An Introduction to World Film
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For the purpose of this book, World Film will be defined as Non-American, Non-Hollywood, and Non-European Film. Western Culture is generally accepted to mean cultures that derive their history from Greco-Roman Civilization and Judeo-Christian religions. This book will address films from Asia and Africa and films by and about indigenous peoples of the Americas, the Caribbean, Australia and New Zealand.

Film artifacts will be examined through the lens of Post-Colonialism and Cultural Humility. Filmmakers will be identified having either neo-colonialist perspectives or native perspectives based on their cultural origins and the intended audience for the films.

**Post-Colonialism** refers both to a specific historical period in the aftermath of imperialism and to intellectual and political projects that attempt to reclaim and rethink the history and agency of people subordinated under various forms of European imperialism. It signals a possible future of overcoming colonialism, including new forms of global empire. It should not be confused with any claim that the world is free of colonial oppression.¹

**Cultural Humility** Film offers the viewer the ability to see through another’s perspective. The goal of cultural humility, like the concept of Cultural Relativism in Anthropology, encourages viewers to seek to understand other cultures, beliefs, and behaviors, from the perspective
of the members of that culture and to empathize without imposing cultural norms.²

*(Nanook of the North)* is the foundational film of this course. It serves as the intersection for the dialogue in this book on post-colonial and native perspectives in film.

Robert Flaherty was an American Explorer in the Hudson Bay. He initially ventured north looking for business opportunities in mineral exploration and the exploitation of natural resources. Instead, he realized there was a commercial opportunity, using the new technology of motion picture cinematography, to present the Inuit people, their culture, and their quest for survival to American audiences. He was attempting to capture this culture that would be erased in the Twentieth Century.

*(Nanook of the North)* is the product of a colonialist in the Hudson Bay attempting to document a culture. It is also a collaboration between the filmmaker and his Inuit film production crew, and Inuit actors, especially Allakariallak, who portrays the fictional character, Nanook.

This film that typifies a colonialist perspective is also an artifact of Inuit culture created through collaboration. The Inuit crew and actors present their native perspective using this technology at the very birth of cinema.

This book begins with *(Nanook of the North)* because it presents the inherent contradictions at the heart of film storytelling.

*(Nanook of the North)* opened at the Ziegfeld Theatre in 1922. It was the
first feature length documentary film and played for half a century as a non-fiction film. Recent scholarship has reconsidered this designation.

Flaherty’s original travelogue of the Hudson Bay burned while he was editing. He returned to the North and found Allakariallak. In the years between filming his first reels of the interactions between the Inuit people and European and American traders, and his return to begin a more collaborative project, the lives of the Inuit people had changed radically. Before the turn of the Twentieth Century, Inuit hunters used handmade tools made from the bones and sinews of the seals and walruses. By 1916, Inuit people were trading pelts for guns and metal tools.

When Robert Flaherty returned to tell the story of “Nanook, the hunter,” he needed to reenact and recreate the kinds of hunting scenes he had filmed only a few years before. The reenactment of traditional Inuit hunting and fishing techniques as Inuit people were replacing their handmade tools with steel knives and guns from Europe raised questions about the authenticity of *Nanook of the North* as a documentary film.

Interestingly, the term documentary was not in use when Flaherty was making his film. *Nanook of the North* was the first feature length documentary film to play in theatres.

Nanook’s story is told through a series of rising obstacles and conflicts. Scenes of hunting and fishing with traditional Inuit tools were reenacted and reconstructed to present a culture that was being erased by modernism.

To discuss Colonialist and Native perspectives in film, it’s important
to first understand that all film stories are told through a perspective. Most film stories are presented through the perspective of the main character. There is a dominant angle from the main character’s point of view. A close-up on a secondary character might indicate the main character’s interest in that character or their suspicion about that character. The camera mimics the human eye and in fact presents human attention in ways that the eye can’t. In life, humans see in wide shots, they may focus on something in a scene, but they don’t have the ability to zoom in to a close-up. With film, the camera can frame a shot to present the interests of the main character.

*Rashomon* is a masterpiece of international cinema, not only because it is beautifully filmed and tells a complex story that still spurs debates about what occurred, but also because *Rashomon* presents the idea of perspective in film.

In *Rashomon* four characters tell four different stories. Viewers will often argue about who is lying and who is telling the truth. The great learning opportunity presented by this film is the possibility that there is no evidentiary truth, only the differing perspectives of witnesses, victims, and perpetrators.

*Rashomon* is a foundational film in this book because it illustrates this concept.

*Pathar Panchali* is a post-colonialist, neo-realist film that tells a story from the native perspective. It’s the product of an international dialog about film and film storytelling. And it’s the third foundation film in this book.

*Pathar Panchali* is the creation of its author and director, Satyajit Ray.
It is also a creative collaboration between Ray, his cinematographer, Subrata Mitra, the world-famous composer and sitar player, Ravi Shankar, and the actors who portray the characters. *Pathar Panchali* was Mitra’s first film and it’s still considered one of the greatest works of cinematography.

When examining Colonialist and Native perspectives in film. It’s not the purpose of this study to make accusations. A filmmaker from a former colonialist country doesn’t necessarily falsify history. They present the world through the lens of a culture of oppression. Only through the evaluation of stories from native perspectives can viewers develop a sense of balance and cultural humility.
Notes


PART I

MAIN BODY
ACTUALITY AND ILLUSION

ACTUALITY

The Earliest Filmmakers

Louis Daguerre developed the Daguerreotype photographic process, the first mechanical process that created sustainable photographs using silver plated copper and mercury vapor in 1839.

In 1874, the French Astronomer, Jules Janssen wanted to record of the transit of the planet Venus passing across the sun. He developed a tool he called the *revolver photographique*. It was a cylinder shaped camera with a revolving photographic plate. He set it up to automatically take a series of shots of the astronomical event. This was one of the first steps in the evolution of the movie camera. Janssen wasn’t interested in making movies, he needed a way to record this historical event and he designed a tool to do it, and he became the first filmmaker.

Across the Atlantic and the American Continent, the famous English photographer, Eadweard Muybridge, was hired by the former governor of California, Leland Stanford.

Stanford was breeding racehorses. He wanted to see if all four of a horse’s legs left the ground completely at a gallop. Muybridge set up cameras with trip wires on the track. When the horse tripped the wires,
they snapped still images of the horse galloping around the racetrack. When they flipped through the photos, they were not only able to learn how a horse’s legs run at full gallop, they were able to create the illusion of motion. And yes, all four of the horse’s legs leave the ground when it gallops. In Jordan Peele’s 2022 film *Nope*, the story of the African American jockey riding the galloping horse in this first film is expanded into a back story for his characters.

By 1880, Muybridge was projecting his photographic sequences with a “Magic Lantern” and presenting the galloping horse on a screen. Muybridge saw film as a way for people to see animals and people in motion. He eventually used trip wire techniques to film human athletes. The painter, Thomas Eakins, was fascinated with what a still frame of motion looked like.

The French Physiologist, Étienne Jules Marey, developed the *fusil photographique*, the photographic rifle, to film birds in flight. Like Janssen he used a glass plate with silver emulsion to record the image, but because of the lightness and quickness of birds and because he needed to aim his film rifle upward, the glass plates were too heavy. He conducted experiments and found that with certain chemicals, paper could serve as a negative, eventually he developed the celluloid strips that we called film.

Celluloid is a tough flammable thermoplastic composed of cellulose nitrate and camphor. Cellulose is the complex polymeric carbohydrate that derives from the cell walls of plants.

Interestingly, when a need for technology was identified, to record a bird in flight, a horse running on a track, or the motion of planets, the equipment was designed. Innovation arises from curiosity, then as it is
used, the technology develops to become faster, lighter, better, more portable, or able to capture longer sequences. These desires pushed technological innovation. The first few films captured action in a few seconds. Celluloid was lightweight and cheap to manufacture.

One of Marey’s assistants, George Demeny, used a motion picture camera to record the human mouth talking. He used his films to teach hearing impaired people to read lips.¹

Originally Motion Pictures were used for science. They were not considered for entertainment.

Then there was Thomas Alva Edison.

By 1893, 15 years after Muybridge won Stanford’s bet, Edison built the first “movie studio,” a small, cramped, wood-frame hut covered in black tar paper with a hole in the roof to let in sunlight. His employees nicknamed it the Black Maria because it reminded them of the police prisoner transport wagons in use at the time. One of the first films they produced was a man sneezing. There was just one problem: the only way to view Edison’s films was through a kinetoscope, a machine that allowed a single viewer to peer into a viewfinder and crank through the images. The ability to project the images to a paying audience would take another couple of years.²

Auguste and Louis Lumière inherited their father’s factory in Lyon France. Their father had produced photographic plates. When he retired, the brothers began working to develop a motion picture camera.
In an interview with George Sadoul in 1948, Louis Lumière explains:

It was during the summer of 1894 that my brother Auguste and I commenced our first work. At that period, the research of Marey, Edison and Démeny had caused those inventors to arrive at certain results, but no projection of film on a screen had yet been accomplished.

The main problem to be solved was that of finding a system of driving the strip of film pictures. My brother Auguste had thought of using for the purpose an indented cylinder, similar to that proposed by Léon Bouilly in another apparatus. But such a system was clumsy. It couldn’t work and it never did.

I was rather indisposed and had to remain in bed. One night when I was unable to sleep, the solution came clearly to my mind. It consisted of adapting to the camera the mechanism known by the name of “presser foot” in the drive device of sewing machines.

Moisson, chief mechanic at our works, assembled the first apparatus in accordance with the sketches which I handed him as the invention took shape. As it was then impossible to obtain transparent celluloid films in France, I conducted my initial tests with strips of photographic paper manufactured in our works. I cut them and perforated them myself. The first results were excellent.

The negatives on paper could not be cast on the screen owing to their excessive opacity. I nevertheless succeeded in animating
them in the laboratory by looking at them with the transparency
effect produced by a strong arc lamp.

I would have used celluloid strips at once had I been able to
obtain in France a flexible, transparent celluloid which gave me
satisfaction. However, no French or British firm was then
making any. I had to send one of our departmental managers
to the United States, who purchased celluloid in non-sensitized
sheets from the New York Celluloid Company and brought
them back to us at Lyon. We cut them and perforated them with
the aid of an apparatus whose feed device was based on that
of the sewing machine, which apparatus was perfected by M.
Moisson.

It was at the end of the summer of 1894 that I was able to make
my first film, “Workers leaving the Lumière Factory.” The men
are wearing straw hats and the women summer dresses. I needed
strong sunlight to be able to make such scenes, for my lens was
not very powerful, and I should not have been able to take such
a view in winter or at the end of autumn.

The film was shown in public for the first time at Paris, rue de
Bennes, before the “Société d’Encouragement pour l’Industrie
Nationale.” This was on 22nd March, 1895. This showing
ended a lecture which I had been asked to give by the illustrious
physicist, Mascari of the Institute, then President of the Society.
I also showed on the screen the formation of a photographic
image in course of development.

