

Introduction: Film-Philosophy and a World of Cinemas

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This Special Section arose out of the 2014 *Film-Philosophy* conference, held at the University of Glasgow, which took as its theme: A World of Cinemas. The aim of both the conference theme and this resulting Special Section is to broaden the debate in film-philosophy, both in terms of a world of cinemas and a world of philosophies. This introduction considers the reasons why such an intervention is worthwhile.

Inter-disciplinary Pulls

Within the discipline of Film Studies, since the mid-1990s film-philosophy scholarship has come to take the place once held by film theory in the 1970s and 1980s. The exact meaning of this hyphenated term typically depends on who you speak to about it, but one popular and broad definition would be the consideration of how films philosophise (or ‘do philosophy’). A clear example of which might be Gilles Deleuze’s Bergsonian exploration of how films can be said to demonstrate different understandings of space (albeit through movement) or time. But there are numerous others areas that might be considered. With the discipline of Film Studies’ famous turn to history in the 1980s bringing the historical to the forefront of research in the field, things theoretical – whilst never really going away – may not now always be addressed directly as such. For instance, it would not be uncommon for historically engaged work on a

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national cinema and culture to explore, for instance, gender roles, using many of the analytical tools first developed during the previous era of so-called High or Grand Theory.

In such a context, then, theoretical issues are more likely to be directly explored as such in the arena opened up by the emergence of film-philosophy. Even so, the importance of film-philosophy, in such a historically-led discipline, may not always be readily acknowledged by all. This is a little surprising, as globally there is plenty of evidence that such an approach is of great interest. As the statistics produced by the website *deleuzecinema.com* illustrate, on just this one topic – the intersection of Deleuze’s ideas and cinema – there is sufficient interest to produce 16,000 visits from 10,000 users in over 100 countries worldwide (with 60% of these visits taking place beyond the UK and the USA), within just three years of its existence. More broadly, the website for *Film-Philosophy* (*film-philosophy.com*) has received around 5000 visits per month for at least the preceding five years. With film-philosophy research already expanding far beyond the initially pivotal importance of Deleuze to now encompass any number of other philosophical figures, what makes film-philosophy more than just film theory reloaded is its interdisciplinary scope. Film-philosophy, as the name rather obviously suggests, has the potential for different ways of working. The most obvious division being, on the one hand, the exploring of films as philosophy (film-philosophy), versus, on the other hand, more cognitivist and analytical approaches to film (philosophy of film) (Sinnerbrink 2011, pp. 3–5). More importantly, the interdisciplinary field now has a lengthy historical canon and broader global reach with which to engage. This provides significantly more scope than film theory’s initial focus on mainly nineteenth and twentieth century European thinkers such as Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud (although such figures remain crucial to the development of film-philosophy).

That said, there remains a need to broaden our intellectual horizons. In the UK, where film-philosophy finds one of the, if not the, greatest concentration of scholars globally, the study of philosophy in the academy remains focused on the Anglo-American Analytic and the (so-called) ‘Continental’ European traditions, very much in that order. The world of philosophies that exist and which have existed beyond this Eurocentric realm, are more likely to be studied by scholars working in or engaging with a specific geographical part of the world, or by those engaged in debates surrounding otherness, as opposed to by scholars of philosophy per se. Or at least, certainly this is the case in the West. For instance, the works of Latin American philosophers like Enrique Dussel, Aníbal Quijano or Walter Mignolo (which are part of a tradition influenced by,

amongst other areas, indigenous thought) are likely to be fairly well known both to scholars in numerous disciplines in Latin American, as well as those working globally in Latin America studies, or to those examining, for instance, the global discourses surrounding a topic like race (e.g. Robert Stam and Ella Shohat, *Race in Translation* (2012)). Yet they will be far less well known, if at all, to scholars of philosophy, at least in the West. No doubt other such examples could be given from other parts of the world, including Abdolkarim Soroush, Kitaro Nishida, Achille Mbembe, amongst many others.

