THE AGE OF NEW WAVES

Art Cinema and the Staging of Globalization

JAMES TWEEDIE

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I began studying the French new wave while writing an undergraduate honors thesis under the direction of Joss Marsh at Stanford University, and my interest in Chinese cinema was sparked while teaching English at the Chinese Academy of Science in Beijing soon after graduation. The new cinemas of Europe and East Asia were personal and intellectual interests before they became professional ones, and this project has been motivated from the outset and throughout by the excitement generated by the films themselves.

Although this project is not based on my dissertation, I began developing the conceptual framework in courses on transnational cinema, neorealism, and postmodernism taught by Nataša Ďurovičová and Angelo Restivo at the University of Iowa. Iowa City was a wonderful place to study film and literature, and I benefitted enormously from the atmosphere of excitement and energy created by the faculty and graduate students at the University. At Iowa, I also benefitted from the generosity and guidance of Garrett Stewart, whose example I try to live up to in my own work as a scholar and a mentor to graduate students.

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The Age of New Waves

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Introduction

YOUTH, CITIES, AND THE GLOBALIZATION OF ART CINEMA

The story of global Hollywood, a familiar tale of American blockbusters occupying screens and imaginations around the world, is one of the most powerful and pervasive narratives of globalization in circulation today. Viewed as a triumphant or apocalyptic force, the omnipresent American film industry often serves as a prototype for globalization itself, as the most popular and lucrative films appeal to audiences on a planetary scale, to a public imagined as a vast market that extends across national boundaries. Regardless of the background of the writer—and the case of Hollywood crops up regularly in the mainstream press and popular nonfiction by journalists, as well as more academic studies in political science and economics—this story remains one of the principle examples of a seemingly ineluctable process in which "the cultural messages we transmit through Hollywood and McDonald's go out across the world to capture, and also to undermine, other societies."[1] For a century, Hollywood cinema has been a crucial component of this expansion of market capitalism, as both a profit-generating good and a widely circulating billboard for the benefits of a particular version of modernity. This economic juggernaut and widespread aesthetic standard also provides the major touchstone for studies of globalization in the film industry, even for critics and scholars who otherwise resist the stranglehold of American cinema on the international film market. Hollywood's capacity to attract diverse audiences in distant locations resonates perfectly with conventional accounts of economic globalization and its borderless world, and its unmatched record of box office hits appears to ratify this vision. Few cultural products can compete with Hollywood, especially when the market provides the framework of analysis and the standard of success.

The proliferation of new waves on the international art house and film festival circuits is one of the few cinematic phenomena from the past half century with a global reach that rivals the geographic range and ambition of

Hollywood. This book contends that these movements are best understood not as isolated events but as a series of interlaced moments, as an alternative vision of global modernity, and as an opening onto the "world" promised in the phrase "world cinema." The new waves surface as one dimension of the visual culture of accelerated modernization, and they accompany a sequence of urban, youth, and consumer revolutions whose universe of reference points and comparisons inevitably extends beyond national frontiers. At the end of the twentieth century, skyscrapers rising over freshly cleared ground in Taipei or Shanghai and luminous ads on colossal LED screens seemed to mark the threshold to the future, but these contemporary phenomena were woven into a long historical sequence that dated back to the 1950s, when the hegemony of American-style capitalism expanded across western Europe and into pockets of East Asia. This book is concerned with the films that emerged together with and documented the construction of these environments, but it also situates this cinematic and cultural experience in a more expansive context than traditional nation-based histories usually explore. With precious few exceptions, Hollywood is the one film industry with the political and economic clout to establish an apparently permanent presence beyond the boundaries of its domestic market and define the terrain of global image culture as its territory. Global new wave cinemas have been one of the exceptions to that rule.