Our first patent, taken out on 13th February, 1895, did not
adopt any particular name. In that patent we merely referred to
“an apparatus for obtaining and showing chronophotographic prints.” It was not until several weeks afterwards that we selected the name of Cinematograph.3

The Lumière camera weighed only a few pounds and was totally mobile.

The first Lumière Brothers’ film “Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory” was a few seconds of footage documenting the actual workers leaving the factory. Louis Lumière wanted to demonstrate how his cameras and photographic equipment recorded images, but by making this choice to film workers in a factory, he became the first documentary filmmaker. His subject was working people, the proletariat. The Lumières called their short films Actualités.

Next, Louis Lumière set up a camera close to the train tracks and filmed as a train rolled into the station. It was called L’arrivée d’un train en gare, Arrival of a Train at the station. Because of the angle of the approaching train toward the camera, the film created a sensation at the first screening. Some reports stated that viewers jumped out of their seats and ran for cover. Other reports said this was an exaggeration, but it was the action movie that launched Cinema.

Lumière set up shots to be dramatic and exciting, but he never sought out actors to enhance the drama. For Lumière, the medium was the message. He was selling cinematographe cameras and he wanted to get people excited by what they could do with his equipment. He began exhibiting the films, but didn’t really consider that there might be a market for film as entertainment.

Lumière hired and trained cinematographers and sent them all over the
world to film things that people in France had only seen in paintings, drawings, and photographs: *The arrival of the Toreadors, the Coronation of Tzar Nicholas II, and the Melbourne Races.*

His screening room was in the basement of a Grand Café in Paris called the Salon Indien. Lumière invented the movie theatre as well as the first movie camera. Lumière had orders for hundreds of cinematographs. Within a few months, he opened cinematographies, screening rooms, in England, Holland, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Switzerland, Spain, Italy, Serbia, Russia, Sweden and the USA. Later he opened cinemas in Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Turkey, India, Australia, Indochina, Japan, and Mexico.

**ILLUSION**

*Méliès, A Trip to the Moon and Phalke, Krishna Janma*

The French Magician, Georges Méliès, was at the first screening at the Salon Indien. When Méliès viewed the Actualités of the Lumières, he realized that film could also be used for the purpose of illusion. He could expand of the sleight of hand tricks he used as a magician and create cinema effects using double exposure and editing techniques.

Méliès’ Masterpiece of special effects and hand-painted color, *A Trip to the Moon*, was completed and released in 1902.

Film could reflect reality and present images of the historic moment, it could be paused to show a still frame of something in motion, it could be sped up and rewound to show time moving backward. Film also offered opportunities to present images from literature, religion, and ancient storytelling traditions.
The History of Motion Pictures in India started only a few months after the Lumieres debuted their first film at Salon Indien in Paris. A screening, using the *cinematographe* as the projector, was held at the Watson Hotel Bombay in July 1896. India was a colony under Queen Victoria. British officials in India were eager to see images of their home in England and they purchased *cinematographes* to make films of India to send back to England.

Harischandra Sakharam Bhatvadekar owned a photography shop in Bombay. After attending one of the Lumière screenings, he ordered a motion picture camera which arrived a year later. He filmed wrestling matches and circus monkeys. He exhibited his films in Bombay and eventually managed the Capitol Cinema.

Bombay theatres screened Indian actuality films with titles like: *Train Arriving at Bombay Station* and *Poona Races*. They also screened *The Queen’s Funeral Procession* and *The Life of Christ*.

Dhundiraj Govind Phalke was a *shastri*, a learned man, from a Brahmin family. He studied photography at the Art School in Bombay. He was also a magician, like Georges Méliès. When he saw the *The Life of Christ*, he realized film could use illusion and special effects to illustrate stories from the Hindu religion. He was determined to make a film about the Hindu God, Krishna.⁴

His first film, *Rajah Harischandra*, based on a story from the Mahabharata, was completed in 1912. *Krishna Janma* was released in 1918. Phalke traveled throughout India by oxcart to present his films. When Phalke showed *Krishna Janma* in Madras screenings were sold out from seven in the morning to midnight. This subject would
dominate Indian film for the next century and would define Bollywood Cinema.

Phalke was able to present stories from Indian cultural history, but he needed to work as Shakespeare did, with male actors portraying female characters. Women would have been branded prostitutes if they appeared in a film.

Bollywood is the term used for the commercial film industry based in Mumbai. The Indian film industry makes big budget films about Indian cultural subjects for an Indian audience: Musicals, Melodramas, and Historical Epics.

Notes


2. Sharman, Russell. Moving Pictures. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted, pp. 21-23.

3. Geduld, Harry M. Film Makers on Film Making. Indiana University Press, 1967. Project MUSE muse.jhu.edu/book/93942. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, 2017, pp. 209-210
2.

REALISM

*Nanook of the North* Robert J. Flaherty (1922) Canada

Flaherty, Robert J. *Nanook of the North*. Pathé Exchange, 1922.

Realism in film indicates the attempt to capture or present real events. The process of filmmaking requires framing, reconstruction, and often reenactment. This is the story of the making of *Nanook of the North*. This book begins with this story because it illustrates the tension of
filmmaking and the difficulty of attempting to capture the historical moment.

**How I Filmed *Nanook of the North* by Robert J. Flaherty**

IN AUGUST 1910, Sir William MacKenzie whose transcontinental railway, the Canadian Northern, was then in the initial stages of construction, commissioned the writer to undertake an expedition to the East Coast of Hudson Bay to examine certain islands upon which deposits of iron ore were supposed to be located.

All told I made four expeditions on Sir William’s behalf, during a period of six years, along the East Coast of Hudson Bay, through the barren lands of the hitherto unexplored peninsula of Ungava, along the west coast of Ungava Bay and along the southern coast of Baffin Land. This work culminated in the discovery of the Belcher Island archipelago in Hudson Bay—a land mass which occupies 5,000 square miles—upon this land mass were discovered extensive deposits of iron ore but all of too low a grade, however, to be of economic importance.

As a part of my exploration equipment, on these expeditions, a motion-picture outfit was included. It was hoped to secure films of the North and Eskimo life, which might prove to be of enough value to help in some way to defray some of the costs of the explorations. While wintering in Baffin Land during 1913-14, films of the country and the natives were made, as was also done on the succeeding expedition to the Belcher Islands. The film, in all about 30,000 feet, was brought out
safely, at the conclusion of the explorations, to Toronto, where, while editing the material, I had the misfortune of losing it all by fire. Though it seemed to be a tragedy at the time, I am not sure but what it was a bit of fortune that it did burn, for it was amateurish enough.

My interest in films, from then on, grew.

New forms of travel film were coming out and the Johnson South Sea Island film particularly seemed to me to be an earnest of what might be done in the North. I began to believe that a good film depicting the Eskimo and his fight for existence in the dramatically barren North might be well worth while. To make a long story short, I decided to go north again—this time wholly for the purpose of making films.

Mr. John Revillon and Captain Thierry Mallet of Revillon Frères became interested and decided to finance my project. It proved to be a happy arrangement, for among the Revillon Frères’ vast system of fur posts which lie scattered through northern Canada I was enabled to use one of these posts as the nucleus for my work. This post was on Cape Dufferin on northeastern Hudson Bay and about 800 miles north of the rail frontier in northern Ontario. The journey thither began on the eighteenth of June, 1920. With Indians by canoe, I followed the Moose River to Moose Factory on James Bay. From thence northward a small schooner was taken to my destination, where I arrived in the middle of August. The resources of the Revillon Frères fur trade post at Cape Dufferin were at my disposal. One of the two living quarters
which comprised the Post was mine as living quarters and film laboratory combined.

My equipment included 75,000 feet of film, a Haulberg electric light plant and projector and two Akeley cameras and a printing machine so that I could make prints of film as it was exposed and project the pictures on the screen so that thereby the Eskimo would be able to see and understand wherever mistakes were made.

Of the Eskimo who were known to the Post, a dozen all told I selected for the film. Of these, Nanook, a character famous in the country, was my chief man. Besides him and much to his approval, I selected three younger men as helpers. This also meant their wives and families, dogs to the number of about twenty-five, their sledges, kayaks, and hunting impedimenta.

As luck would have it, the first film to be made was the walrus hunt. From Nanook, I first heard of the “Walrus Island,” which is a small island far out at sea and inaccessible to the Eskimo during the open water season since it is far out enough so as not to be seen from land.

On the island’s south end, a surf-bound beach, there were, in summer, Nanook said, many walrus, judging from signs that had been seen by a winter sealing crowd of Eskimo who, caught by a breakup of the ice, had been forced to live there until late spring, when, by building an umiak of driftwood and sealskins and by digging out the open water lands of ice which had not yet cleared from the coast, they succeeded in getting on to the mainland. Nanook was very keen about my going, for,
as he said, “It is many moons since I have hunted the summer walrus.”

When I had decided upon taking the trip the whole countryside was interested. There was no lack of applicants for the trip. Everyone gave me some particular reason why he should be included in the expedition.

With an open-seas boat twenty-five feet long rigged with a leg-o’-mutton sail we started, a throng of Eskimo, their wives, children and dogs assembled on the beach to see us off.

A few miles from the Post we reached the open sea when for three days we waited on the coast for easy weather in order to undertake the crossing. We finally reached the island one day at nightfall, and landed on what was nothing but a low waste of bed rock and boulders a mile and a half long and the whole of its shoreland ringed with booming surf. Around the luxury of a driftwood fire (driftwood is rare on the mainland) we lounged far into the night, speculating mainly on what chances there might be for walrus.

As luck would have it just as we were turning in, from Nanook suddenly came an exclamation “Iviuk! Iviuk!” and the bark of a school of walrus resounded through the air. When early the next morning we went over, we found much to our disappointment that the walrus herd had gone into the sea again but presently one after another and near the shore the heads of a big school of walrus shot up above the sea, their wicked tusks gleaming in the sun.
As long as they were in the water no films could be made and we returned again to the camp. For the next two days we made almost hourly trips to that beach before finally we found them—a herd of twenty—asleep and basking in the sand on the shore. Most fortunately they lay at a point where in approaching, we could be screened from their view by a slight rise in the ground. Behind the rise, I mounted the camera and Nanook, stringing his harpoon, began slowly snaking over the crest. From the crest to where they lay was less than fifty feet and until Nanook crawled to within half that distance toward them none took any alarm. For the rest of the way, whenever the sentinel of the herd slowly raised his head to look around, Nanook lay motionless on the ground. Then when his head drooped in sleep, once more Nanook wormed his way slowly on.