Indeed, the debate surrounding the relationship between these two dominant branches of philosophy in the West only further detracts from the realisation that there is much more going on in the wider world that we are not discussing in philosophy or, by turns, film-philosophy. As John Mullarkey summarises early on in *Post-Continental Philosophy* (2006), a work which then attempts to move beyond this divide:

Philosophically speaking, of course, there is no such thing as ‘Continental philosophy’ at all – this is both a sham geo-cultural distinction and a category error. There is not one philosophical theme that is exclusive to the European Continent, nor any outside the Continent that is confined to ‘Anglo-American’ philosophy. The mention of Continental philosophy also brings to mind its other ill-coined associate, ‘Analytic philosophy’; but no methodological barrier exists between the two traditions either. In fact, it is extremely difficult to make any distinction stand up under historical, methodological, or philosophical scrutiny. (p.1)

We might consider the construction of the category of ‘Continental’ philosophy, then, as rather like Edward W. Said’s famous observations on how the Orient is constructed from the perspective of the West; that is, through homogenisation and a form of misrepresentation that works by projecting a reverse image of one’s own (self-chosen, self-defining) positive attributes onto the other. Curiously, in this instance the Anglophone projection of otherness onto ‘Continental’ philosophy renders philosophy very much a Western affair, and everything beyond it, presumably, something of a philosophical wilderness. Thus, as Mullarkey helpfully concludes: ‘the Analytic–Continental distinction is philosophically erroneous but metaphilosophically accurate: it has less to do with what philosophers think about when they philosophise than *where* they philosophise, with *whom* they talk about it, and *what* they say about it to each other’ (2006, p.2). This begs the question, then, of how to decentre this confining binary, how to broaden the horizon of where we philosophise, with whom, and in what way, by engaging with a world of philosophies via a world of cinemas.

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Other scholars make a similar point in ways that can be illuminating for this discussion. In *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem* (1999), Robert B. Pippin considers how European philosophy can be understood as expressive of dissatisfaction with ‘the affirmative normative claims essential to European modernization’ (p. xi). As part of this broader debate, Pippin explores what might be considered to make European philosophy European. For Pippin, put ‘crudely’ (as he has it), a broad distinction can be drawn between, on the one hand a Western European tradition which takes as a philosophical focus a largely negative reaction against modern bourgeois culture, together with its underpinning Enlightenment ideals of science, individual rights, civil society and democracy. This is the tradition often labelled ‘Continental’ philosophy, and Pippin makes a compelling case for what connects many thinkers in this tradition, for instance with regard to the nihilism which emerges due to problems arising from modernity (1999, pp. 78–113). On the other hand there is an Anglo-American tradition which, comparatively, does not consider the topic of modernity to be a philosophical problem (whether the reaction to it is negative or not) (Pippin 1999, p. xix). In *The Idea of Continental Philosophy* (2006), Simon Glendinning picks up on this aspect of Pippin’s argument in his conclusion, to critique Pippin’s position on philosophy and modernity. Glendinning’s critique affirms something of Pippin’s initial, ‘crude’ formulation of this idea, before adding his own alternative conclusion. Glendinning states:

Isn’t there something to the idea of an important division *within* Western culture between those who do and those who do not experience modernity as a problem? I believe there is. However, the distinction is not, I would suggest, one between analytic and so-called Continental philosophers. Rather it is a distinction between those who attempt to come reflectively to terms with our supposedly modern condition and those who accept it without much ado. It is, I want to say, not a division within philosophy but a distinction between a philosophical and non-philosophical relation to modernity. (2006, p. 109)

Yet, why should this reflexivity be solely situated within Western culture, in line with the Eurocentric myth of ‘self-critical reflexivity as a Western monopoly’ (Stam and Shohat 2012, p. 67)? What is true of many Western philosophers with regard to their reflexive concern with modernity (and in Glendinning’s distinction this includes writers in both Analytic and Continental traditions), is equally true, if not more so, of a great many philosophers from other parts of the world. This is in particular so in the numerous areas where European modernity arrived as a colonising

force over many centuries. For example, Latin American philosophy's discussion of the nexus of coloniality/modernity (as found in the works of, precisely, Dussel, Quijano, Mignolo et al), understands the historical development of the Eurocentric world system after 1492 as emerging on the back of widespread genocide and enslavement. There would not have been any modernity without the unequal structure of power it also created, coloniality. This history includes the genocidal extinguishing of indigenous ways of thinking which pre-existed the arrival of Europeans and European ways of thinking, and it extends all the way through time to the Holocaust which took place in Europe during the Twentieth Century's Second World War. Whilst many European philosophers find this latter event somehow inexplicable, Caribbean philosopher Charles W. Mills notes in *The Racial Contract* (1997) that it is part of the same long history of genocidal acts perpetrated by European colonisers against non-white populations, globally, since 1492 (pp. 98–105). With this historical backdrop in mind, it is perhaps not at all surprising that modernity elicits a negative reaction within any philosophical tradition, European or otherwise. After all, its noblest ideas are founded upon a ground that is quite literally blood soaked and ransacked, the glimpsing of which undercuts their very veracity.