This study focuses not on the world seen through the lens of Hollywood but on globalization glimpsed from the margins, where market forces arrive along with visions of a future already portended by Hollywood cinema itself. Beginning with the emergence of the French new wave in theaters around the world in the late 1950s, a series of new cinemas and new waves incited a "revolution," an "explosion of world cinema," an insurgency devoted to the representation of the modern and the real.[2] In three overlapping phases corresponding roughly to the 1960s, the 1980s, and the 1990s, filmmakers, producers, and critics developed a small but dynamic art cinema market that provided an international venue for films produced outside the direct control of Hollywood. From France to Finland, from Germany to Japan, this fascination with newness rejuvenated world cinema in the 1960s and early 1970s, and both domestic and foreign observers were quick to encapsulate these widely dispersed movements in a rhetoric of commonality whose preferred term of art was "new wave." In the 1980s, new waves from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Ireland, Spain and numerous other locations joined this refrain. By the 1990s and early 2000s, the Chinese, Mexican, and Korean waves had become primary sites of innovation in the realm of art cinema. The revolutionary promise of nearly all these movements lay in the assertion that novelty can replace received wisdom as the source of authority in the arts, that cinema can be harnessed to the transformative energy of youth and derive its aesthetic and conceptual dynamism from the turmoil of global modernity rather than the stability of a local tradition.

While this book focuses on both the virtues and the limitations of that desire for originality, what matters at the outset is the international and collective nature of the fantasy that has spread across the globe and flaunted its disregard for borders. During the postwar era, the category of youth became an essential reference point for the filmmakers of the French new wave, Japan's *taiyozoku* (or Sun Tribe) and the directors of the associated new wave, Britain's Teddy Boys and "angry young men," and their counterparts in other youth-based rebellions of the 1950s and 1960s. They paralleled the rise of Julio García Espinosa's "imperfect cinema," Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino's "Third Cinema," and Glauber Rocha's "aesthetics of hunger," all of which enlisted film in the nationalist and anticolonial movements of the 1960s. These movements held in common their emphasis on culture, especially popular culture, as a revolutionary force and their status as local manifestations of a global movement. Writing on the period that he identifies as the "age of three worlds," a period that overlaps at its outset with the first new waves, Michael Denning says:

> as we look back on the last half of the twentieth century, it seems clear that culture moved to the foreground. It is not, to be sure, that there had been no culture before 1950, but it was always in a period's background. Historians dutifully included it in a supplementary chapter on arts and culture as they surveyed the age of Jackson and Victoria. But suddenly, in the age of three worlds, everyone discovered that culture had been mass produced like Ford's cars; the masses had culture and culture had a mass. Culture was everywhere, no longer the property of the cultured or the cultivated.[3]

The art cinema of the 1950s and after has drifted constantly between high and low traditions, between popular media and rarefied art, between transnational youth culture and the gallery or museum; it is "culture" in both the elevated and universalized, the archaic and contemporary, senses of the word. What the cinematic new waves have globalized is a hybrid, mutually contaminated cultural category—art cinema—that lies at the border of mass communication and art.

As Denning suggests, the radical redefinition of "culture" in the postwar era coincided with even more ambitious attempts to redraw the geopolitical boundaries in a postcolonial world; and the mass media, at once art forms and instruments of social engineering, lay at the nexus of those intertwined representational and political projects. He writes:

> the differentiation of cultural studies in the age of three worlds was . . . the result of the emergence of yet another aspect of social reality—the culture industries, the mass media, mass communications—which seemed to have its own autonomy, its own logic, and its own power. Though intertwined

> with state, market, and civil society, the "media," as it is called in daily life, seemed to occupy an imaginative space equal to the state and the market. Thus the study of the logic of this new world, the logic of mass communication, the logic of culture in a new sense, became the fifth social science, a postmodern social science, linked . . . to that other reorganization of the social sciences in the age of three worlds: area studies.[4]

Cinema and music were the most influential media linking the decentralized and far-flung participants in this global transformation, and films and songs became the primary devices for imagining and developing an embryonic international movement liberated from the restraints of an established local tradition and obeisance to an acceptable canon of foreign masterpieces. At the core of this phenomenon was the category of "youth culture," whose transnational movements drew a disorienting and unfamiliar map of the world. The battle lines between generations were local and national, but lines of affinity linked the Teddy Boys and the *taiyozoku*, while ignoring the niceties of national borders and the division of the world into East and West or North and South. A new generation of filmmakers and musicians demonstrated that "the so-called 'European age' in modern history began to yield place to other regional and global configurations toward the middle of the twentieth century."[5]