I might mention here that the walrus has little range of vision on land. For protection he depends upon his nose and so long as the wind is favorable one can stalk right in to them. When almost right in amongst them, Nanook picked out the biggest bull, rose quickly and with all his strength landed his harpoon. The wounded bull, bellowing in rage, his enormous bulk diving and thrashing the sea (he weighed more than 2,000 pounds), the yells of the men straining for their lives in their attempt to hold him, the battle cry of the herd that hovered near, the wounded bull’s mate which swam in, locked tusks, in an attempt to rescue—was the greatest fight I have ever seen. For a long time it was nip and tuck—repeatedly the crew called to me to use the gun—but the camera crank was my only interest then and I pretended not to understand. Finally
Nanook worked the quarry toward the surf where he was pounded by the heavy seas and unable to get a purchase in the water. For at least twenty minutes that tug-o’-war kept on. I say twenty minutes advisedly for I ground out 1,200 feet of film.

Our boat, laden with walrus meat and ivory—it was a happy crew that took me back to the Post, where Nanook and his fellows were hailed with much acclaim. I lost no time in developing and printing the film. That walrus fight was the first film these Eskimo had ever seen and, in the language of the trade, it was a “knockout.”

The audience—they thronged the post kitchen to the point of suffocation, completely forgot the picture—to them the walrus was real and living. The women and children in their high shrill voices joined with the men in shouting admonitions, warnings and advice to Nanook and his crew as the picture unfolded on the screen. The fame of that picture spread through all the country. And all through the year that I remained there every family who came wandering into the Post begged of me that they be shown the “Iviuk Aggie.” After this it did not take my Eskimo long to see the practical side of films and they soon abandoned their former attitude of laughter and good-natured ridicule toward the Angercak, i.e., the White Master who wanted pictures of them—the commonest objects in all the world! From that time on they were all with me. When in December the snow lay heavy on the ground the Eskimo abandoned their topecks of sealskin and the village of snow igloos sprung up around my wintering post.
They snow-walled my little hut up to the eaves with thick blocks of snow. It was as thick-walled as a fortress. My kitchen was their rendezvous—there was always a five-gallon pail of tea steeping on the stove and sea biscuit in the barrel. My little gramophone, too, was common property. Caruso, Farrar, Ricardo-Martin, McCormick served their turns with Harry Lauder, Al Jolson and Jazz King orchestras. Caruso in the Pagliacci prologue with its tragic ending was to them the most comic record of the lot. It sent them into peals of laughter and to rolling on the floor.

The difficulties of film development and printing during the winter were many. That convenience of civilization which I most missed was running water. For instance, in the film washing, three barrels of water for every hundred feet was required. The water hole, then eight feet of ice, had to be kept open all winter long and water clotted with particles of ice had to be taken, a barrel at a time, from a distance of more than a quarter of a mile away. When I mention that over 50,000 feet of film was developed over the winter with no assistance save from my Eskimo and at the slow rate of eight hundred feet a day, one can understand somewhat the amount of time and labor involved.

The walrus hunt having proved so successful, Nanook aspired to bigger things. The first of the bigger things was to be a bear hunt at Cape Sir Thomas Smith, which lay some two hundred miles northward of us. “Here,” said Nanook, “is where the she-bear den in the winter. I know, for I have hunted them there,
and it seems to me that there we might get the big, big aggie [picture].”

He went on to describe how in early December the she-bear dens in huge drift banks of snow. There is nothing to mark the den save the tiny vent or air hole which is melted open by the animal’s body heat. He went on with a warning that one should not walk there for one would fall in, in which case the she-bear might be angry! His companions would remain at either side of me, rifles in hand, whilst I filmed (he was going to make sure of my safety in the affair at least). He, with his snow knife, would open up the den block by block. The dogs, in the meantime, would all be unleashed and like a circle of wolves would gather around him howling to the skies. Mrs. Bear’s den door opened, Nanook, with nothing but his harpoon, would be poised and waiting.

The dogs baiting the quarry—some of them with her lightning paws the bear would send hurtling through the air—Nanook dancing here and there (he pantomimed the scene on my cabin floor using my fiddle bow for harpoon) waiting to dart in for a close-up throw—this, he felt sure, would be a big, big picture (aggie peerualluk). I agreed with him.

After two weeks’ preparation, we started. Nanook with three male companions, two sledges heavily laden, and two 12-dog teams. My food outfit comprised one hundred pounds of pork and beans which had been cooked in huge kettles at my post and then put into a canvas bag and frozen. These beans
chopped out with an axe from the frozen mass along with dried fruit, sea biscuit, and tea comprised my food supply.

Nanook and his companions’ diet was seal and walrus augmented by tea and sugar from my supply and, most important of all, tobacco, that most valued of the white man’s treasure.

We departed on a bitterly cold day—the 17th day of January—every profile of the landscape blurred with drifting snow. For two days we made good progress, for the traveling ground was hard and well packed by the wind. After that time, however, a heavy gale with falling snow wrecked our good going. Day after day we slowly made our way along. Ten miles or less was an average day’s travel. We had hoped to cover the 200 miles to Cape Smith in eight days but, when twelve days had elapsed, found we were only half way. We were discouraged, the dogs all but worn out, and to make matters worse the supply of seal and dog food was near the point of exhaustion.

The low coastline off which we traveled for days on end was the confusing mirage hanging in the sky, so that Nanook could not locate himself and our position in relation to Cape Smith. Constantly as we traveled along in that monotony of days, our nearness to Cape Smith became the subject uppermost in our minds. “How near are we?” was the hourly question that became the plague of poor Nanook’s existence. The few times he tried to predict, he was invariably wrong. Finally, we had traveled to a point where the Cape, Nanook was sure, was no
more than two days on, for he was certain that he had spied through the haze and rime old hunting country of former years. Within the day, his companions found that he again was wrong. They could not contain their impatience and irritation. Poor Nanook became disgusted, and as we continued he kept his head averted and steadfastly refused to ever look upon that confounding mainland again.

We were on our beam ends the day we finally reached Cape Smith. Our brown leader dog, that for the last three days we had been carrying on the top of the sledge in the attempt to save her, was dying of starvation. Nanook ended it all with his harpoon and as he held aloft the carcass said: “There is not enough left for dog food.”

Well, anyway there were seals at the Cape, that we were sure of, and moreover we would be there within the day, so we continued cheerfully enough. The great land mass of the Cape rising a sheer 1,800 feet stood out boldly before us. By nightfall we reached our treasure land of bear and seals and plenty. We halted before the rise of an old campground of Nanook’s, and, abandoning sledge and dogs, climbed eagerly to a vantage for the welcome sight of the seal grounds. We gazed there a moment or so before we realized that the seal ground we looked out upon was like all the barren ground we had traveled—a solid white field and not a seal-hunting lane of open water anywhere.

We forgot about bear hunting; for two and a half weeks we tried for seals, wandering from day to day along the broken ice
foot of the Cape. In that interval two small seals were killed and they were just enough to keep the dogs alive. For four days, at one time, we had no seal oil and our igloo was in darkness. The dogs were utterly weak and slept in the igloo tunnel. Whenever I had to crawl out of doors, I would have to lift them to one side like sacks of flour, for they were too weak and indifferent to move away. The irony of it all was that bears there were everywhere; four of them had passed within a thousand feet of our igloo one night, but the dogs were too weak to bay them or bring them to a stand. My own food supply was nearing its fag ends. For days past I had been sharing it with the men.

I will never forget one bitter morning when Nanook and his men were starting off for a hunting day on the ice fields at sea. I suddenly discovered that none of them had touched my food at breakfast time. When I remonstrated with Nanook he answered that he was afraid I might be short!

Our luck turned that day at nightfall, however, when Nanook crawled into the igloo wearing a smile from ear to ear, and shouting the welcomed words “Ojuk! Ojuk!” (the big seal). He had killed a big seal that was “very, very large” and enough for us and dogs for all the long trail south to home again.

What a feast those men had through that memorable night! When it was over, said Nanook in deep content, “Now we are strong again and warm. The white man’s food has made us much too weak and cold.” The flesh of seal is certainly warmth-giving to the greatest degree. When I awakened the
next morning, all of them were still asleep, their bodies were covered with hoar frost and vapor lay floating over them in the cold igloo air.

Though the problem of our food supply was now solved, we were still not able to travel, for the dogs needed feeding up. During this interval we hunted along the gigantic flanks of the cape for signs of bear dens. Tracks there were everywhere, but of dens only one and that one had been abandoned. Had we had the time to spare, it would have been only a matter of days before we would have found one, but I had a great amount of filming to do at my winter post and more time could not be spared, so reluctantly enough we left the Cape and started off on the down trail for home.

We arrived there on the tenth day of March, and so ended the six hundred miles and fifty-five days of our Nanook’s “big picture” journey. But it was not all loss: I was richer by a fuller knowledge of the fine qualities of my sterling friends, the Eskimos.¹

*Nanook of the North* introduces concepts addressing the depiction of Indigenous People, Documentary Filmmaking, Colonialism, a filmmaker with a Colonialist Perspective, and Neo-Realism.

In 1910, Robert J. Flaherty set off to the Canadian North to become a miner, and prospector like his father. The Canadian Railroad was being built at that time to transport wheat to the Hudson Bay to be shipped and sold to Europe.

On his third expedition, Flaherty took a film camera with a portable
printing and developing machine and some lighting equipment. Before he left, he traveled to the Eastman company in Rochester, New York to take a three-week photography course. Over the next three years he filmed the Inuit people in the Hudson Bay and their vanishing lifestyle.

In 1916, he was editing his film, when he dropped a cigarette on the highly flammable celluloid. 30,000 feet of footage burst into flames. Flaherty was so badly burned that he was hospitalized.

In the hospital, he told his wife, Frances, that his film was just a travelog: people, sleds, dogs, and igloos. It wasn’t a story. He was determined to return to Northern Canada to make a film that would present the perspective of an Inuit person and bring American viewers into this world.

The film Flaherty made was *Nanook of the North*, the first feature-length documentary film. Nanook’s name became a household word. It presented real people, in a real place, in a real time. But by the time Flaherty returned, the Inuits had been trading with Europeans and were using metal tools and guns.

In order to present the traditional Inuit hunting and fishing methods, Flaherty needed to reenact hunting scenes using handmade tools from bone, tusk, antler, and other materials available in the region before the traders arrived.

The Character of Nanook was played by an Inuit man named Allakariallak. He and his family not only acted in the film, but also served as the film production crew. They collaborated with Flaherty to tell their story of life in the Arctic.
An accident changed the direction of this filmmaker and introduced innovation in storytelling. The term *documentary* would be termed a few years later by Scottish filmmaker, John Grierson, referring to Flaherty’s film, *Moana*. Flaherty’s innovation in *Nanook of the North* brought viewers into the point of view of one character to empathize and understand his life rather than oggle at the oddity of his foreign culture.

As he prepared to head north, World War I began and the work of motion picture filmmakers seemed less important than the trenches in Europe, and Flaherty had difficult gaining funding. In 1920, the French Fur company Revillon Frères bankrolled his expedition with $500 per month, $13,000 for equipment and $3,000 for expenses.

After months of travel, over a year filming, and a year editing, Flaherty showed the film to executives at Paramount Pictures. Before the film was over, most of the executives walked out. The few that were left told Flaherty that people would never sit through two hours of Eskimos eating seal meat. The film was released by the French distributor, Pathé. It opened on June 11th, 1922 in New York and was a huge success.²

In his time, Flaherty was criticized for being too sentimental and for using reenactment and dramatization. This film lasted because Flaherty brought viewers into the point of view of the Inuit hunter and presented Allakariallak and his family with empathy.