As Robert Sinnerbrink points out in response to Glendinning, those philosophers who self-identify as working in a 'Continental' tradition are unlikely to consider themselves unwitting dupes of an Analytic ruse which homogenises them as though part of an Orientalist other. Sinnerbrink observes that whilst Glendinning argues 'that there is no *single* tradition encompassing the 'usual suspects' [... Glendinning] underplays the possibility that 'Continental philosophy' is a portmanteau term – institutional as well as intellectual – covering a plurality of traditions, each with its own practices of philosophical inheritance. Glendinning thus 'chickens out' (to use his phrase) on radical pluralism, preferring to explain away the divide rather than reflect upon its reality' (Sinnerbrink 2008, p. 697). Sinnerbrink's alternative, pluralist perspective argues for the existence of various 'Continental' traditions. It positions philosophy as not one but many. It is as though 'Continental' philosophy, whilst positioned, as minority cultures often are, in relation to a more dominant, hegemonic culture, nevertheless engages in various ways with all the challenges and creative possibilities that such a position entails. By extension, Sinnerbrink's argument points to the pluralistic nature of philosophy more broadly, and the Eurocentrism of debates which rack focus exclusively on defining the Western tradition as though it were the central problem for the field. What Sinnerbrink's position indicates, then, is the need to consider the greater complexity of traditions of which

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European philosophy is just one global province, that of a world of philosophy.

The Analytic/Continental debate signals as much as anything the need to reach out beyond Western philosophers in order to gain perspective on their provincial concerns. Even some of the more challenging developments in Western philosophy in the 21st century, such as speculative realism and object oriented ontology, are primarily focused on revolutionising this very Western tradition that emerges after Immanuel Kant (in line with Glendinning's view regarding contemporary philosophy's engagement with Kant, across the straw man divide of Analytic/Continental traditions), and to which they by turns also belong (2006, p. 102). Broadly speaking, the writings of those grouped together under the term speculative realism – if it can be considered a cohesive movement – unite around the shared challenge to the Kantian position which shapes so much Western thinking (through the development of phenomenology, and on to the present): that the only way for humanity to know the world is through its relationship to it, rather than in and of itself. As Quentin Meillassoux notes in the extraordinarily eye-opening *After Finitude* (2008), after Kant, 'we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other' (2008, p. 5). Speculative realism, engaging with the dangers that humanity faces due to climate change, and a potentially imminent sixth mass extinction event, thus speculates instead as to how we might understand the world in ways other than through this Kantian anthropocentrism.

Briefly delving a little further into speculative realism will assist in furthering this argument about the need to engage with both a world of cinemas and a world of philosophies, by way of productive comparison. To put things rather reductively, speculative realists would presumably argue that the popular philosophical conundrum of, 'If a tree falls in the forest and no one is there to see it, does it make any sound?', is simply an anthropocentric one, and revealing only of the unhelpful separation that Western philosophy maintains between humanity and nature. Meillassoux, for example, would presumably point out that trees pre-existed humanity (what he calls the 'ancestral', which he defines as 'any reality anterior to the emergence of the human species') (2008, p. 10), and indeed, exist when humanity is not around. Accordingly, we might speculate that a speculative realist position on this conundrum might be that – (obviously), yes, the millions of trees that fell in the forest before there were any humans to see them, and indeed, those that do so to this day when we are not looking, all make a sound (and, perhaps, they are also all 'heard' in their falling (or perhaps we should speculate that this

might be better understood as, 'felt' in their falling) by the forest, or at least, the other objects within it). From such a position, this response would not naively miss the point of the conundrum, but point to its very flaw.

Yet, with the coloniality/modernity position of certain Latin American philosophers in mind, in many parts of the world might this conundrum, historically, have been considered a rather redundant one for a related reason? In many places it might have simply been formulated as a statement more along the lines of: 'Someone's cut down all the trees. It must have been the Europeans in their boats. They seem to think the world revolves around them.' Accordingly, could not even such unorthodox movements as speculative realism (unorthodox at least in terms of the Western canon) offer a great deal more to knowledge if they also engaged more broadly with a world of philosophies?¹

Such an argument might start with a text only very recently published at time of writing, that is useful for thinking beyond a Eurocentric philosophical canon. Hamid Dabashi's *Can Non-Europeans Think?* (2015) re-engages with some previously, at times, heated debates between scholars like Dabashi and Mignolo on the one side, and Slavoj Žižek on the other, who identify themselves along a non-European/European divide. Like the speculative realists, Dabashi is highly critical of Kant, but unlike the speculative realists it is not for his anthropocentrism, but for his Eurocentrism, or indeed, his racism. Dabashi observes that Kant, along with many other European philosophers after him, denies 'others the capacity to think critically or creatively by way of enabling, authorizing, and empowering themselves to think for the world' (2015, p. 259). Only European philosophers, Dabashi points out, are believed (by European philosophy) to have this capacity.

