connotative*: Their formal arrangements use *mise-en-scène* (i.e., composition of shot and frame), lighting, camera movement, acting styles, editing, and so on. This suggests that filmic sign(s), unlike some others, offer a second level of meaning linked to our feelings, dreams, and desires (Stam, Burgoyne, & Flitterman-Lewis, 1992, p. 195). Much semiotic analysis stresses the difficulty of

exhausting the possible meanings of signs and signifying systems, and the above discussion of *Thelma & Louise* suggests that signs (such as of two women on the road) are in any case interpreted by readers in light of their own experiences, of the point in history at which they see the film, and of the circumstances in which the film is produced and watched.

Types of Film: The Documentary, the Experimental, the Feature

Although all modes of filmmaking—the documentary, the avant-garde or experimental film, and the fictional narrative (the feature)—use the properties of the filmic medium, such as *mise-en-scène*, camera movement or position, and editing, they have different approaches toward the profilmic event (the action unfolding in front of the camera at the moment of shooting) and toward addressing the audience. The documentary tends to respect the profilmic event—that is, it claims to document what goes on before the camera, with a minimum of manipulation. Yet there is more than one school of thought on how much a documentary filmmaker should manipulate the results of capturing the profilmic. Early Soviet filmmaker Dziga Vertov argued for the heavy manipulation (through editing) of “fragments” of reality caught on film. His *Man With a Movie Camera* (1929) tried to capture the fast-changing reality of postrevolutionary Soviet society by juxtaposing images of Moscow citizens engaged in ordinary activities with images of the making of a film. In this way he tried to suggest a parallel and a solidarity between his own work as a filmmaker for the new society and the work of every Soviet citizen to the same end.

By contrast, the “direct cinema” school of documentary filmmaking favors keeping the integrity of the profilmic event apparent after the postproduction of the film, so that viewers see pretty much what they would have seen if they had been present on the scene of filming. For example, Frederick Wiseman’s *High School* (1968) documents daily life in an American high school by having the camera follow students through their activities of the day, including club meetings, hallway high jinks, and confrontations with teachers. Wiseman tried to “respect” the events recorded by not having a voice-over narration and by using a minimum of editing within scenes.

The documentary concern with recording reality is usually connected to the director's or the funder's desire to change some aspect of that reality for the better. This is true even of "found footage" films (which juxtapose fragments of already shot footage), such as Cuban filmmaker Santiago Álvarez's *Now!* (1965), an edited collection of images of the American civil rights struggle with African American singer-activist Lena Horne singing "Now" on the sound track. Sometimes a documentary will try to re-create a past event according to eyewitness accounts by staging scenes with actors. For *The Thin Blue Line* (1988), director Errol Morris used the lighting and camera angles of a film noir fictional crime story—a film style that dwells on the harsh and sometimes grotesque aspects of human behavior (the word *noir*, black, being used in the sense of an all-pervasive corruption) to try to show how difficult it is to know the truth. Paradoxically, Morris became convinced while shooting his film that his subject—a man on death row—was innocent of the crime of which he had been convicted. The success of the film and the issues it raised prompted the alleged murderer to get a new trial, and his sentence was eventually overturned. These examples raise complex questions about the relations between media and reality that have yet to receive any definitive answers.

Documentaries were probably the first films exhibited for paying audiences. The form originated in France with the Lumière Brothers' series of films, known as *actualités*, that recorded ordinary events, such as workers leaving a factory, trains arriving in stations, and parents (one of the brothers and his wife) feeding their baby. From the time of their appearance in 1895, documentaries have served as both information and entertainment for the mass film audience. The documentary "urge" has also been present in many fictional film movements and styles, such as Italian neorealism, which sought a new fictional style to represent social issues in Italy in the period after World War II, and postrevolution Cuban film, which was not only made by directors schooled in documentary film and Italian neorealism, but had the specific tasks of educating the audience in Cuban history as part of a nationwide literacy campaign. Although films that were primarily documentary in style were very popular and visible in theaters worldwide in the first two decades of film production, they are now seen mostly on television (with the occasional exception, such as *The Thin Blue Line*, discussed above).

The avant-garde or experimental film is also rarely seen in theaters. Museums, classrooms, art galleries, and specialized television channels (in the United States, public television channels or "art" cable channels) are the most likely venues for films that take as their subject and agenda the exploration of the film medium itself. The properties of film technology and film language are often explored in the avant-garde film in the effort to understand more precisely how cinema is distinguished from other art forms. In the 1960s and 1970s, the avant-garde film tended to be the preferred medium and mode for artists with political messages who felt the conventional narrative codes of commercial cinema "naturalized"—took for granted and communicated as obvious, beyond question by sensible people—the political agendas of capitalist, patriarchal culture. However, throughout the history of avant-garde cinema—from the French surrealists' play with the erotic fantasies of Hollywood in *Smiling Madame Beudet* (1923) to American filmmaker Maya Deren's film-noirish exploration of her subjectivity in *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943) to Cecile Barriga's *Meeting of Two Queens* (1991), a found-footage film in which images of Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich are edited together to suggest a romantic relationship between the two—avant-garde films have displayed a fascination with and exploration of popular culture and its pleasures.