After the success of *Nanook of the North*, Paramount Pictures gave Flaherty their full support and funding. He made a few more documentary films, but nothing would repeat the global success of *Nanook of the North*. 
The Film as Text

The films in this course are the primary texts. World civilizations and cultures will be presented through films made by native and non-native filmmakers; some filmmakers from former colonialist empires with colonialist perspectives.

*Nanook of the North* is a documentary film that uses reenactment and dramatization to show the experiences of Inuit people surviving in the arctic climate. *Train to Busan* is a fictional film about how a little girl survives a zombie apocalypse in Korea. Both fictional and non-fictional films convey cultural values through their depictions of characters and how those characters overcome obstacles.

Robert Flaherty begins the film with text on title cards. These cards tell the story of how the film was made and how he collaborated with Allakariallak, the Inuit man who portrays Nanook. *Nanook of the North* was released before the electronic technology to add sound to film was developed. It was made before the development of color film.

Robert Flaherty used a mechanical camera and chemicals that made the celluloid film react to sunlight to create a negative image. Then using the negative film, which was edited to tell the story, a positive film was created and distributed to theatres.

All lighting for *Nanook of the North*, was provided by the sun. Sound recording technology would require electricity to transduce acoustical energy into electronic energy which could be transported, altered and eventually stored. The transduction device is a microphone. Microphones had been developed and recordings made and played back using a Victrola. In *Nanook of the North*, Nanook listens to a
record on a wind-up Victrola. Electricity was not available in the Arctic and had not been successfully used yet in film production when Robert Flaherty began and even completed this project. The first talkie, a film with sound was *The Jazz Singer*, released in 1927.

The music in *Nanook of the North* would have been performed live in the theatre by a pianist or organist to convey the emotion in the film.

**Robert Flaherty’s Text on Screen**

This film grew out of a long series of explorations in the north which I carried out on behalf of Sir William McKenzie from 1910 to 1916. Much of the exploration was done in journeys lasting months at a time with only two or three Eskimos as my companions. This experience gave me an insight into their lives and a deep regard for them.

In 1913 I went north with a large outfit. We wintered on Baffin Island, and when I was not seriously engaged in exploratory work, a film was compiled of some Eskimos who lived with us. I had no motion picture experience, and naturally the results were indifferent. But as I was undertaking another expedition, I secured more negative with the idea of building up this first film.

Again, between explorations. I continued with the picture work. After a lot of hardship, which involved the loss of a launch and the wrecking of our cruising boat, we secured a remarkable film. Finally after wintering a year on Belcher Islands, the skipper, a Moose Factory half-breed, and myself got out to civilization along with my notes, maps and the films.
I had just completed editing the film in Toronto when the negative caught fire and I was minus all. The editing print, however, was not burned and was shown several times—just long enough to make me realize it was no good. But I did see that if I were to take a single character and make him typify the Eskimos as I had known them so long and well, the results would be well worth while.

I went north again, this time solely to make a film. I took with me not only cameras, but apparatus to print and project my results as they were being made, so my character and his family could understand and appreciate what I was doing. As soon as I showed them some of the first results, Nanook and his crowd were completely won over.

At last, in 1920, I thought I had shot enough scenes to make the film and prepared to go home. Poor old Nanook hung around my cabin, talking over films we still could make if I would only stay on for another year. He never understood why I should have gone to all the fuss and bother of making the “big aggie” of him. 

*Nanook of the North* begins with actual text on the screen to tell the story of how the film was made. Other films in this course will be used as texts, examined and understood, using the film, images, dialogue, and music.
Notes


3.

**PERSPECTIVE**

*Rashomon* Akira Kurosawa (1950) Japan


Japan is an island nation of 126,500,000 million people living on 6,852 islands. The largest island is Honshu. Tokyo, the capital and home of the Japanese film industry, is on the Eastern side of Honshu, 5136 miles across the Pacific Ocean from San Francisco. Hokkaido, Shikoku, Kyushu are other islands in the Japanese Archipelago.

Japan has more than a third of the population of the United States on a land mass comparable in size to California. It is a large country with a large population. Their closest neighbor to the west, across the Sea of
Japan, is South Korea. Kamchatka, the wildest and most remote part of Russia, is north of Japan, across the Sea of Okhotsk.

Japan is remote and geographically isolated. The Japanese language is phonetic and was developed without external influences. Writing came late to Japan. Hiragana, the Japanese written language was developed in the 400s.

The Japanese religion is Shinto, the way of the Shi, the spirits that inhabit all things in nature. Japanese poetry, Haiku, is often inspired by nature. Buddhism came to Japan from China and India and is now the most popular religion.

Some of the first Western European traders to come to Japan were Portuguese. The Japanese word for Thank you, Arigato, comes from the Portuguese Obrigado.

Japanese Noh Theatre is characterized by masked actors who use music, dance and elaborate gestures to communicate Buddhist themes.

In 1931, Japan invaded Manchuria, 30 million people died in this war between China and Japan that eventually turned into WWII.

Yasujiro Ozu was one of the first masters of Japanese Cinema. Tokyo Story is about the end of traditional Japanese lifestyles and the rise of modernism.

Mono no Aware, the pathos of things, the idea that life is essentially static and sad, is a central theme in Ozu’s work. His characters have small realizations rather than huge climactic battles. Japanese houses were traditionally made of paper with screens dividing rooms. Beds
were rice mats on the floor. Ozu used a short tripod to film at the level of his characters who were often seated on the floor.

The United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and fire bombed Tokyo. The fire devastated Tokyo and incinerated the film industry and the historic films of pre-war Japan.

After WWII, Japan emerged as an economy dedicated to technology and innovation in electronics.

*Rashomon* was the first international film from Japan. Akira Kurosawa’s film follows the story of a rape and a murder from four perspectives. Each of these characters reveals what he or she saw in court. The film recreates these contradictory testimonies. Rashomon introduced Toshiro Mifune to international audiences and began his collaboration with Kurosawa.

Kurosawa is one of the most influential directors in film history. Many of his Samurai movies were remade as westerns. *Yojimbo* starring Toshiro Mifune was remade as *A Fist Full of Dollars* with Clint Eastwood. *The Seven Samurai* was recreated for American audiences as *The Magnificent Seven*.

The 1950s was also when Japan launched *Godzilla* as a reaction to nuclear war and radiation in Japan.

Kurosawa studied international cinema and gained an understanding of the techniques of directors like John Ford and Howard Hawkes before taking the ideas of American Westerns and telling stories based in Japanese History and Culture.

*Rashomon* is a dramatic film, a movie, with a screenplay and actors
portraying the characters. The film is set in the era of Classic Japan with noblemen on horseback and peasants in rags. The actors wear costumes and make-up to evoke this classical era.

The Samurai were the knights of Japan from the 12th Century to the 1800s. They were paid by Daimyo, feudal landlords, and they followed the code of Bushido: Indifference to Pain, Unflinching loyalty, Rectitude, Courage, Benevolence, Politeness, Sincerity, Honor, Loyalty, and Self-control.

Perspective is an important concept in film. How are characters portrayed and how is their story presented in an external or objective point-of-view or through a subjective lens that presents the character’s world as they see it. There is no better presentation in cinematic history of the concept of perspective than Rashomon.
4.

**NEOREALISM**

*Pather Panchali* Satyajit Ray (1955) India


The image above of Apu opening his eye, or his sister, Durga, prying his eye open to wake him up for school, exemplifies perspective in film.
*Pather Panchali* is Apu’s story. It begins before he is born, but even before his birth, the story is from his perspective and recounts events that he knows from family stories and from his understanding of the narrative story of his life.

India is the seventh largest country in the world with more than 1.3 billion people. It is a Democracy. At the time of the emergence of motion pictures, India was a British Colony. The British ruled India for 300 years.

India gained independence from Britain with the guidance of Mahatma Ghandi in 1947. Ghandi believed in *Ahimsa*, non-violence. The transition from colonialism was peaceful, but it was followed by the Great Partition which created the nation of Pakistan.

Muslim Indians moved North to Pakistan and Hindus and Sikhs moved south to India. It was the greatest mass migration in human history. 15 million people were uprooted, many died. The Himalayas, the tallest mountains on Earth, are north of India, east of Pakistan, a difficult land to cross. Communities that had lived in relative peace, attacked each other. Gangs of killers set villages on fire, women were raped and disfigured, and many people died in the violence or in the trek north.

The emergence of sound in film was not a great breakthrough for India because there are many languages spoken on the sub-continent: Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Gujarati, Tamil, Punjabi, Kashmiri, Marathi, and Telugu. Film united India by telling stories from the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. The emergence of sound brought back the issues of caste and religious differences in India.
Satyajit Ray lived in Kolkatta, the historical birthplace of India’s greatest poet, Rabindranath Tagore. Ray came to film as a scholar, artist, and the founder of the Calcutta Film Society. He was aware of trends in international cinema, particularly Italian Neo-Realism. His goal was to tell the story of India to a global audience.

*Auteur Theory* was the concept developed by the filmmakers and film critics in the French New Wave. They considered the film director to be the author of a film. The French New Wave filmmakers were watching films and writing about the art of film in their magazine, *Cahiers du Cinema*. Alfred Hitchcock, Akira Kurosawa, and Jean Renoir were some of the auteurs celebrated by the French New Wave.

Satyajit Ray and his partner, Hari Das Gupta, were screening their films at the Calcutta Film Society when French Director, Jean Renoir came to India to make *The River*.

Renoir asked Ray and his partner for help finding locations and crew for his film. Ray studied Asian and European film before he became a filmmaker. He also met and worked with one of the most respected directors in film history.

*Pathar Panchali*, set in Kolkatta, is a post-colonialist film that tells a story from the native perspective in the Bengali language. It’s also the product of an international dialog about film and film storytelling.

This neo-realist masterpiece is a creative collaboration between Ray, his cinematographer, Subrata Mitra, and the world-famous composer and sitar player, Ravi Shankar as well as the actors who portray the characters. *Pathar Panchali* was Mitra’s first film and is still considered one of the greatest works of cinematography. *Pathar Panchali* means
Song of the Small Road. It’s the first part of the *Apu Trilogy* about a boy named Apu.¹

Neo-Realist films are set in the current time and are usually filmed on location, rather than on a set. The actors are often non-professional and are not wearing elaborate costumes or make-up. Often scenes are filmed without sound. The soundtrack is recorded later in a studio. *Pathar Panchali* was filmed over three years. Because of budget limitations, Ray had to work around the actors’ schedules and lives, the limitations of climate, and the availability of natural light.

Ray’s first concern is the Social Identity of his characters.