Dabashi's difference in terms of starting point leads to a markedly different destination to that of the speculative realists. Dabashi's book emphasises that beyond the European canon there is a large body of work developing which attempts to understand the world, philosophically, in an entirely different way (2015, p.4). In this it follows in the wake of works by other thinkers who have made similar statements. Noticeably, in his Foreword, Mignolo (also noting the racism in Kant) reiterates his previous ideas regarding border thinking. This term refers to the double bind faced

1. Speculative realism has already received constructive critique from within the parameters of the Western canon, in Steven Shaviro's *The Universe of Things: On Speculative Realism* (2014), which offers an alternative way of proceeding through the same philosophical territory by engaging with Alfred North Whitehead's thinking (Shaviro 2014).

by those outwith Western philosophy of having to know it in order to consider an alternative to it (2015, p. xxxiii; a point also made by Dabashi (2015, p. 5)), in a manner which is not required of European philosophers. This is particularly so in what Mignolo refers to as our emerging ‘multipolar global world order’ (p. xlii). Which approach is the most reflexive with regard to modernity should by now be clear.

Dabashi further argues that Western philosophy is not well equipped to understand the newly emerging world of ‘de-Europeanized’ globalized capital (2015, pp. 5–12). The former geopolitical structure, of the global colonial centre and its colonised (Orientalised) periphery – that which similarly defines Eurocentric ideas of where philosophy does and does not exist globally – is no longer true of our world (p. 23). Thus Dabashi notes that although in “its originary modernity this globalized capital was made mythically ‘European’”, now it is non-European philosophies emerging from amongst those ‘disenfranchised by the global operation of capital’ who by virtue of their need to think beyond the European canon are able to philosophise most accurately about the emerging world (p. 12).

Ultimately, Dabashi here calls for European philosophers to open out their focus from their own tradition (that which constructed the imperialist mental cartography of the world as centred around a knowing European subject exclusively able to think about the knowable world beyond its bounds, and those in that other realm, who cannot know themselves – i.e. the West and the Rest), and meet the other philosophers of the world on a level playing field. Dabashi calls for philosophers to stand ‘next to’ each other (2015, p. 28). This position is not a million miles away from that of Dussel’s ‘transmodernity’ (which calls for an encounter or engagement between modernity and its others), as is discussed in Martin-Jones’s contribution to this Special Section, including in terms of how much more it may offer to study of a world of cinemas than an approach like speculative realism (1995, p.76). For Dabashi, this proximity will help philosophers to engage with the contemporary world in a more meaningful manner (2015, p. 23).

It is perhaps not surprising that something very similar of what can be said of the need to broaden philosophical engagements, to encompass a wider world of thought, can also be said of film-philosophy. Whilst the annual *Film-Philosophy* conferences in recent years have slowly begun to see papers on how philosophies from ‘elsewhere’ might assist in our comprehension of a world of cinemas, as yet these remain very much sparkling but nonetheless scattered, singular shooting stars in the firmament. The work going on both ‘elsewhere’ and ‘here’ to broaden our grasp of a world of philosophies in relation to film is only appearing in glimpses, brought by those scholars willing and/or able to take a step

towards the rest. This is not to suggest that the *Film-Philosophy* conferences are a parochial affair, as the range of countries from which delegates hail has been wide. Nevertheless, it now seems imperative that we open outwards much more to seek greater engagement. In this respect, there is an excellent opportunity for film-philosophy to harness and decisively utilise the increasing interest in a world of cinemas that emerges from within the historical turn in Film Studies (the argument can even be made that the turn to history should be seen, in retrospect, as a turn to a world of cinemas) (Martin-Jones 2011), and to embrace what the coming decades will realise of the world of philosophies beyond the Analytic/Continental traditions, and indeed, the obscuring of their provinciality generated by Eurocentric debates surrounding the divide in 'philosophy' that they supposedly illustrate.

