Introduction

If it is true that no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human being in his own circumstances, then it must be true that for a European or American studying the Orient there can be no disclaiming the main circumstances of his *actuality: that he comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an individual second.*

Edward W. Said

This study of Third World film making and the West has to confront a number of obvious hazards:

(i) Firstly, it is a study of Third World film making written from a Western standpoint, with all the implicit assumptions that this carries. As the notes and bibliography indicate, I have tried wherever possible to draw on and refer to the work of Third World theorists and critics in defining the ways in which Third World film making is best approached, but the overall conceptual framework is my own. Inevitably, this book cannot be offered as any kind of "definitive study." It is rather a voyage of discovery through areas of world cinema that remain largely unknown, and it will have succeeded if it allows the reader to experience some of the excitement that went into its writing.

(ii) A work that ventures into areas as diverse as culture and politics, economics and ideology, literature and film must of necessity be a work of synthesis. My debt to the authors on whom I have drawn is self-evident, but I hope and believe that fresh illumination will arise from bringing together strands of analysis hitherto unrelated. The major problem in drawing on this contextual material has been to avoid too gross an oversimplification of arguments developed by their authors through successive books and articles over a period of years.

(iii) While the breadth of the issues to be confronted if Third World cinema is to be put into context presents one level of problem, another and hardly less daunting difficulty is posed by the historical span demanded for such a work. Film reached the major cities of Asia, Latin America, and North Africa within a matter of months of the first film showings in Paris, London, and New York, so the history of film exhibition and to some extent film production is virtually as long in the non-Western world as in the West. The pattern of Western dominance—first by France and then by the United States—was established even before the Soviet Revolution of 1917, and this pattern causes problems with the definition of Third World film making. Clearly there was a considerable amount of film production in the non-Western world before the concept of the Third World came into being.

(iv) If the concept of a Third World grouping may be thought to begin, in political terms, with the 1955 Bandung Conference, this meeting of "non-aligned" countries does not offer a basis for selecting countries or film industries to be treated here. Political criteria need to be reinforced by economic definitions, and basically this present study may be said to cover the development of cinema in those countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America that (a) experienced colonization in the nineteenth and/or twentieth centuries and (b) have not subsequently chosen a socialist path of development that effectively takes them away from the tight economic system that binds the bulk of these countries to the West.

(v) But even this definition begs almost as many questions as it answers. Japan can be safely left aside, since it follows a well-documented alternative pattern of industrial development and hence displays a distinctive approach in its film industry and modes of cinematic representation. But what is to be done with China? Is Turkey to be excluded, since it was never colonized and is a member of NATO? How are the various forms of African socialism to be regarded? Can we ignore Cuba, which has had so potent an influence on the film makers of Latin America and elsewhere? Even if we shelve these fairly fruitless problems of categorization—on the grounds that pre-1949 China is best understood in the context of Western colonial dominance, that Turkey has problems of economic underdevelopment similar to those of its neighbors in the Middle East, that African socialism has not resulted in economic independence, or that Cuban culture can be fully understood only if the influence of proximity and historical links with the United States is taken into account—there are still problems. A broad definition remains dangerous, since it can be taken as implying that it is possible to offer generalizations about the Third World that are equally valid for countries as diverse in history, culture, and resources as Mali and Brazil or Bolivia and India. In specific film terms, it could likewise imply an equation of Ouagadougou, arguably the center of black African film making, with Bombay, the undisputed capital of the Indian film industry.

(vi) Moreover, though an economic definition of the Third World in terms of countries that have been marked by underdevelopment stemming from the dominance of colonial or neocolonial powers offers a reasonable—perhaps the only possible—starting point, there are further complications when one considers specific developments in cinema. Here the dominance of the United States has reached unparalleled dimensions. Tony Garnett's dictum that "to work in the British film industry is to know what it is to be colonized" is well known, and in many ways the struggles of film production in Australia and Canada—which can hardly be considered as belonging to the Third World, however wide we cast the net—offer some of the clearest examples of certain ideological aspects of cultural neocolonialism.

(vii) The problems of tackling the specific issues of film history are in many ways precisely the opposite of those related to research into the contextual issues of economics and national development. Instead of an overabundant literature couched in specialist terms, there is a paucity of available source material in English—though this material has increased immeasurably even during the period in which this book has been researched and written—and there remain numerous gaps even when sources in French or Spanish are drawn upon. Moreover, these gaps are not simply in our knowledge of the development of Third World film making but include aspects of cinema in the West as well. There is, for example, no adequate account of the economic organization and rise to world dominance of Hollywood, though various articles published since the late 1970s do offer clues as to the pattern such an account might take. Because of this lack of preexisting studies, I have been forced on occasion—as in the account of Hollywood's world role—to make assertions and generalizations that themselves really need justification at book length.