Maps of world cinema over the past half century have been further complicated by the imperfect alignment between the "three worlds" and the "three cinemas."[6] The discrepancy between the naming conventions used to describe the worlds and their cinemas is symptomatic of the ambiguous and undertheorized status of the global new waves in the world system that developed after World War II. This partitioning of the planet into a numbered sequence of alliances was the dominant geopolitical model after the Bandung conference of 1955 divided the globe into the domain of Euro-American capitalism (and its outpost in a reconstructed Japan), the communist bloc in the Soviet Union and its satellites, and the independent postcolonial states. The cartography of film history gathers together very different sets of nations. The first cinema of Hollywood and the major western European studios merge with the equally conventional, resource-intensive, flawless productions in what Lenin called the "most important" art. The Third World celebrates a form of "imperfect" cinema whose material poverty becomes a marker of its more direct engagement with the reality of the postcolonial condition. And in between lie the "second" art house cinemas associated initially with European movements like Italian neorealism and the French new wave but also with clusters of artists who crop up in the metropolitan centers of global capitalism (for example, the British and Japanese new waves, American direct cinema, or John Cassavetes). The international new waves are both more and less like Hollywood, and both closer to and more distant from "Third Cinema," than is commonly understood. This book attempts to situate the new waves between these two

worlds and their cinemas: it examines the allure of American pop culture and global capitalism, but it also revisits several formative moments in the evolution of the contemporary global system, moments when the world order was only beginning to take shape and wavered on the cusp of an alternate future.[7]

This book begins at a crucial era in the ongoing rivalry between European and American conceptions of culture, the period in the 1950s when French filmmakers used American cinema as a tool to confront a lifeless "tradition of quality" that dominated their domestic industry. But the book also provides an account of the ambivalence and regret that surfaced in the earliest new wave films and exploded in French cinema of the late 1960s. Then it analyzes the image-making strategies that documented a similar combination of fascination and regret during Taiwan's incorporation into a global market in the 1980s and China's attempt to "link tracks" (*jiegui*) with the world during its era of Reform and Opening. As the narrative engages with all three film cultures, it illuminates the commonalities among their discrete film industries. Each of these cinemas is discovered by an international film circuit at the same time that a domestic economic revolution signals the society's engagement with an emerging system of global markets; each wields the threat and promise of transnational film movements to confront the inertia of its home industry; and, at once a product and an account of globalization, each becomes a record of the disruption that follows in the wake of socioeconomic upheaval.[8] This book envisions the logic of the new waves as the representation of globalization from the frontiers of an emerging world market in images. Marked by their relatively limited economic resources and therefore their difference from Hollywood's aesthetic ideals, these films always bear the stain of their locality; they are relegated to the festival circuit and the domain of world cinema, where anachronistic survivals of the local continue to dwell; they exist in a liminal position between lived history and anticipated future, between the confines of a material environment and the images that serve as harbingers of a global culture in the making. Neither inside nor outside, the new waves inhabit the chaotic verges of this market revolution and bear witness to an age-defining historical phenomenon as it unfolds.

Because of its importance and its scope, the upsurge of new cinemas demands to be considered in its global dimensions, but in the discipline of film studies the "new wave" either remains a formless and oceanic metaphor without history or substance, or it falls under the rubric of particular national cinemas, as the "French," "Japanese," or "Hong Kong" new wave. Although the tendency to catalog these movements within familiar geographical, industrial, or linguistic boundaries helps to identify the domestic circumstances from which they arise, it may also obscure one of their most innovative and revelatory dimensions: their repetition and simultaneity in various locations and their resistance to the habitual attribution of a local place-name. That territorial marker tends to limit the purview of scholarship to domestic conditions of

production and reception, and as a result, film scholars and critics have ignored the most revealing transnational dimensions of these cinematic movements, overlooking the many links and interactions among them. Each appearance of a "new wave" is itself a symptom: it celebrates the persistence of novelty and local specificity in a world of homogenizing culture industries; but it can also ring hollow, like a marketing slogan designed to achieve product differentiation in the increasingly crowded international film festival circuit. The difficult and nearly impossible task is to speak of new wave cinemas in the plural while also recognizing the uniqueness of each particular situation, to recognize historical specificity while also acknowledging that each of these cinematic new waves is one among many.