The Film Studies 'side' (of the hyphen) of film-philosophy has arguably progressed further than its counterpart, Philosophy, in this respect, precisely through its acknowledgement of the importance of studying a world of cinemas. Along with a very gradual emergence of English translations of works by film scholars from locations such as Japan, China and Argentina amongst others (e.g. Sato 1982, 2008; Dai 2002; Aguilar 2008), indicative of an increasing awareness of 'other' voices writing on their 'own' cinemas, there have also been some studied attempts to engage directly with traditions beyond the Western canon. In the Global North, standout texts such as Aaron Gerow's *Visions of Japanese Modernity* (2010), and Victor Fan's *Cinema Approaching Reality* (2015), for example, engage with critical and theoretical works on film, from Japan and China respectively. Each in their own way enables a greater understanding of how film was, and is, conceived of in these locations. In so doing, these books also enable a broadening and reconsideration of debates in film theory that are ongoing in English language Film Studies in its more established locations (especially in parts of Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand). As Fan argues so compellingly in relation to the Chinese context, there is much to be gained by engaging with the different, often as yet obscured or over-shadowed film theories of the world (in a situation where the dominant ideas which hold sway globally tend to emanate from the West), by enabling a 'cross-cultural discourse' to enrich knowledge on both sides (2015, p.3). This is a process in which Canan Balan engages in this Special Section, for example, by examining the writings of the early twentieth century Kurdish Islamic thinker Said Nursi.

These developments in Film Studies help us understand why Dabashi's invitation for non-European philosophers to engage in dialogue is not necessarily always as unconditionally welcoming as it might sound.

In *Can Non-Europeans Think?* Dabashi argues that Europeans should learn to 'read' without assimilating new knowledge of the rest of the world back into the known parameters of Western thought (2015, p. 6). This assertion against the return of colonizing thinking seems entirely reasonable; asking Europeans to consider the thoughts of those beyond Europe in their own right, and as equals (p. 28). Yet, in practice this means that in his scholarship on cinema Dabashi does not necessarily always welcome certain attempts by Western scholars to engage with Iranian cinema using European philosophical ideas (2007, p. 343). This seemingly less welcoming stance is explained as being, in part, because the 'inorganic nature of cinematic writing on Iranian cinema' means that it has been, as yet, insufficiently theorised or understood (2008, p. 116). For Dabashi, outsiders cannot read (literally) or incorporate knowledge of what Iranians think about Iranian cinema. Moreover, 'the globalized nature of spectatorship' (as Iranian films circulate on the international film festival circuit, for instance) renders Iranian films, he argues, 'fetishized commodities' divorced from their context of production. As a result of this imbalance, Dabashi considers 'the theorists and practitioners of Iranian cinema' not to be involved in a 'hermeneutic circle' discussing the 'hidden and/or operative aesthetics of Iranian cinema' (2008, p. 240).

To be clear, Dabashi is not arguing for cultural identity and language usage as the most appropriate ways to underpin the veracity of interpretation (2008, p. 72). Although he clearly does consider this kind of knowledge base desirable, as do most scholars of a world of cinemas, to be fair. Rather, his argument illustrates the precariousness of meaning that can attach to films from around the world, at the intersection of what we might call, reductively, 'indigenous' and 'international' interpretations. In this respect Dabashi echoes Glauber Rocha's manifesto 'An Esthetic of Hunger' (1965), which famously critiques the consumption of Brazilian films internationally as the temporary dining out on another's misery on film, as though it were a momentary consumable exoticism disconnected from its context of production (Rocha 1965). Thus Dabashi similarly argues for an 'Aesthetics of Emancipation', also decrying the festival circuit's 'paradoxical matching of Third World miseries as spectacle with transnational bourgeoisie as spectator' (very often consumed individually on DVD in private homes across the developed world, rather than to potentially mobilise a public in the location where the films were made) to journalistically manufacture 'a liberal transaesthetics of indifference that corresponds to the logic of the military globalization it represents' (2008, p. 33).

Albeit, Dabashi mitigates this starkly oppositional position towards film festivals in the following pages of his illuminating *Makhmalbaf at*

Large (2008). He acknowledges: the potential that festivals have as sites of global resistance where ideas can creatively cross-pollenate (p. 34); the (admittedly very fine) distinction he considers to exist between the kind of seemingly unknowing global consumption that he critiques as taking place in the West and what he considers a more nuanced grasp of Iranian cinema that is possible in other parts of what might be considered the Global South (p. 119); and indeed, finally, the potential of filmmakers to create art that challenges indifference, regardless of how their films are consumed (p. 200). Yet whether or not one is entirely in agreement with Dabashi on such points, the seeming difference in stance across his works on philosophy and film – whether welcoming dialogue with regard to thinking, or attempting to rebalance discussion by being less welcoming with regard to film criticism – illustrates the particular challenges of thinking at the border. It demonstrates, I would argue, something of the perhaps inevitable corresponding sense of a need also to maintain or protect said borders at times against potentially obscuring or colonising discourses.