Fictional narrative film is undoubtedly the most popular mode of filmmaking in the world, and yet, as I have suggested, it was probably not the first kind of film exhibited, nor was it immediately dominant when it appeared shortly after the Lumière Brothers showed their *actualités*. Early movie audiences were fascinated by many aspects of the film product and the filmgoing experience. Fictional films were one kind of filmic entertainment, albeit one that was related to other popular forms of entertainment, such as the comic strip, vaudeville, stage theater, the short story, and the novel.

Ultimately, fictional features best suited the vertically integrated film industry, which developed its power on the basis of its ability to produce regular product for a growing number of theaters serving diverse audiences. The production of regular film product was dependent on efficient procedures. Fictional narratives could be produced more quickly and predictably than documentaries because they were made in the controlled environments of studios or production companies, with a labor system increasingly modeled on the factory and the conveyor belt, and employing a stock company of actors. Documenta-

ries, in contrast, depended upon actual events and specific individuals, and if any of these failed to turn out as predicted, or the necessary light and sound conditions could not be met, then the financial schedule of production, distribution, and exhibition would be in disarray.

By the early 1910s, fictional narratives were the dominant products of most film companies in industrialized nations. This does not mean, however, that fictional narratives as we know them today—whether products of Hollywood or of European industries—sprang up fully accessible to all audiences. Some theorists have suggested that “intertextual” relations were crucial to audience comprehension of early narrative films—films that to modern viewers may seem to be lacking in basic narrative information or causal links, because they are not aware of the other, nonfilm, texts to which the films allude. Film texts that could be understood in and of themselves without reference to any other text (because continuity editing constructed “realistic” space and action, and because simplified plot organization ensured cause-and-effect relations) developed only when the film industry moved to secure a truly mass audience. As noted above, audience members of certain classes, educational levels, and, perhaps, ethnic status might not have had access to all the appropriate intertextual allusions of the earlier films appealing to a middle-class, educated audience (Musser, 1990; Staiger, 1992).

The Growth of U.S. Cinema to Global Preeminence

It was on the basis of this guaranteed mass audience—through continuity-based fictional narratives and attractive exhibition and viewing practices—that the U.S. film industry secured a strong home market. This alone did not cause the further eventual domination of the world market by American films, but it poised the industry to take advantage of the right circumstances—which presented themselves at the outbreak of World War I in 1914, when many European industries shifted to war production and competition among those nations’ films was stalled by closed borders. The American film industry began its domination of the world market at that point, and it has remained remarkably viable despite changes in global capitalism and the necessity of making adjustments to closed markets in such periods as World War II in 1939-1945 (which it was able to make up for from 1945

onward by reorganizing the postwar German and Japanese film industries in ways that benefited the importation of American film product).

It is unfair and reductive to suggest that the rest of the world's cinema is "alien" to the American industry, not only because the traditions established by American cinema in its earliest incarnations were actively imbibed from the French, Italian, British, and German products, but because these other industrialized European countries were, as are now much of Asia and Latin America and the newly "independent" Eastern European countries, organized in terms of a consumer culture. The fantasy scenarios of American film narratives and star discourses appealed then and now, in part, in many different cultural contexts because of this common economic and psychological organization and orientation of twentieth-century culture (for a different view, see Mohammadi, Chapter 21).

Some of the best international cinema has responded to this fact, such as the tragedies and satires by Germany's Rainer Werner Fassbinder, who wrote and directed films dealing not only with the legacy of Fascism in contemporary Germany, but with the alienation between people and within the individual's own self-awareness because of the lures and desires of consumer culture. Yet Fassbinder's films also show a love for the Hollywood melodrama of Minnelli and Sirk (the latter an émigré from Nazi Germany). Wim Wenders, Fassbinder's colleague, has almost obsessively "rewritten" the American western and melodrama genres—even making films in the United States—while benefiting from the looser, more open narrative form of contemporary German cinema. This has allowed him to make films that "play" with American genres rather than embody them and to meditate on the political implications of these popular cultural forms for modern Germany.

German feminist filmmaker Ulrike Ottinger has done something similar with the pirate-film genre in her *Madame X* (1977). Like Wenders, who in his film *Until the End of the World* (1991) turned to Japanese and Eastern cultures to find the future of cinema (and video), Ottinger has explored non-Western realms as visual landscapes for her meditations on cinema and the representation of women. In her almost three-hour long *Joanna d'Arc of Mongolia* (1988), several European women are captured by a Mongolian and her Amazon warriors. On the Mongolian steppes—a place that takes on metaphoric as well as literal meaning—the European women free themselves of their past identities, which Ottinger uses as an occasion to fantasize

about a world without patriarchy and a cinema not bound by typical iconography or conventional structures of time.