A national cinema framework forecloses the possibility of situating these films in the broader context of the international festival circuit that developed in the immediate postwar era and the subsequent emergence of an export-oriented art cinema in the 1940s and 1950s.[9] The purpose of this book is to move beyond those scholarly boundaries and provide a global and comparative analysis of new wave cinemas, to demonstrate how another conception of world cinema has operated on the margins of the Hollywood-centered system for the past five decades. There are inherent risks in this jump from one geopolitical reference point to another, as the solid ground prepared by a research tradition begins to recede. But this departure from the conventions inherited from the age of area studies also opens up enormous possibilities, especially when a multifaceted social totality begins to materialize and draw together the discrete events and locations visible from a single vantage point. As Neil Smith suggests, "the importance of 'jumping scales' lies precisely in [the] active social and political connectedness of apparently different scales, their deliberate confusion and abrogation."[10] With that motivation in mind, this book attempts to construct a framework that allows us to leap outward from the most local of conditions to the national, regional, or even global processes into which they flow. And others have already taken that risk, including generations of filmmakers whose sense of their own universe is infinitely larger than the carefully delimited domain of the state.

The Universal Language of Images

Cinema has always been a global phenomenon. The threat of McDonaldization, Coca-colonization, and the all-conquering Hollywood blockbuster looms over contemporary discussions of globalization and culture, while the promised efficiency of economic integration and the ideal of a universal modernity motivate more optimistic chronicles of the process. But similar fears and aspirations have dominated critical and industrial accounts since the invention of cinema. The current era of globalization has merely rekindled those fears and

revived many of the utopian promises that inspired early filmmakers. Before World War I, French cinema was a major exporter of films to the United States, and most of the films screened in American theaters were produced in foreign countries. Latin American theaters at that time were dominated by French and Italian cinema.[11] While American production companies were also competitive in these early film markets—for example, a program of Thomas Edison films was screened in Shanghai as early as 1897, one year after the first Lumière brothers film debuted in that city—there have been other contenders for the role of global film hegemon, including France in the earliest years of the medium, and the Soviet Union, which dominated film culture in the Eastern Bloc and the distant outposts that lay in its sphere of influence during the Cold War. Particular regions experience their own dynamics of power and resistance, with the Hong Kong film industry exerting its power over East and Southeast Asian screens and Indian cinema overshadowing smaller national industries in South Asia. But fear of global homogenization in the realm of cinema and economic anxiety about an already mature or impending monopoly in the film business are usually provoked by "Hollywood," now an outdated and excessively local place-name in a world of runaway productions, but a symbol of the glamour, familiarity, and dread that accompanies American cinema on its advance around the globe.

After the destruction of many of its rival industries in World War I and the consolidation of a classical narrative system, American movies assumed an increasingly dominant position in world film markets. In 1920, with a postwar influx of Hollywood cinema beginning to overwhelm European producers, Emile Vuillermoz eulogized the once glorious French film industry: "The French cinema is about to perish. Its demise is no more than a matter of months. . . . French filmmakers then either will have to become Americanized under the guidance of the American film companies [harbingers of a regularized aesthetic] or else disappear."[12] Critics and industry insiders penned similar polemics in response to this Hollywood juggernaut, often using the same neologism—"Americanized"—to describe audiences transformed by the influence of this foreign cinema. In language that anticipated countless later denunciations of the pernicious effect of American film, a 1927 article in Britain's *Daily Express* characterized the seemingly unstoppable spread of Hollywood as a foreign invasion that would imperil British spectators, weaken their loyalty to the empire, and target those considered most vulnerable to the fantasies displayed on the silver screen. "The bulk of our picture-goers," asserted the author, "are Americanised to an extent that makes them regard a British film as a foreign film, and an interesting but more frequently an irritating interlude in their favourite entertainment. They go to see American stars; they have been brought up on American publicity. They talk America, think America, dream America; we have several million people, mostly women, who, to all intent and purpose, are temporary American citizens."[13] The association