Indeed, what goes for research into a world of cinemas seems equally so for a world of philosophies. The consequence of this is that, by turns, it makes the kind of dialogue that is invited by Dabashi by no means an easy or straightforward practice. It requires a considered approach, and the awareness of a likely degree of incomplete understanding (albeit along with the gaining of a new perspective), presumably for all parties. This by turns is likely to be at times welcome, at times less so, again presumably for all parties. Yet this can be attempted at least, as the aforementioned works by Gerow and Fan demonstrate in relation to Japanese and Chinese cinemas. Or, alternatively, and to remain with Iranian cinema a moment longer, Farhang Erfani's *Iranian Cinema and Philosophy* (2012) perhaps provides a useful example of an attempt to, as Erfani states, walk the 'fine line' between film theory and philosophy of film on the one hand, and Iranian cinema on the other (p. 3).

This difference in levels of engagement with the broader world found in Film Studies may be in part because this discipline has had to realise the need to reach out geographically and geopolitically to find the richness of a history which, stemming from only the late nineteenth century, is simply a great deal shorter than that which Philosophy (and many other subjects) can boast. In this respect, recent standout texts like Saër Maty Bâ and Will Higbee's anthology *De-Westernising Film Studies* (2012) are not only part of the growing 'transnational turn', but are also the latest instalments in a lineage of works considering how to understand a world of cinemas. In this instance, they proceed by challenging the 'West' not as a geographical and historically bound region, but as an 'ideologically inflected mode of

being in and seeing, perceiving or representing the world' which informs discourses in Film Studies (Bâ and Higbee 2012, p. 2).

This growing corpus includes work on various different cinemas worldwide, including since the 1980s, in English alone, over twenty scholarly books on Indian cinema, Chinese cinemas (PRC, Hong Kong, Taiwan), and cinemas across Africa, along with at least ten each on cinema in Brazil, Argentina, Iran, South Korea, New Zealand, to name only a few instances. It also includes canonical texts dating back to works on the 'Third Cinema' manifestos of the 1960s (emerging from Brazil, Argentina and Cuba) (Rocha [1965], Solanas and Getino [1969], Espinosa [1969]), and the academic works that followed (e.g. Tesholme H. Gabriel, *Third Cinema in the Third World* (1982)), and more recently, ranges from Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's *Unthinking Eurocentrism* (1994) to Stephanie Dennison and Song Hwee Lim's edited collection *Remapping World Cinema* (2006). These and others have broadly engaged with what it means to explore a world of cinemas.

What the study of a world of cinemas thus emphasises above all else is, it seems to me, the need to balance an understanding and engagement with the context of production (industrial, cultural, historical, critical) together with an attendance to the broader 'world' in which such films are made and circulate. A huge part of this process, regarding context in particular (so widely practised after the turn to history), relates to the emphasis now placed on understanding the philosophical worldview of different cultures when analysing cinemas of the world. This is perhaps most readily evident in the studies of popular Indian cinema which emphasise its non-Aristotelian narrative structure, due to the origins of its aesthetic in Sanskrit texts such as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* (Martin-Jones 2011, p. 207). This knowledge can be balanced with the situation in the 'world' of, in the case of 'Bollywood' (and to some extent this goes for India's film industries more broadly), a cinema which has a regional and global reach and an aesthetic that has been influenced by other cultures and their cinemas. Thus, to understand how film thinks, how film philosophises, we need more fully to engage with not only a world of cinemas that is locally embedded and globally intertwined, but also a similarly complexly-interrelated world of philosophies that inform such cinematic articulations.

A Small Step

The articles contained in this Special Section were either delivered at the 2014 *Film-Philosophy* conference or have been developed from original ideas by the conference organisers. There was a huge range of papers that could have been included, from amongst panels on Australian, Brazilian,

Chilean, Chinese, Indian, Iranian, and Japanese Cinemas, which is not to mention the talks on films from various other parts of the world, and just as importantly, the numerous philosophers and philosophical traditions under discussion. Ultimately these particular papers were chosen as they were from amongst the most well developed ideas at that time, and when collected together within the necessarily limited confines of a Special Section, they could give the most coherent expression of intent: namely, *to indicate the untapped plurality of thought which film-philosophy has the capacity to access, which exists at the intersection of a world of cinemas and philosophies.*

This collection, then, is but a small step towards a much bigger project, a gesture or indication towards the myriad pathways that are yet to be explored by film-philosophy's coming engagement with not only a much broader world of cinemas, but also of philosophies. This bigger project will require several generations of scholars to be realised, and will need to negotiate the geopolitical complexities of not only how (to paraphrase Dabashi) non-European films and philosophies think, but also, who is willing or able to speak about them, how they speak about them, and so on: we return to Mullarkey's '*where ... with whom ... and what*' (2006, p.2). There is far too much ground there for any one Special Section. Still, a small step can be taken.