Given these practical and conceptual problems and the enormously wide scope of the project, how can the approach adopted here be characterized? Basically, I have attempted in this study to keep the focus broad and to make the issues clear, while outlining an overall development and presenting certain areas of significant achievement. The movement through the successive chapters, from context to history and on to the achievements of specific film makers, gives a progression from generality to detail, from theory to realized practice, and, let it be said, from problematics to often dazzling resolution. For though the theoretical issues raised here are extremely complex and the history of Third World film making is one of constant struggle against overwhelming odds, the actual achievements of the film makers have been strikingly original and effective.

Part One

The Social, Cultural, and Economic Context

The Indian who goes barefoot but clutching a transistor radio beneath his poncho, runs the risk of getting nowhere, and ending up in no man's land: like a man who has lost his fingerprints. This is the danger we would all risk if, cursing our cultural identity and ceasing to defend it, we blindly accepted the bilateral assistance, foreign technicians and international cooperation which correspond to other mental patterns, other orientations and other objectives.

Oswaldo Guayasmin

The understanding of Third World film making demands consideration of a number of factors—social, cultural, economic—that are customarily ignored in accounts of Western cinemas. This is not because writing about Third World film requires—as the editors of a recent issue of *Jump Cut* assert—"a different methodology and a treatment of other concerns than writing about mainstream film does."[1] Rather, it is an indication of the inadequacy of so much writing about mainstream cinemas, which continues to employ such dubious concepts as autonomous national cinemas and creatively independent "authors," and fails to take into account the economic primacy of distribution for cinema. The following pages therefore look at some of the factors that have defined Third World film making:

- the nature of social structures shaped by the force of tradition and the impact of colonialism
- the emergence of Western-educated elites as ruling groups and as the prime movers in cultural production
- the problems of defining both a "nation" and a "national culture"
- the issue of language and the insights afforded by literature and theater that bridge the gulf between Western and non-Western worlds
- the nature of cinema as a product of Western capitalism
- the role of U.S.-dominated film distribution as an examplar of the working of the capitalist world system

But our starting point is the personal experience of the colonized, for there is no relevance in arguments about whether "objectively" the Third World has

benefited from the impact of the West or whether the possession of colonies was "in reality" a loss-making situation, unless we first take into account the fact that the impact of the West was almost universally experienced as a traumatically destructive force by those subjected to it. As this book will show, Third World film making has the same inextricable mixture of idealism and philistinism as cinema in the West. The finest films display similar qualities of passion and commitment, insight and tenderness. But underlying them all—and crucial to an understanding of their form and meaning—is the often shattering and always dislocating impact of Western values and culture.

Third World Societies 1

On the psycho-cultural level, probably no historical phenomenon of modern times has been so traumatic and so destructive of the mental structures of entire societies. Everywhere, but most especially in nations whose own history dated back to antiquity—China, Egypt, Vietnam, Persia—the onslaught of European colonialism stunned, bewildered, and overwhelmed the traditional elites.

Gérard Chaliand

Though a mere ninety years separate us from the birth of cinema, these years have seen a total transformation of the world political situation. In 1895 the European empires were at the apparent height of their power and influence, dominating between them over three-quarters of the earth's surface. The bulk of Africa and Asia was formally colonized, while most of the Latin American republics, which had achieved their national independence in the early part of the nineteenth century, were still subjected to British economic power. Largely as a result of the two world wars, this pattern was totally destroyed within fifty years or so: the old empires were dissolved—often with surprising ease—and the United States rose to dominance of the "free world." The West was now confronted with new forms of social organization, in the socialist world that came to comprise the USSR, the People's Democratic Republics of Eastern Europe, China, and parts of Southeast Asia. The notion of a "third world" is conceivable only in terms of the opposition of these two power blocks and could come into being only after the move toward postcolonial independence had begun and the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America could enjoy a sense—however fleeting and illusory—of achieving an impetus of their own. The Bandung Conference of "nonaligned nations" of 1955 can in this sense be seen as offering a starting point, after which the term *Third World* can be meaningfully applied, though participation in that confer-

ence is in no way a limiting definition of the term. The Third World, then, came into existence in the late 1950s, and the term began to enjoy a vogue in the 1960s.