New German Cinema was preceded by the French New Wave, among the first post-World War II film movements and directors to understand, love, and simultaneously hate American dominance of the film market. Films that came out of these movements were generated by this ambivalence. Godard, one of more than a hundred directors who made their feature film debuts in France in 1959, was probably the first director to understand how American films had "colonized" the unconscious desires of consumer culture with their seductive images of individual freedom and power. He not only ruthlessly analyzed this process in many of his films, he paid homage to the immensely powerful desires released by American film genres (from the musical to the gangster film to the western) and consumer culture.

After making films to support the student leftist movements of the 1960s, he eventually returned to a more artisanal mode of image making with partner Ann-Marie Mieville. Together they made two stunning video series, *France/Tour/Détour* and *Six Fois Deux*, profound and complex explorations of the different ways in which television and film address their viewing subjects, and the relations of these media to contemporary European culture.

The Future of Cinema

The directions taken by Wenders and Godard suggest that the future of cinema may lie in video or television. This observation may work itself out on many levels. Film may disappear, although its superior image resolution still affords great creativity and viewing pleasure. The way we view films may change to approximate the television experience and the viewing citizen it produces, which is more than likely a viewer in some kind of family context who interacts with video games, computers, and television. Although it is likely that many will still seek out the viewing experience in public movie houses, no matter how far from ideal they may be in some regards, television, video, and computer/CD-ROM delivery of film images are likely to be the dominant delivery systems in the future.

This shift could transform the place of film in consumer culture. Viewers who tape and watch films on video already zap through the

commercials that interrupt broadcast films. Yet films, from *E.T.* to *Pretty Woman*, are still produced with consumer messages inscribed within the text. Time will tell if the newly forecast "interactive" movies, which allow individual spectators to change or direct narrative activity, will translate into media use that emphasizes more of the popular and less of the mass, consumer orientation of film culture.

Appendix: Select Filmography

EARLY FILMS IN EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES

- Workers Leaving the Factory* (Lumière Bros., France, 1895)
- Arrival of Express at Lyons* (Lumière Bros., France, 1895)
- A Trip to the Moon* (Méliès, France, 1902)
- The Life of an American Fireman* (Porter for Edison Co., United States, 1903)
- Rescued by Rover* (Hepworth, England, 1905)
- The Lonedale Operator* (Griffith, United States, 1911)
- Cabiria* (Pastrone, Italy, 1914)
- The Birth of a Nation* (Griffith, United States, 1915)
- The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Wiene, Germany, 1919)
- Madame Du Barry* (Lubitsch, France, 1919)
- Male and Female* (De Mille, United States, 1919)
- Smiling Madame Beudet* (Dulac, France, 1923)
- Sherlock, Jr.* (Keaton, United States, 1924)
- The Crowd* (Vidor, United States, 1928)
- Battleship Potemkin* (Eisenstein, Soviet Union, 1925)
- Man With a Movie Camera* (Vertov, Soviet Union, 1929)

ITALIAN NEOREALISM

- Rome—Open City* (Rossellini, Italy, 1945)
- The Bicycle Thief* (De Sica, Italy, 1949)

FRENCH NEW WAVE

- Breathless* (Godard, France, 1959)
- The Four Hundred Blows* (Truffaut, France, 1959)

Yet films, from E.T. to
 messages inscribed
 forecast "interactive"
 or direct narrative
 emphasizes more of the
 of film culture.

Filmography

UNITED STATES

France, 1895]

France, 1895]

United States,

1911]

1919]

1919]

1919]

1919]

1925]

1929]

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EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN AVANT-GARDE AND DOCUMENTARY

Meshes of the Afternoon (Deren, United States, 1943)

The Thin Blue Line (Morris, United States, 1988)

Night and Fog (Resnais, France, 1955)

Sans Soleil (Marker, France, 1984)

Meeting of Two Queens (Barriga, Spain, 1991)

CUBAN FILM

Now! (Álvarez, Cuba, 1965)

LBJ (Álvarez, Cuba, 1968)

Lucía (Solas, Cuba, 1969)

Memories of Underdevelopment (Gutiérrez Alea, Cuba, 1968)

NEW GERMAN CINEMA

Ali—Fear Eats the Soul (Fassbinder, Germany, 1974)

Joanna d'Arc of Mongolia (Ottinger, Germany, 1988)

Kings of the Road (Wenders, Germany, 1976)

Madame X (Ottinger, Germany, 1977)

Until the End of the World (Wenders, Germany, 1991)

Further Questions

1. Consider the various differences between watching a film in a movie theater and watching it on video at home. How important is each in affecting the communication process of appreciating a movie? Would high-definition television (see Demac, Chapter 16) cancel out the differences?
2. In the United States, *film* is often sharply separated from *television* by media critics, and in turn *television* is often sharply distinguished from *video*. Why do you think these distinctions are made? Do they apply in other countries as well?
3. Documentary films are viewed much more commonly in Europe, Japan, Russia, Australia, and other countries than in the United States. Is this important for understanding the differences in media use and impact among these countries?

4. Film industries have often played important roles in promoting national imagery and myths. Immerse yourself in a set of films from one foreign country and try to identify the signifiers of national culture used in the films.