The collection of articles has been designed to do two things, which intertwine to greater or lesser degrees in the respective contributions, at the nexus of the study of a world of cinemas and philosophies. Firstly, to introduce philosophers of the world who are as yet either entirely or relatively unknown to the study of film. Secondly, to consider new ways of understanding a world of cinemas philosophically, whether using established or (relatively) less well-known philosophical positions. The first aim is more prominent in the first articles, the latter in the later pieces, as though a transformation were gradually evident between these poles in the reading experience, with two pieces on 'non-cinema' providing the pivotal heart of the collection.

The Special Section starts with Laura U. Marks's introduction to film-philosophy of the thought of the Sixteenth/Seventeenth Century Persian philosopher, Sadr al-Dīn Muhammad al-Shīrāzī (Mullā Sadrā). Marks demonstrates how Sadrā's idea of the 'imaginal realm' (as part of a triad of realms, sensible, imaginal and intelligible) offers an alternative to dualistic thought, a process ontology comparable with those of Western thinkers like Baruch Spinoza, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Henri Bergson or Alfred North Whitehead. When engaged with cinema, this idea from Eastern Islamic philosophy suggests new ways of understanding how film can enable us to think about collective politics, and imagine that which

does not yet exist. Canan Balan's ensuing article also explores the works of an Islamic thinker, this time the Nineteenth/Twentieth Century Kurdish writer Said Nursî. Balan speculates on how Nursî's exploration of cinema as a means to access the divine ('God's cinema'), suggests that it was his exposure to the early silent cinema of attractions specifically, during a life lived often in prison or in exile after 1925, which led to his conclusions. As with Marks's contribution on Sadrâ (which considers Sadrâ in relation to Siegfried Kracauer, André Bazin and Gilles Deleuze), Balan's focus on Nursî offers a way of considering cinema that is alternative to existing theories already established in the canon, in this instance Hugo Münsterberg, Walter Benjamin and Deleuze amongst others. Thus, although this is not the first time that the works of a philosopher from Western Asia have been engaged with in contemporary film-philosophy,² what these two articles offer is an opportunity for readers to reconsider how film theory might have looked in, as it were, another imagined world, had the ideas of thinkers like Sadrâ and Nursî been as central to the development of the canon as the existing Western names that are so well known.

Two articles then follow which engage with the work of the contemporary Latin American philosopher Enrique Dussel (who is Argentine, but who has been based in Mexico since the latest Argentine dictatorship of the 1970s and 1980s). Martin-Jones focuses on Dussel's post-Levinasian concept of 'transmodernity' as a way to consider globally encompassing issues, such as, in this instance, the importance of the nonhuman history of the planet, as foregrounded by recent work on ecology in Film Studies. Dussel's work, in this instance, provides an alternative to the emerging focus on speculative realism for exploring certain films that explore nonhuman and ecological concerns in a transnational manner. However, more broadly, the point of the piece is to give at least one example of the usefulness of Dussel for film-philosophy, namely via his historicized ethics and the opportunity this provides for discussion of how a world of cinema engages with world history. The article that follows, by William Brown likewise focuses on Dussel's philosophy of liberation, but here emphasising its 'barbarian' aspect (as a philosophy of the global periphery) which is put into a productive relationship with the ideas of various other thinkers (for example, Antonio Negri and François Laruelle), in order to develop the idea of 'non-cinema'. Brown explores how the almost unquantifiable global wealth of digital

2. For example, in addition to the examples which Laura U. Marks cites in her contribution, see also William Brown (2012).

filmmaking can be considered to contain within it the possibility of a non-capitalist cinema, foregrounding its labour, one that has been immanent to cinema since its inception.