Awareness of this historical time-span allows us to proceed to a definition in geographical terms. Taking the situation in the 1960s, when the concept of a "third world" began to achieve acceptance, we find that the West—that which U.N. statistics define as "the developed countries with market economies" (i.e., the United States, Canada, Western Europe, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and, arguably, Israel and South Africa)—comprised one-fifth of the world's population but enjoyed almost 60 percent of the world's gross domestic product. The socialist states—which the U.N. documents call "countries with planned economies" (i.e., the USSR, Eastern Europe, China, and the People's Republics of Mongolia, Korea, Vietnam, and Cuba)—contained one-third of the world's population and consumed almost 30 percent of the gross domestic product. This left the Third World—the "developing countries with a market economy" (i.e., Latin America, the remainder of Asia, and all of Africa except perhaps South Africa)—comprising half the land area and embracing half the world's population, while enjoying barely 12 percent of the gross product.[1] The argument for adopting such economic criteria for a definition of the Third World has been admirably summarized by Pierre Jalée:

> To regard the Third World as a single economic entity is, I know, in one sense schematic and arbitrary. But I also know that in a much more important sense this reflects the fundamental reality. Underneath the differences between their natural resources and level of development, the underdeveloped countries of Latin America, Asia and Africa have in common the fundamental characteristics of economies complementary to those of the advanced capitalist countries.[2]

Portrait of the Colonized

The definition offered above presents us with a vast range of differences, all covered by the term *Third World,* and it must be admitted that there is a tendency for discussions to veer between broad generalizations that need immediate qualification (e.g., the Third World is *not* all black, poor, rural . . .) and claims that since all countries are unique, any particular Third World country can be discussed only in terms of its own historical and cultural specificity. The same is true when we come to discuss the impact of the West on these societies.

An initial distinction must be made between colonization (as in the Spanish and Portuguese settlement of Latin America) and colonialism (typified by European rule in Africa from the nineteenth century onward). There are clearly wide divergences of historical and geographical circumstances and great vari-

ations in the length and intensity of the foreign impact, but there are also shared characteristics beyond any local particularity. Indeed, as the reception of Albert Memmi's classic study *The Colonizer and the Colonized* shows, a personal portrait that keeps strictly to local observation may take on universal dimensions. The portrait offered may be, in Memmi's own term, a "mythical" one, but it is one key to an understanding of Third World cultural aspirations in the postindependence period. Memmi's analysis demonstrates the way in which the colonial relationship locks the two halves of the equation together, so that the colonizer's privilege and affluence find their counterparts in the deprivation and poverty of the colonized. While the basis of this relationship is economic, it is sustained through ideological means, whereby the "mythical and degrading portrait" created and spread by the colonizer "ends up by being accepted and lived with by the colonized. It thus acquires a certain amount of reality and contributes to the true portrait of the colonized."[3] This imposition is the ultimate aim of the colonizer, whose "legitimacy" is secured only when the colonized accepts not only economic dominance but also the image of the world the colonizer presents to him.

The identity of the colonized depends on a number of sustaining factors—social relations, religion, language, and history—and all of these become the focus of the colonizer's attention. Undermining the economic basis of the colonized's life inevitably serves to disrupt the social relations that bind communities together. Religion is more resistant to outside pressure, but the disruption of traditional family ties resulting from the activities of Western missionaries should not be underestimated. The time-honored way to control language and history is, of course, through the educational system. The reforms of education imposed by colonial administrations often establish a foreign tongue as the language of tuition and employ textbooks imported from the "mother country." Given the colonizer's economic hold over the country, it is possible within a comparatively short time to downgrade native languages and substitute the colonizer's tongue as the language of commerce, law, and government. As a result, all non-European languages are regarded with contempt and deprived of any influence on social or economic life. In Memmi's Tunisia, as in other parts of Africa colonized by France, French became the sole language used by "the entire bureaucracy, the entire court system, all industry," and Memmi laments that "the colonized's mother tongue, that which is sustained by his feelings, emotions and dreams, that in which his tenderness and his wonder are expressed, thus that which holds the greatest emotional impact, is precisely the one which is the least valued."[4]

Literacy itself is not an unqualified boon, if it serves merely as a channel for foreign influences and loosens the links that bind the colonized to their own society and their own history. This was the case in colonial Tunisia where, as Memmi shows, a child fortunate enough to receive a school education was not "saved nationally":