of Hollywood cinema with cultural imperialism remains one of the most common frameworks for discussions of transnational art and media circulation, and it echoes similar concerns in the first half of the twentieth century.

In the period immediately after World War II, Hollywood expanded its influence around the world with the help of goodwill toward the United States and the unprecedented political power accrued in the wake of its victory in Europe and Asia. In 1950, the producer Walter Wanger portrayed Hollywood as a "celluloid Athens" and described its films as an opening salvo in a "worldwide barrage of ideas that will break through barriers and reach people everywhere."[14] This alliance between "Donald Duck and diplomacy" would have commercial and material benefits as well, Wanger hastened to add.[15] In one of the most explicit formulations of the old adage that "trade follows the film," he wrote: "we have done a great service not only selling America but also American products."[16] Nataša Ďurovičová suggests that as early as the mid-1920s many Hollywood executives considered their films more than expressions of a particular national consciousness and more than "an alternative, competing cultural idiom."[17] She argues that for many Hollywood executives and especially B.P. Schulberg, Paramount's production chief, the Americanness crystallized in the movies was an epitome of "universal human evolution, subsuming under it all the local currencies of cultural exchange."[18] American cinema was an effective advertisement for American products because it appeared to be selling something else, a less specific but still powerful vision of America as the seat of modernity itself.

Familiar sentiments also animated the more recent controversy about a "cultural exception" that shields domestic films and other audiovisual productions from international free-trade agreements. Steven Spielberg joined the many in Hollywood who condemned screen quotas as an infringement on the right of art and ideas to move freely. "We cannot lock our borders any more than we ought to close our minds," he argued in a statement issued during the 1993 GATT negotiations.[19] Seven European directors, including Pedro Almodóvar, Bernardo Bertolucci, and Wim Wenders, responded to this lobbying campaign with a full-page ad in *Daily Variety*: "Dear Steven, We are only desperately defending the tiny margin of freedom [allotted] to us. We are trying to defend European cinema from complete annihilation."[20] In the more colorful words of a *Libération* editorial, governments and citizens around the globe were forced to counter the threat posed by blockbusters like *Jurassic Park* (Spielberg, 1993), with its almost irresistible combination of cuteness and terror, and "confront, with renewed vigor, the yankosaurs who menace our country."[21] When "free trade" results in a virtual monopoly on film screens, when it threatens local cultural traditions, when it undermines the very foundations of national belonging, then ministers of culture and foreign trade, industry professionals, and newspaper editorial boards begin to argue for a different conception of cinema, with images no longer a good to be

bought and sold but an essential element of a people's identity and a contributor to their basic human dignity.[22] An atavistic definition of culture and an equally atavistic geopolitical model resurface in order to impede the unremitting advance of a borderless mass media governed only by the logic of the market.