At the centre of the Special Section, Brown's take on 'non-cinema' is joined by another view of the term as formulated by Lúcia Nagib. Nagib returns to Bazin in order to examine how cinema embraces 'impurity', through interbreeding with the other, 'uncinematic' arts (a practice nowadays referred to as intermediality), in order to transform thought, and in so doing, politically transform society. In this endeavour, Nagib engages not only with Bazin, but also Alain Badiou, Theodor W. Adorno, and Jean-François Lyotard. However, noticeably, Nagib also draws upon the work of Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, who writes on how indigenous Tupi-Guaraní peoples of the Amazon (specifically the Arawaté tribe) consider the importance of ritual cannibalism for understanding how they appear to others (in particular, to their enemies). Such a 'thought from the Outside', to quote Deleuze, is used to unlock the challenging ending of the controversial documentary *The Act of Killing* (2012) as a work of non-cinema which ultimately negates its cinematic possibility in order to provide a more integral engagement with reality. These two articles by Brown and Nagib, together provide the pivotal centre of the Special Section. They illustrate how (European and) non-European philosophies can be usefully used to engage with a world of cinemas in ways that take us directly to the core of cinematic thinking. In this respect, they also mark the shift in the Special Section from its emphasis on the usefulness of 'new' (more accurately, as yet under-utilised) philosophers from the world of philosophies for film-philosophy, to an emphasis on the equally useful dimension of a world of cinemas for uncovering the (historicized) *political* dimension that lies at this core of filmic thought in a world of 'de-Europeanized' (as Dabashi has it) global capital. Here we find, to adapt Dabashi a little, not only what the world of philosophies is thinking (which films can help us to unlock), but just as importantly, what the world of cinemas is thinking (which philosophies can help us to unlock).

Thus the collection concludes with two pieces that continue this movement towards the political in relation to a world of cinemas. Patricia Pisters transitions us from non-cinema to post-cinema, exploring how contemporary filmmakers of different kinds work like media archaeological metallurgists in their excavation of audio-visual archives from which they produce works exploring the contingency of history (inventing the past, relooping the past, and so on). Drawing on Deleuze and Félix Guattari's geophilosophy, Pisters examines how the political project once referred to as 'Third Cinema' now continues in new forms

and formats, as modern political cinema looks to reshape collective memory (and thereby construct new collectivities) as the globalized world moves beyond postcoloniality. Finally, Kathleen Scott and Stefanie van de Peer explore how the ideas of sympathy and seeing (as opposed to notions of empathy and the gaze or look) can help to explain how female solidarity is constructed between women in films undergoing extreme conditions of suffering and viewers from (potentially) all around the world. A key theoretical figure in their argument is the Caribbean philosopher Frantz Fanon, who was not only influential in film theory's engagement with political cinema (the idea of 'Third Cinema' in particular), but who also remains central in the current debate between Dabashi/Mignolo and Žižek (et al.) over the distinction between European and non-European philosophy. Here, in the authors' developing of this idea of transnational spectatorial solidarity with character, Fanon is joined by Sandra Lee Bartky (amongst other feminist and postcolonial scholars, such as E. Ann Kaplan, Sarah Cooper, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Lúcia Nagib, Ella Shohat, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak), whose idea of 'feeling-with' (similar to but also distinct from Jean-Luc Nancy's 'being-with') is combined with Fanon's consideration of how sympathy can arise from the violence surrounding colonial and postcolonial struggles.

Together the authors explore films from Algeria, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Ghana, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Lebanon, Norway, the Philippines, the UK and the USA, including co-productions with various other countries, and films incorporating archival footage from other countries still. The Special Section's exploration of a world of cinemas also includes within it clear evidence of the solidifying of the recent 'transnational turn' (which has reanimated Film Studies after a long adherence to the nation as structuring paradigm) in the conscious decision by practically all the scholars involved to provide evidence in diverse films from various parts of the world. This is a practice which Dina Jordanova has called 'watching across borders' (2010 p. 51).

In particular, the political dimension of the collection which comes to the fore in many contributions, speaks to an emerging emphasis on politics in film-philosophy, or perhaps more accurately (considering the long history of discussion of political film in film theory), its re-emergence. This is worth noting because a dominant and exciting area of focus in film-philosophy in recent years has been ethics, as is evident in the previous *Film-Philosophy* Special Section on Emmanuel Levinas, edited by Sarah Cooper in 2007, along with various books by Cooper (2006), Jane Stadler (2008), Catherine Wheatley (2009), Libby Saxton and Lisa Downing (2010), Jin-hee Choi and Mattias Frei (2014), and

Robert Sinnerbrink (2015) amongst others. What is most evident in the pieces by Martin-Jones, Brown (in their use of Dussel's historicized, post-Levinasian ethics) and Scott and van de Peer (who position their work on solidarity in distinction from a Levinasian approach to the Other), is that the study of ethics in film-philosophy continues to develop, incorporating now a foregrounded focus on its political dimension. The selected articles demonstrate that this refocusing of the debate has been prompted in large part by the engagement of a world of cinemas with the conditions of alterity and inequality fostered by neoliberal globalization. As such, the political side to ethics returns us once more to Dabashi and Mignolo (et al.) and the question of how a world of philosophies, in this instance engaging with a world of cinemas, can better enable our understanding of the world we inhabit.

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