**A Long Time on the Little Road by Satyajit Ray**

I remember the first day’s shooting of *Pather Panchali* very well. It was in the festive season, in October, and the last of the big *pujas* was taking place that day. Our location was 75 miles away from Calcutta. As our taxi sped along the Grand Trunk Road we passed through several suburban towns and villages and heard the drums and even had fleeting glimpses of some images. Someone said it would bring us luck. I had my doubts, but I wished to believe it. All who set about making films need luck as much as they need the other things: talent, money, perseverance and so on. We needed a little more of it than most.

I knew this first day was really a sort of rehearsal for us, to break in, as it were. For most of us it was a start from scratch. There were eight on our unit of whom only one—Bansi, the art director—had previous professional experience. We had a
new cameraman, Subrata, and an old, much-used Wall camera which happened to be the only one available for hire on that particular day. Its one discernible advantage seemed to be a device to insure smoothness of panning. We had no sound equipment, as the scene was to be a silent one.

It was an episode in the screenplay where the two children of the story, brother and sister, stray from their village and chance upon a field of *kaash* flowers. The two have had a quarrel, and here in this enchanted setting they are reconciled and their long journey is rewarded by their first sight of a railway train. I chose to begin with this scene because on paper it seemed both effective and simple. I considered this important, because the whole idea behind launching the production with only 8,000 rupees in the bank was to produce quickly and cheaply a reasonable length of rough cut which we hoped would establish our bonafides, the lack of which had so far stood in the way of our getting a financier.

At the end of the first day’s shooting we had eight shots. The children behaved naturally, which was a bit of luck because I hadn’t tested them. As for myself, I remember feeling a bit strung up in the beginning; but as work progressed my nerves relaxed and in the end I even felt a kind of elation. However, the scene was only half finished, and on the following Sunday we were back on the same location. But was it the same location? It was hard to believe it. What was on the previous occasion a sea of fluffy whiteness was now a mere expanse of uninspiring brownish grass. We knew *kaash* was a seasonal flower, but surely they were not that shortlived? A local
peasant provided the explanation. The flowers, he said, were food to the cattle. The cows and buffaloes had come to graze the day before and had literally chewed up the scenery.

This was a big setback. We knew of no other kaash field that would provide the long shots that I needed. This meant staging the action in a different setting, and the very thought was heartbreaking. Who would have known then that we would be back on the identical location exactly two years later and indulge in the luxury of reshooting the entire scene with the same cast and the same unit but with money provided by the Government of West Bengal?

When I look back on the making of Pather Panchali, I cannot be sure whether it has meant more pain to me than pleasure. It is difficult to describe the peculiar torments of a production held up for lack of funds. The long periods of enforced idleness (there were two gaps totaling a year and a half) produce nothing but the deepest gloom. The very sight of the scenario is sickening, let alone thoughts of embellishing it with details or brushing up the dialogue.

But work—even a day’s work—has rewards, not the least of which is the gradual comprehension of the complex and fascinating nature of film-making itself. The edicts of the theorists, learnt assiduously over the years, doubtless perform some useful function at the back of your mind. But grappling with the medium in a practical way for the first time, you realize (a) that you know rather less about it than you thought you did; (b) that the theorists don’t provide all the answers,
and (c) that your approach should derive not from Dovzhenko’s *Earth*, however much you may love that dance in the moonlight, but from the earth, the soil, of your own country—assuming, of course, that your story has its roots in it.

Bibhutibhusan Bannerji’s *Pather Panchali (The Little Road)* was serialized in a popular Bengali magazine in the early 1930’s. The author had been brought up in a village and the book contained much that was autobiographical. The manuscript had been turned down by the publishers on the grounds that it lacked a story. The magazine, too, was initially reluctant to accept it, but later did so on condition that it would be discontinued if the readers of the magazine so wished. But the story of Apu and Durga was a hit from the first installment. The book, published a year or so later, was an outstanding critical and popular success and has remained on the best-seller list ever since.

I chose *Pather Panchali* for the qualities that made it a great book: its humanism, its lyricism, and its ring of truth. I knew I would have to do a lot of pruning and reshaping—I certainly could not go beyond the first half, which ended with the family’s departure for Benares—but at the same time I felt that to cast the thing into a mold of cut-and-dried narrative would be wrong. The script had to retain some of the rambling quality of the novel because that in itself contained a clue to the feel of authenticity; life in a poor Bengali village does ramble.
Considerations of form, rhythm or movement didn’t worry me much at this stage. I had my nucleus: the family, consisting of husband and wife, the two children, and the old aunt. The characters had been so conceived by the author that there was a constant and subtle interplay between them. I had my time span of one year. I had my contrasts—pictorial as well as emotional: the rich and the poor, the laughter and the tears, the beauty of the countryside and the grimness of poverty existing in it. Finally, I had the two natural halves of the story culminating in two poignant deaths. What more could a scenarist want?

What I lacked was first hand acquaintance with the *milieu* of the story. I could, of course, draw upon the book itself, which was a kind of encyclopedia of Bengali rural life, but I knew that this was not enough. In any case, one had only to drive six miles out of the city to get to the heart of the authentic village.

While far from being an adventure in the physical sense, these explorations into the village nevertheless opened up a new and fascinating world. To one born and bred in the city, it had a new flavor, a new texture; and its values were different. It made you want to observe and probe, to catch the revealing details, the telling gestures, the particular turns of speech. You wanted to fathom the mysteries of “atmosphere.” Does it consist in the sight, or in the sounds? How to catch the subtle difference between dawn and dusk, or convey the gray humid stillness that precedes the first monsoon shower? Is sunlight in Spring the same as sunlight in Autumn? . . .
The more you probed the more was revealed, and familiarity bred not contempt but love, understanding, tolerance. Problems of film-making began to recede into the background and you found yourself belittling the importance of the camera. After all, you said, it is only a recording instrument. The important thing is Truth. Get at it and you’ve got your great humanist masterpiece.

But how wrong you were! The moment you are on the set the three-legged instrument takes charge. Problems come thick and fast. Where to place the camera? High or low? Near or far? On the dolly or on the ground? Is the thirty-five O.K. or would you rather move back and use the fifty? Get too close to the action and the emotion of the scene spills over; get too far back and the thing becomes cold and remote. To each problem that arises you must find a quick answer. If you delay, the sun shifts and makes nonsense of your light continuity.

Sound is a problem, too. Dialogue has been reduced to a minimum, but you want to cut down further. Are these three words really necessary, or can you find a telling gesture to take their place? The critics may well talk of a laudable attempt at a rediscovery of the fundamentals of silent cinema, but you know within your heart that while there may be some truth in that, equally true was your anxiety to avoid the uninspiring business of dubbing and save on the cost of sound film.

Cost, indeed, was a dominant determining factor at all times, influencing the very style of the film. Another important factor—and I wouldn’t want to generalize on this—was the
human one. In handling my actors I found it impossible to get to that stage of impersonal detachment where I could equate them with so much raw material to be molded and remolded at will. How can you make a woman of eighty stand in the hot midday sun and go through the same speech and the same actions over and over again while you stand by and watch with half-closed eyes and wait for that precise gesture and tone of voice that will mean perfection for you? This meant, inevitably, fewer rehearsals and fewer takes.

Sometimes you are lucky and everything goes right in the first take. Sometimes it does not and you feel you will never get what you are aiming at. The number of takes increases, the cost goes up, the qualms of conscience become stronger than the urge for perfection and you give up, hoping that the critics will forgive and the audience will overlook. You even wonder whether perhaps you were not being too finicky and the thing was not as bad or as wrong as you thought it was.

And so on and on it goes, this preposterous balancing act, and you keep hoping that out of all this will somehow emerge Art. At times when the strain is too much you want to give up. You feel it is going to kill you, or at least kill the artist in you. But you carry on, mainly because so much and so many are involved, and the day comes when the last shot is in the can and you are surprised to find yourself feeling not happy and relieved, but sad. And you are not alone in this. Everybody, from “Auntie,” for whom it has been an exciting if strenuous comeback after thirty years of oblivion, down to the
little urchin who brought the live spiders and the dead toad, shares this feeling.

To me it is the inexorable rhythm of its creative process that makes film-making so exciting in spite of the hardships and the frustrations. Consider this process: you have conceived a scene, any scene. Take the one where a young girl, frail of body but full of some elemental zest, gives herself up to the first monsoon shower. She dances in joy while the big drops pelt her and drench her. The scene excites you not only for its visual possibilities but for its deeper implications as well: that rain will be the cause of her death.

You break down the scene into shots, make notes and sketches. Then the time comes to bring the scene to life. You go out into the open, scan the vista, choose your setting. The rain clouds approach. You set up your camera, have a last quick rehearsal. Then the “take.” But one is not enough. This is a key scene. You must have another while the shower lasts. The camera turns, and presently your scene is on celluloid.

Off to the lab. You wait, sweating—this is September—while the ghostly negative takes its own time to emerge. There is no hurrying this process. Then the print, the “rushes.” This looks good, you say to yourself. But wait. This is only the content, in its bits and pieces, and not the form. How is it going to join up? You grab your editor and rush off to the cutting room. There is a grueling couple of hours, filled with aching suspense, while the patient process of cutting and joining goes on. At the end you watch the thing on the
moviola. Even the rickety old machine cannot conceal the effectiveness of the scene. Does this need music, or is the incidental sound enough? But that is another stage in the creative process and must wait until all the shots have been joined up into scenes and all the scenes into sequences and the film can be comprehended in its totality. Then, and only then, can you tell—if you can bring to bear on it that detachment and objectivity—if your dance in the rain has really come off.

But is this detachment, this objectivity, possible? You know you worked honestly and hard, and so did everybody else. But you also know that you had to make changes, compromises—not without the best of reasons—on the set and in the cutting room. Is it better for them or worse? Is your own satisfaction the final test or must you bow to the verdict of the majority? You cannot be sure. But you can be sure of one thing: you are a better man for having made it.  

Notes


CULTURAL APPROPRIATION

Black Orpheus Marcel Camus (1959) Brazil


Brazil is the largest country in South America with 208 million people on 3.2 million square miles. The capital is Brazilia. Sao Paolo is the
most populous city. Rio De Janeiro, the second largest city, located in Southern Brazil, was founded by the Portuguese in 1565. It’s a business hub for oil and mining as well as tourism and universities. Brazilian people descend from the indigenous people of Brazil, the Portuguese Colonists, and Enslaved Africans who arrived in Brazil in the 1700s.

Much of Brazil is rainforest. The Amazon bisects the equatorial section of Brazil running east from Manaus to the Atlantic Ocean. Most major rivers run North to South, the Amazon runs West to East.

French filmmaker, Marcel Camus, filmed *Black Orpheus* in the favelas of Rio De Janeiro during *Carnival*, the celebration that precedes the season of lent in this predominantly Catholic country. Camus’ film presented this celebration and the city of Rio to the world in 1959. It won the Academy Award for best foreign-language film and the Palme d’Or at the Cannes Film Festival.