Despite this long history of apprehension about a homogeneous global culture, the possibility of a cinema without borders has not always incited such anxiety, even outside the national film industries with the most to gain. Arising alongside the first concerns about cultural colonization, film's first generation of artists and theorists anticipated a time when a "universal language" of images would transcend borders erected in the name of cultural and linguistic difference. Writing in *Ciné-Journal* in 1912, the prolific and influential French critic Yhcam suggested that an ideal form of cinema would overcome the fundamental obstacles that inevitably bedevil literature. Unlike the novelist or poet, "the scriptwriter of the cinema solves the problem of the diversity of languages. For him there is no need of either *Volapuc* or *Esperanto*. His drama is understood everywhere and by everyone, by the Chinese as well as the Parisians, by the Spanish as well as the English, by the Russians as well as the Arabs. His field of action has no boundaries; he writes for the universality of all peoples."[23] The first film entrepreneurs also envisioned a global marketplace, with stars, studios, or directors evolving into brand names capable of publicizing and disseminating their product to a worldwide pool of consumers. In theory and practice, as both an idealized art form and a business like any other, cinema was launched onto a global stage in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Despite the challenge posed by the coming of sound, those universalizing ambitions remained even after linguistic difference rendered the utopian visions of early cinephiles increasingly outlandish and unrealizable. The multilanguage versions produced between 1929 and 1933 in the Paris suburb of Joinville combined these idealistic and commercial motivations, as they hoped to unite the efficiency of assembly-line manufacture—using the same sets and a screenplay translated into several European languages, a slightly more targeted variation on mass production—with the faded dream of a universal cinema, now scaled down to a multinational rather than genuinely or plausibly global project. Although the catastrophic devastation of World War II brought that period in film history to a halt, the utopian ambition of a world cinema manifested itself again in the immediate aftermath of the conflict. The burgeoning of an art house and film festival circuit developed into one of the major sites for this alternative conception of cinematic globalization, and the various new waves cinemas were key components of this nascent network of dispersed filmmakers and spectators.

Before the term "new wave" was coined in the 1950s, Italian neorealism was the major postwar export phenomenon appealing to art house audiences, with films like Roberto Rossellini's *Rome, Open City* (*Roma, città aperta*, 1945) and

Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* (*Ladri di biciclette*, 1948) selling out theaters elsewhere on the continent and overseas. While an international success on this scale would have been impossible to anticipate in the cultural and economic conditions that prevailed in Italy in 1945, three years of genuinely stunning triumphs established neorealism as the paradigm for a certain manner of art cinema, a model for later filmmakers to adopt and aspire to. The so-called Andreotti Law of 1949 contributed to the downfall of neorealism because it choked off access to foreign sources of revenue. The law provided subsidies for films "suitable . . . to the interests of Italy" and denied export permits to films guilty of "slandering Italy abroad."[24] Andreotti envisioned cinema as a mechanism to "make known abroad what is being done in our country" and display "what is new where building, progress, work is concerned."[25] But the Andreotti Law and its aftermath helped underscore another key dimension of the films emerging from Italy after the war: cinematic modernism often conflicted with the economic and political project of modernization because those two manifestations of the modern clashed in the realm of visual culture, because they circulated through and cultivated different modes of image-making. According to the ministerial logic of the time, "the interests of Italy" would be defended if filmmakers depicted the nation's ascent into the ranks of modern economies instead of harping on the rubble left behind after the war and the actuality of uneven development. And while Andreotti himself would pursue this agenda in various government positions, including prime minister seven times, Italian cinema began to converge with more dominant trends in a globalizing film industry. It became one of the earliest outposts of runaway productions, when directors like Sergio Leone created spaghetti westerns at a lower cost than Hollywood could match in the deserts of southern California. It opened a small niche for itself as an exporter of genre films like the sword-and-sandal epics of the 1950s. And it eventually embodied the transformations of Italy's economic miracle when actresses like Gina Lollobrigida and Sophia Loren became synonymous with elegance and impeccable taste and served as talismans for the march toward a postindustrial economy. Movies were instrumental in this makeover, as a state with virtually no fashion industry before World War II quickly positioned itself as one of the world's preeminent arbiters of style and the center of a transnational fashion empire centered in Milan.

Neorealism proved surprisingly capable of traveling, but it was channeled into the relatively limited domain of art cinema, and Italy never developed a film industry with a sustained commercial appeal on a global scale, unlike the trade in style that was sustained with the assistance of Italian cinema's most important stars and directors. The heirs of De Sica and Rossellini would find themselves exploring a similar niche in the global film market (Pasolini and Antonioni, for example). Others would operate in a modernized domestic industry organized around the logic of overseas production and flexible labor,