This is a scripted narrative movie created for European and American audiences. Camus used the Greek myth of Orpheus and Euridice which would have been familiar to educated film enthusiasts. The actors are Brazilian, the language is Portuguese, but the story from Greek Mythology is imposed on their exotic culture for international audiences. This is one way for filmmakers from the former colonialist empires of Europe to appropriate aspects of native culture for outside audiences.

Barack Obama saw *Black Orpheus* with his mother and sister in New York City when he was a student at Columbia University. It was his mother’s favorite film. Obama did not share his mother’s enthusiasm.

We took a cab to the revival theater where the movie was
The film, a groundbreaker of sorts due to its mostly black, Brazilian cast, had been made in the fifties. The storyline was simple: the myth of the ill-fated lovers Orpheus and Eurydice set in the favelas of Rio during Carnival. In Technicolor splendor, set against scenic green hills, the black and brown Brazilians sang and danced and strummed guitars like carefree birds in colorful plumage. About halfway through the movie, I decided that I’d seen enough, and turned to my mother to see if she might be ready to go. But her face, lit by the blue glow of the screen, was set in a wistful gaze. At that moment, I felt as if I were being given a window into her heart, the unreflective heart of her youth. I suddenly realized that the depiction of childlike blacks I was now seeing on the screen, the reverse image of Conrad’s dark savages, was what my mother had carried with her to Hawaii all those years before, a reflection of the simple fantasies that had been forbidden to a white middle-class girl from Kansas, the promise of another life: warm, sensual, exotic, different.¹

Notes


The Lumierès’ Actualities played in Dakar, Senegal at the turn of the century. George Méliès traveled to Dakar to make a film in the early 20th Century, but by 1935, The Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment censored film distribution in Africa and limited what European and American viewers saw about Africa.

Bantu relates to Central African people and their languages including Swahili. The British Colonial Film Unit distributed propaganda films about the post office and farming, but comedies were censored from distribution in Africa because they did not present whites as dignified.
French filmmakers, Chris Marker and Alain Resnais, filmed a documentary in Africa called *Les Statues Meurent Aussi* (Statues also Die). The film contrasted African Art in museums to scenes of African life. It was finished in 1953 and was banned in Europe and the US because it was considered too controversial.

Before Colonialism in Africa, there were few written records. Many African languages were spoken rather than written. Cultural histories, mythologies and religious traditions were shared in song or poetry. Wisdom was recorded and conveyed orally. Colonial powers erased history by breaking up communities through slavery, resettlement, and the loss of language. Western narratives were substituted for traditional myths and ancestral stories. This was done by missionaries, in attempts at Christian and Muslim conversion, and through cultural hegemony and conquest. Today, nearly 50% of Africa is Muslim, 40% is Christian, only 10 percent of 1.2 Billion people in Africa practice indigenous religions.

Europeans and Americans saw Africa depicted in films like *Tarzan*, which was produced on a Hollywood lot and featured trained animals. Edgar Rice Burroughs, the writer of the Tarzan series, never set foot in Africa. He wrote the first Tarzan book in Chicago in 1912. The Tarzan story was first captured on film in 1918 and was the most influential depiction of Africa in the first half of the 20th Century. *Tarzan* was the first film to gross $1 Million.

African cinema emerged with the Anti-Colonialist movements in Africa. Filmmaking was inherently political, designed to give Black Africans a voice. Ousmene Sembène saw Marker and Resnais’ film. Sembène was from Senegal, a country where French is the official
language. He is one of the first Black African filmmakers to create films that were able to reach international audiences.

Senegal is a West African nation with a population of 16 Million on 76,000 square miles. The official language is French. Other francophone nations include: Cote D’Ivoire, Mali, and Cameroon.

Sembène served in the Senegalese Army then left to work as a fisherman, bricklayer, and mechanic in Marseilles. He wrote three novels before he began making films. Sembène’s first major success was *Barom Sarret* (The Waggoner) in 1963. It was filmed in Dakar and follows a man with a wagon, as he picks up and drops off passengers from the poorest areas of the city to the wealthy area inhabited by the French. The dialog and the internal monolog of the Wagon Driver were dubbed in French. All the sound in the film was recorded in a studio with actors to create a soundtrack for the 16 mm black and white film.

His film *Ceddo*, about the conversion of Africans to Islam in Late 18th Century Senegal, came out in 1976. Sembène was Muslim. He addressed cultural colonialism and the surrender of Africa to foreign ideologies in his films. *Ceddo* was banned for eight years in Senegal.1

*Black Girl* follows Douana, a Senegalese woman as she takes a job as a maid for a French family in Dakar. They take her to Antibes, in Southern France, where she expects to take care of the children. Instead, she is isolated, cooking, and cleaning for a French couple. She resents the way she is treated by the French, particularly the woman who employs her.

Sembène presents her story with some internal monolog in voice-over,
but his direction style is removed so that audiences have to speculate and consider why Douana is unhappy. He presents the subtle but disturbing microaggressions of the French toward a citizen of one of their former colonies.

One of the goals of native filmmakers was to present through film what had been disguised, misrepresented, and erased by colonialism. An interesting comparison can be made between Senegalese Filmmaker, Sembène, and Italian filmmaker, Gillo Pontecorvo. Both are making anti-imperialist films, but they choose different techniques for telling revolutionary stories.

Notes

Gillo Pontecorvo was a journalist and communist. He made *The Battle of Algiers* to “re-examine and re-evaluate the basic concept of a historical event.” He uses a neo-realist style not to present the Algerian Revolution objectively, but to “make a subjective statement employing objective fact.”

He wanted Europeans to see the Algerian battle for autonomy as an archetypal struggle against oppression. Filmmaking for Pontecorvo was “a deliberate rearrangement of chosen fact for a didactic purpose.”

He began working on the script with the Algerian revolutionaries and planned to cast the leaders of the Liberation Front in his film. Pontecorvo was Italian, not a native filmmaker, but his express goal and philosophy was anti-imperialist. He wanted to present the view and experience of the anti-imperialist forces in Algeria who were fighting for freedom from France. The National Liberation Army fought France from 1954 to 1962.

In an Interview for PierNico Solinas’ Book on The Battle of Algiers, Pontecorvo explains:

In times like these when so many countries are still grappling with the problems of the struggle for independence and freedom we thought it both stimulating and important to focus not only on the techniques of urban guerilla warfare and partisan war but also on how, with the right timing, a people or ethnic group need simply set its mind on independence in order to begin an irreversible process which will eventually achieve that goal despite momentary defeats and setbacks.

*The Battle of Algiers* shows the defeat of the NLF; then after two years of silence, the leaders dead or exiled, the organization destroyed, just when everything seems over for good, the movement explosively sets itself in motion again, thereby proving that nothing is lost on revolutionary ground because what has been sown springs up multiplied and thousand-fold.

I did photo tests with my own camera and a 16mm. Then with Marcello Gatti we made more tests with a 35mm camera. What we were searching for was a kind of photography that was...
visually pleasing, but at the same time would contain the rough quality of a newsreel.

We met with Algerian partisans, talked with the people of the Casbah, got direct emotions. I spent days with Sala Bazi, who had been a member of the NLF. He explained step by step how the organization functioned, how they made their bombs, placed them, etc. We came away with an idea of the situation as complete as if we had lived it ourselves.

Cinema can be a way of revitalizing a people’s deadened responses. We have been conditioned to absorb a false vision of reality that is dominated by the tastes, morals, and perceptions of the establishment. To forego the possibility of opposing the fictions diffused by this establishment is in the least irresponsible. That is why I believe in a cinema which addresses itself to the masses and not a cinema d’élite for an elite.²

Notes


8.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Black Robe Bruce Beresford (1991) Canada

Once Were Warriors Lee Tamahori (1999) New Zealand


Indigenous people are people who migrated to an area before written history. All people migrate. Humans have been moving all over the globe since Homo Sapiens evolved in Africa.

New Zealand consists of two main islands in the southwest Pacific Ocean and 600 smaller islands. New Zealand is more than 1000 miles from Australia across the Tasman Sea. It’s one of the most remote places on earth, and one of the last to be settled by humans.
The Maori people migrated to New Zealand in the 1200s in canoes from Polynesia. This is not pre-historical time. In Europe, it was the Dark Ages, a time of the Bubonic Plague, religious Crusades, and illiteracy for everyone but priests. Abel Tasman sighted New Zealand in 1642. Shortly afterward, colonists arrived. The Maori preceded the Europeans by 400 years, a significant historical period for one culture to claim sovereignty.

The Treaty of Waitangi was signed in 1840 between the British and the Maori. There were no Miscegenation Laws to prohibit marriage between Maori women and the English settlers. 600,000 New Zealanders claim Maori descent. Nonetheless, in Once Were Warriors, the Heke family are disenfranchised. Social Services takes their son Mark away because Beth misses his juvenile court appointment. Jake is out of work. Their oldest son joins a gang. Grace is the one family member who succeeds in school and as a creative writer, but her family cannot protect her from the dangers of living in poverty.

New Zealand prides itself on a history of peace and co-existence, but the native people still suffer from poverty, addiction, alcoholism, and violence, like indigenous people all over the world.

The scars of colonization still harm Maori children 400 years after their ancestral homeland was invaded, and their native language and mythologies replaced.

Sherman Alexie, a member of the Coeur D’Alene Nation, a Spokane Indian from the Pacific Northwest writes about growing up in a dangerous party house in his book, You Don’t Have to Say You Love Me.
My mother and father hosted a New Year’s Eve party in our HUD house on the Spokane Indian Reservation in 1973. Or 1972 or 1974. I was only seven years old, but I knew, with a fundamentalist’s fervor that the party was potentially lethal. Not because of my mother and father’s actions, but because of their inattentions. They were alcoholics who’d get what they laughingly called bottle-blind… So, yes, my bottle-blind parents invited everybody on the reservation to that dangerous New Year’s Eve party, including two Indian men who were widely believed—who were known—to have committed murders.

I wasn’t all that worried about their presence at that New Year’s Eve party. I wasn’t afraid of being killed as much as I was afraid of being sexually abused. I knew there would be five or six party guests who’d sexually molested my friends and cousins. There would be guests who’d raped only adults. And guests who’d raped only children. And opportunists who had and would violate any vulnerable woman, man, or child.

As an adult, I can look back at the violence on my reservation and logically trace it back to the horrific degradations, sexual and otherwise, committed against my tribe by generations of white American priests, nuns, soldiers, teachers, missionaries, and government officials. The abused can become abusers. It’s a tragic progression. But as a child, even a very bright child, I had little knowledge of Native American history. We Spokane Indian children weren’t even taught about our own tribal history. I only knew my personal history. And, in my story, the villains were other Spokane Indians.¹
His experience growing up as an indigenous child in the United States is more similar to the experiences of the Heke children on the other side of the planet than to non-native children in his own country.

**Men With Quills**

Jared Diamond identified *Guns, Germs and Steel* as the three weapons used by European Colonists to destroy indigenous cultures in North and South America.\(^2\)

The fourth and possibly the most powerful tool of colonization is writing. William Penn arrived in the American Colonies with a deed, signed by Charles II, explaining that the territory now known as Pennsylvania belonged to him. He signed treaties with the Leni Lenape that allowed them to remain in the Delaware Valley, an area where Lenape people may have lived for thousands of years. He was considered benevolent.

In *The Dawn of Everything*, David Wengrow and Anarchist, Anthropologist David Graeber posit that the US Revolution and especially the French Revolution were inspired by Indigenous thinkers.

In order to understand how the indigenous critique – that consistent moral and intellectual assault on European society, widely voiced by Native American observers from the seventeenth century onwards- evolved, and it’s full impact on European thinking, we first need to understand something about the role of two men: an impoverished French aristocrat named Louis-Armand de Lom d’Arce, Baron de la Hontan, and an unusually brilliant Wendat statesman named Kandiaronk.\(^3\)
They quote Kandiaronk, leader of the Wendat Confederacy, who traveled to Europe and debated the Frenchman, the Baron de Lahontan about the superiority of Wendat Culture.

I have spent six years reflecting on the state of European society and I still can’t think of a single way they act that’s not inhuman, and I can genuinely think this can only be the case, as long as you stick to your distinctions of ‘mine’ and ‘thine.’ I affirm that what you call money is the devil of devils; the tyrant of the French, the source of all evils; the bane of souls and slaughterhouse of the living. To imagine one can live in the country of money and preserve one’s soul is like imagining one could preserve one’s life at the bottom of a lake. Money is the father of luxury, lasciviousness, intrigues, trickery, lies, betrayal, insincerity, –of all the world’s worst behavior. Fathers sell their children, husbands their wives, wives betray their husbands, brothers kill each other, friends are false, and all because of money. In the light of all this, tell me that we Wendat are not right in refusing to touch, or so much as look at silver?⁴

Europeans lived in Monarchial states, most people were peasants with no rights and no hopes of ever gaining anything. The Wendat lived in egalitarian societies. They shared what they had with those less fortunate. Children were treated with kindness and never disciplined. But they were fierce in warfare and cruel to captives.

Some of the documents of Revolution and the writings of Enlightenment thinkers quoted the language of Wendat and Algonquin leaders. Graeber and Wengrow argue that indigenous civilizations may have been defeated, but their ideas of Democracy
influenced the governments that were eventually established in North America.

*Black Robe* presents the story of a French Jesuit who travels into Wendat territory to establish a mission and convert the indigenous people of what would later be Ontario, the land between the Great Lakes. He travels with a small Algonquin group, a family, and learns about their beliefs while he attempts to convert them.

Sigmund Freud is credited with developing an understanding of the mind that begins with the interpretation of dreams. This was a central guiding principle of many native peoples of North America. *Ondinnonk* is the Iroquoian work for the secret desires expressed in dreams. In the film, *Black Robe*, Chomina sees the She Manitou and can foresee and accept his death. His dreams give him knowledge to make decisions.

History may be written by the winners, but the ideas of Native People that were enslaved, killed, converted, and schooled, live on in the central principles and in the founding documents of U.S. and Canadian culture.

Notes

48-49.

The Wind Will Carry Us

Abbas Kiarostami (1999) Iran


Abbas Kiarostami was born in Tehran, Iran in 1940 and died in 2016 in Paris. He studied Fine Arts at the University of Tehran and worked as a traffic cop. He began making films in 1970. His first film, called Bread and Alley, features a young boy and a dog. Like other neorealist directors, Kiarostami uses non-professional actors, and sometimes real people playing themselves on screen, as part of a fictional story.

In 1978, the Shah of Iran, Reza Pahlavi, was overthrown, and Teheran, which was a wealthy, cosmopolitan city became part of a Shia
Theocracy under the Ayatollah Khomeini. Kiarostami made the decision to stay in Iran and to continue to work within the restraints of conservative Islam which largely forbids representational or figurative artwork.

Kiarostami’s films are made for an international audience to see Iran a country that is closed off from much of the world.

In *The Wind Will Carry Us*, a television crew from Teheran travels to a Kurdish village in an ancient city built into the side of a mountain. They are there to film a funerary rite, where friends of a person who died injure themselves to show their grief. In the film, the filmmaker is waiting for a local person to die. But as he waits, Kiarostami captures the life in this remote village.

Kiarostami’s films, which are often centered around children and poor Iranians living in rural areas, were not seen as overtly political, so he was allowed to work under an extremely oppressive regime. He made forty-eight films in his career.

*A Taste Of Cherry* won the Palme D’Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 1998. In this film, the protagonist is planning to commit suicide and is trying to find someone to bury him. His filmmaking style is considered minimalist because it involves long takes. Many of these takes happen in cars as the protagonist drives in and out of Teheran.

New York Times film critic, A.O.Scott wrote that Kiarostami, “in addition to being perhaps the most internationally admired Iranian filmmaker of the past decade, is also among the world masters of automotive cinema. He understands the automobile as a place of reflection, observation and, above all, talk.”¹
Notes

THE POLITICS ARE PERSONAL

10.

In the Mood for Love Wong Kar-Wei (2000) China


There are three Chinas: Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.

Mainland China was closed off from much of the world under Chairman Mao Zedong who controlled China from October 1st, 1949 to his death in 1976.

Hong Kong was an independent city under British control until 1997 when it reverted to China.

When the Chinese Government was exiled after the social
revolution in 1949, they went to Taiwan, the island formerly known as Formosa. The United States had diplomatic relations with the Nationalist Government and did not recognize Mainland China, but instead maintained relations with the former government in Taiwan. This island nation is officially known as The Republic of China.

Martial Arts movies have been central to film production since the first Chinese filmmakers. Chinese Martial Arts, known as Kung Fu or *Wuxia* films are similar in some ways to Samurai movies, they are set in the classical period. But unlike the aristocratic Samurai who serves a lord or shogun, the *Wuxia* fighter is independent, often a peasant, and sometimes a woman.

The first Chinese film center was in Shanghai on the mainland. Zhang Shichuan co-founded Mingxing Film Company (Star Films) with Zheng Zhenqiu in 1922. He directed 150 movies. *The Burning of the Red Lotus Temple*, adapted from the novel *The Tale of the Extraordinary Swordsmen*, was China’s first Martial Arts movie. It was 27 hours long, filmed and released in sixteen parts between 1928 and 1931, kind of like the Star Wars movies.

In 1931, Chiang Kai-Shek’s Nationalist Government banned Martial Arts Movies. Mingxing Studios was destroyed by Japanese bombs in the Battle of Shanghai. Nearly all of Zhang’s Martial Arts movies were destroyed by the Japanese or the Chinese Nationalist government.

The Shaw Brothers, Run Run, Runje, and Runme, moved their production studio from Shanghai to Hong Kong before the
Japanese invasion. By 1961, Shaw Productions was the largest privately owned production company in the world.

The Shaw Brothers produced King Hu’s debut *Wuxia* film from Taiwan, *Come Drink With Me*. The film features a young female martial artist who fights the oppressors and avenge the innocent.1

Bruce Lee, the Chinese Martial Arts master who brought Kung Fu Movies to the World was born in the United States in 1940, grew up in Kowloon, Hong Kong, attended college at the University of Washington, then began making movies in Hong Kong with the Shaw Brothers’ production company, Movietown.

Wong Kar-Wai was born in 1958 in Shanghai. *Chungking Express* was the first in his Hong Kong Trilogy. The other two films are *Fallen Angels* and *Happy Together*, which won Best Director at Cannes.

*In the Mood for Love* is about two people exiled from Shanghai in British Hong Kong. They move into an apartment building on the same day and gradually realize that their respective spouses are cheating on them with each other.

Initially they play the parts of their spouses: eating what the husband or wife eats for dinner, imagining what the other couple are saying to each other. As they play these parts with each other, they become friends and collaborators. Mr. Chow is a writer. He lends his martial arts books to Mrs. Chan. Then he suggests they try to collaborate to write a martial arts series together. Through this creative process, they fall in love, but unlike their spouses they...
refuse to cheat and they go to great lengths to avoid being caught in their chaste collaboration.

Mr. Chow takes a job in Singapore. Mrs. Chan goes to see him, she goes to his apartment, calls his office, but doesn’t say anything. He sees her cigarette and knows she was there. Three years later, she returns to Hong Kong, and moves back into the apartment building with her child.

In 1966, the Cultural Revolution was beginning in Mainland China and some Chinese left for the open economy of Hong Kong. When Mao Zedong rose to power, Red China closed to the west. If these characters seem lonely, isolated, and cut off from friends and family, it’s due to this historical moment when they left their country and home for fear and for opportunity.

Wong collaborated with Cinematographer Christopher Doyle on many of his early films. This collaboration helped to raise awareness of his work as a director in the US and the UK.

*Mise-en-Scene* is a French term that means what’s in the picture frame in film. In many scenes, *In the Mood for Love* presents characters in a closed form. They are surrounded by high walls and confining alleys. When they enter their apartment buildings they often need to pass by the neighbors in cramped hallways. In one scene Mrs. Chan is trapped in Mr. Chow’s apartment when a neighbor comes home earlier than they expected. These two characters are constrained by society and are often presented trapped against a wall or stuck in the rain. This is not a story of liberation, it’s a story of constraint.
The title of the film was originally *A Story of Food*. It was filmed in Hong Kong and in the Cambodian Holy City of Angkor Wat. Wong was editing the film to submit it to the Cannes Film Festival, when the director of the festival suggested he change the title.

He chose *In the Mood for Love*.

Notes

11.

**DIASPORA**

*Head On* Fatih Akin (2005) Turkey and Germany

*Bhaji on the Beach* Gurinder Chadha (1993) United Kingdom

*The Small Axe Series* Steve McQueen (2020)


People migrate. The term Diaspora was traditionally used for the dispersion of Jewish people all over the world, but it can be used to indicate how people leave their homeland and become part of other cultures. There are 11 million Turks living in Germany. They are part of the National Identity. But until the year 2000, German citizenship
was not by blood not birth. A child born in Germany was not a German citizen unless they were born to German parents. Generations of Turks lived in Germany and never gained citizenship.

The United Kingdom conferred citizenship on anyone born in a British Colony, but this did not protect them from racism. Gurinder Chadha’s film *Bhaji on the Beach* tells the story of Indian migrants in London in the 1990s.

Steve McQueen’s anthology film series, *Small Axe*, presents the experiences of West Indian migrants in London from the 1960’s to the 1980s in five films made for BBC One and Distributed by Amazon Prime.

Turkiye Cumhuriyeti, The Republic of Turkey, is a democratic, secular nation that spans Europe and Asia. Istanbul sits on the Bosphorus, a peninsula in Europe, in the Sea of Marmara. Anatolia, the large land mass that comprises the rest of Turkey is in Asia. The capital, Ankara is in Anatolia.

75% of people in Turkey consider themselves to be Turks, but there are Greeks, Kurds, Armenians and Jews in Turkey. Much of Ancient Greece was in Turkey. Homer, the blind Poet that wrote *The Illiad* about the conquest of Troy, likely lived on the West Coast of Turkey. Troy was a walled city in Northwest Turkey. The land of early Christianity, Asia Minor, including the inhabitants of cities where Saint Paul wrote his letters: the Colossians, the Phillippians, the Philadelphians, were in what is now Turkey. The capital of the Holy Roman Empire was Constantinople, now it is called Istanbul.

*Head On,* the German title is *Gegen die Wand,* Against the Wall,
tells the story of Turkish *gastarbeiter*, guest workers, immigrants who come to Germany to do menial work.

In the film, two Turks meet after they have attempted to commit suicide and decide to get married. The girl wants to marry to escape the control of her family. He has nothing to lose. It’s a redemption story.

The German Turkish Alliance was solidified in 1914 with the rise of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Atatürk helped the Turks win the Battle of Gallipoli, then he transitioned Turkey from a feudal empire to a 20th Century republic. He was president from 1923-1938. He abolished the Caliphate and ended Sharia Law and the veiling of women. He developed a public school system for boys and girls. In 1928, he changed the official written language of Turkish so that it is written in a Roman Alphabet rather than in Arabic Script.

*Bhaji on the Beach*

Gurinder Chadha was born in Kenya under British Colonialism, she is of Indian, Sikh descent. She was raised in England. When Chadha’s family moved to London, they experienced racism. Her father wore a turban and had a beard and was unable to work as a banker, so their family ran a store. They were not considered British in the same way that Brits of Anglo-Saxon descent are.

She made her first Documentary film “I’m British, but...” in 1989. She’s made 20 films, including shorts and documentaries, and she directs a British television show called Beecham House. Chadha’s work as a filmmaker deals with the contradictions or identity and the strain of living under the traditions of Indian and Sikh culture is
cosmopolitan London, especially the Sikh tradition of arranged marriage.

Chadha was named the most prolific female director working in Britain by the British Film Institute.
12.

WOMAN AND ISLAM


Al Mansour, Haifaa. *Wadjda*; a Sony Pictures Classics release; Razor Film in co-production with High Look Group and Rotana Studios, in cooperation with Norddeutscher Rundfunk and Bayerischer Rundfunk; produced by Roman Paul, Gerhard Meixner; Culver City, Calif.: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2014.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was established in 1932 on 830,000 square miles on the Arabian Peninsula. It’s almost four times the size of Texas, with 34.2 Million People. It is the second largest Arab Country, second to Algeria. It is a totalitarian dictatorship, financed by oil, and governed by the conservative Wahabi sect of Sunni Islam. It is the second largest oil producer, second to the United States. Oil
was discovered in 1938 and turned this theocracy into a global military power. The capital is Riyadh, the home of the Saud Family.

Saudi Arabia is also the home of the two holiest cities of Islam: Mecca and Medina.

Mecca, the Holiest City of Islam, is the birthplace of Muhammed. The Koran was revealed to Muhammed by Allah in the cave of Hira. The Great Mosque is believed to be built by Abraham and Ishmael of the Old Testament. Practicing Muslim people must travel to Mecca to participate in the Hajj. They circle around a Kaaba, the holiest site in Islam, at the center of the Masjid Al Haram, the great Mosque.

The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem is also a holy site for Islam. It’s where Mohammed ascended into heaven. It’s 900 miles from Jerusalem to Mecca, a long voyage, but interestingly linked by three major historical religious figures, Mohammed, Abraham and Ishmael.

*Wadjda* tells a neo-realist story about a normal girl growing up in a very oppressive society. The director, Haifaa Al- Mansour, had to film inside a van when she was outside on the streets of Riyadh. It is the first feature film from Saudi Arabia, a country with no movie theatres, where film is prohibited. Mansour worked within the confines of Saudi culture so that she could produce a film in her own country. In the end, the Saudi government supported her and submitted the film to festivals as the first Saudi Arabian film
Half of a Yellow Sun Biyi Bandele, Chimamanda Ngozi Aidchie (2014) Nigeria

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie tells the story of the Nigerian Civil War in her 2006 novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Twin sisters, Olanna and Kainene, are divided by the war that divides their country. Olanna falls in love with a revolutionary professor, Odenigbo, and Kainene takes over the family business. Her lover is a White Englishman. This story
of two sisters serves as a metaphor for the war that tears their nation in half.

Olanna and her lover, Odenigbo, are committed to the development of Biafra a new independent nation in Africa. The story is set in the 1960s in Lagos and in the University town of Port Harcourt, in Post-Colonialist Nigeria.

The film, directed by Biyi Bandele, uses maps superimposed on scenes to show viewers where the action is happening and news footage from the era to show the war from a more objective viewpoint. The primary tool for storytelling in this film is Melodrama.

Realism is the attempt to capture events that are happening and present them on screen. Neo-Realism uses non-professional actors in realistic settings to tell narrative stories that reflect the reality of the lives of the characters. Dramatic films may tell stories set in another century or in the future. Actors wear costumes and play parts that sometimes diverge from reality. Melodrama is a genre that involves viewers in the emotional lives of characters through love, heartbreak, and family conflict. It can be a powerful tool in gaining the empathy of viewers.

*Half of a Yellow Sun* is a melodrama that presents the history of post-colonial Nigeria through the romance and heartbreak of two sisters.

*Nollywood* emerged as the first major film market in Africa, based in Lagos, Nigeria. When African filmmakers began making movies to tell African stories from a native perspective, they could take their films to festivals in Europe and the United States, but there was no
distribution network for film in Africa, and no movie theatres for films to be screened.

The technology to make DVDs, digital optical disks that could record movies, was invented in 1995. DVDs could be recorded, copied and played back inexpensively and provided the first real opportunity to distribute film in Africa.

Jamie Meltzer’s 2007 documentary film, Welcome to Nollywood, follows six Nigerian filmmakers working in Lagos. In many cases their films use melodrama to tell stories for African Audiences. The films were distributed on DVDs, sold in stores and markets, and often played on community TV sets with DVD players.

Half of a Yellow Sun presents the evolution of the Nollywood film market from inexpensive movies to a film based on an international bestselling novel featuring world-renowned actors, Chiwetel Ejiofor and Thandiwe Newton.

In her 2009 TedTalk on The Danger of a Single Story, Adichie explains how she was raised in Post-Colonial Africa speaking English and reading British literature. She experienced her life through a European lens. She attended college in the United States, then returned to Nigeria to write.¹

Notes

¹ Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi, TED Global 2009 https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story/c
14.

VENGEANCE AND REDEMPTION

*Train to Busan* Yeon Sang-ho (2016) South Korea

*The Host* Bong Joon-ho (2006) South Korea


Korea is the most vibrant film market in the world today. Bong Joon-ho’s *Parasite* won the Palme D’Or at the 2019 Cannes Film Festival and the Oscars for Best Picture, Best Director and Best Original Screenplay.

The Republic of South Korea has 51.4 million residents in 38,000 miles. There are 505 people per square kilometer in Korea, 10 times the global average. Most Koreans live in urban areas. North Korea is the
major source of immigrants who cross the border to work. With ten million people, Seoul is the 17th Largest City in the world.

U.S. involvement in the The Korean war began in June 1950 when South Korea was invaded by North Korean Troops. Korea became the battleground between the United States and Communist China. The war lasted three years. In that time, more bombs were dropped on South Korea than on any single country during World War II. South Korea is the most bombed land mass in the world. The border between North and South Korea is still the most heavily guarded border on Earth.

**Vengeance** is a major theme in South Korean Cinema. Park Chan-wook’s Vengeance Trilogy includes: *Old Boy, Lady Vengeance* and *Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance*. The Korean hero is not the Savior, someone who saves an innocent person, in Korean Cinema the hero the Avenger, taking action after the innocent person has been killed. *The Host*, by director, Bong Joon-ho presents a strong example of this concept in South Korean Cinema.

**Train to Busan**

The film takes place primarily on the train from Seoul to Busan, which bisects South Korea heading southeast toward the Sea of Japan, as a a zombie apocalypse breaks out. The story is told through the eyes of a little girl who desperately wants her father’s attention.

The film premiered at the 2016 Cannes Film Festival. Yeon Sang-ho made the animated film *Seoul Station* based on a graphic novel first, then made *Train to Busan*, the live action version of this story. Like *Parasite*, *Train to Busan* addresses class and the desire for
democratization in an economy that has grown exponentially in fifty years.

**Monsters as Symbols**

In *Train to Busan* and *The Host* the monster represents something to the main character. For Su-an, the zombies enable her to gain recognition and attention from her father. Often zombies serve this purpose in film. They arrive when a character makes a secret wish to be alone with another character or asks the question, “what would it take to get him to pay attention to me?”

Similarly, the river monster represents Gang-doo’s wife, the mother of Hyun-seo, who deserted their family. The monster is feminized and could even be considered a *dentata*. When she releases the children, they seem to be born from her jaws. Monsters will often represent what the character fears most. In *The Host*, Gang-doo has been abandoned by a woman. This monster returns to remind him of his humiliation, and his emasculation, and provides an opportunity for him to avenge this cruelty.
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**Cinema Verité**– A genre of Documentary film that follows action and films what’s happening in real time. The camera is often hand-held. Rather than formal interviews subjects are filmed interacting with other people on camera.

**Colonialism**– The exertion of power by one country over another, to extract resources and profit. Colonialist powers often used culture, language and religion to dominate and control their colonies. Filmmakers are not colonialists, but when filmmakers come from colonial powers and make films about subjects of colonialism, their colonialist perspective can influence the way they tell the story.

**Cultural Appropriation**– When a member of a more powerful cultural group takes on characteristics of a less empowered group and profits by using their cultural history and characteristics.

**Cultural Hegemony**– The global dominance of colonial powers using language, literature, and religion.

**Cultural Humility**– In psychology, this term indicates the ability to empathize with the other without imposing cultural norms. Film offers the viewer the ability to see through another’s perspective. It encourages viewers to understand other cultures, beliefs, and behaviors, from the perspective of members of that culture.
Documentary- The term developed by documentary filmmaker John Grierson in 1926 for non-fiction films.

Ethnographic Film- This is the term used for films created for the purpose of anthropology rather than for entertainment.

Neo-Realism- A genre of narrative or fictional film that is set in the current time in a specific place. Neo-Realist films use non-professional actors to play characters similar to themselves in realistic settings. But the film has a screenplay and is directed and structured to tell a feature film story. Neo-Realist films are usually dramatic rather than comedic and often address issues of social justice, class, poverty and human rights.

Political Unconscious- A term averred by Marxist literary theorist Frederick Jameson to identify the ineluctable process of seeing and sensing political structures of oppression in literature and in film. It is the process of identifying class and class struggle in storytelling.

Post-Colonialism— Refers both to a historical period in the aftermath of imperialism and to an intellectual and political project to reclaim and rethink the history and agency of people subordinated under various forms of European imperialism.¹

Realism- Film cannot capture reality. All films are framed, edited and reconstructed. Realism is the attempt to reflect reality on film with the acceptance that events will often need to be reenacted or dramatized to be captured on film.
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