

# ANTHROPOLOGY, FILM INDUSTRIES, MODULARITY

RAMYAR D. ROSSOUKH AND  
STEVEN C. CATON, EDITORS

# ANTHROPOLOGY, FILM INDUSTRIES, MODULARITY

BUY

Duke University Press Durham and London 2021

**DUKE**

**UNIVERSITY  
PRESS**

# ANTHROPOLOGY, FILM INDUSTRIES, MODULARITY

RAMYAR D. ROSSOUKH AND  
STEVEN C. CATON, EDITORS

**DUKE**

UNIVERSITY  
PRESS

© 2021 DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS All rights reserved  
Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ∞  
Typeset in Garamond Premier Pro and  
Din by Westchester Publishing Services

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
Names: Rossoukh, Ramyar D. [date] editor. | Caton, Steven Charles,  
[date] editor.  
Title: Anthropology, film industries, modularity / Ramyar D. Rossoukh  
and Steven C. Caton, editors.  
Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2021. | Includes  
bibliographical references and index.  
Identifiers: LCCN 2021005910 (print)  
LCCN 2021005911 (ebook)  
ISBN 9781478013969 (hardcover)  
ISBN 9781478014904 (paperback)  
ISBN 9781478022190 (ebook)  
Subjects: LCSH: Motion picture industry—Cross-cultural studies. |  
Motion picture industry—Social aspects. | BISAC: SOCIAL SCIENCE /  
Anthropology / Cultural & Social | PERFORMING ARTS / Film /  
History & Criticism  
Classification: LCC PN1995 .A584 2021 (print) | LCC PN1995 (ebook) |  
DDC 791.43—dc23  
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021005910>  
LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021005911>

DUKE

UNIVERSITY  
PRESS

## Contents

Acknowledgments · vii

### INTRODUCTION · I

RAMYAR D. ROSSOUKH AND STEVEN C. CATON

#### 1. "ENGLISH IS SO PRECISE, AND HINDI CAN BE SO HEAVY!"

*Language Ideologies and Audience Imaginaries  
in a Dubbing Studio in Mumbai* · 41

TEJASWINI GANTI

#### 2. THE DIGITAL DIVINE

*Postproduction of Majid Majidi's The Willow Tree* · 63

RAMYAR D. ROSSOUKH

#### 3. JOURNALISTS AS CULTURAL VECTORS

*Film as the Building Blocks of News Narrative in India* · 89

AMRITA IBRAHIM

#### 4. "THIS IS NOT A FILM"

*Industrial Expectations and Film Criticism as  
Censorship at the Bangladesh Film Censor Board* · 109

LOTTE HOEK

#### 5. "THIS MOST RELUCTANT OF ROMANTIC CITIES"

*Dis-location Film Shooting in the Old City of Sana'a* · 129

STEVEN C. CATON

#### 6. STEALING SHOTS

*The Ethics and Edgework of Industrial Filmmaking* · 163

SYLVIA J. MARTIN

DUKE

UNIVERSITY  
PRESS

7. MAKING VIRTUAL REALITY FILM

*An Untimely View of Film Futures from  
(South) Africa* · 181

JESSICA DICKSON

8. THE MOROCCAN FILM INDUSTRY À CONTRE-JOUR

*The Unpredictable Odyssey of a Small  
National Cinema* · 213

KEVIN DWYER

References · 243

Contributors · 267

Index · 269

DUKE

vi · Contents

UNIVERSITY  
PRESS

## Acknowledgments

The direct source for the ideas in this book was the panel “Film Industries” organized by Ramyar D. Rossoukh for the 2013 Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, for which Michael M. J. Fischer and Steven C. Caton were discussants. We would like to thank Michael M. J. Fischer and the eight panelists, Sherry Ortner, William Mazzarella, Kevin Dwyer, Mary Steedly, Tejaswini Ganti, Sylvia Martin, Young-a Park, and Marieke J. Wilson, for their stimulating papers and insightful comments. In 2017, Steven C. Caton gave the lecture “Ethnography of Film Industries” at Cleveland State University and at Carleton College (as the guest of its Middle East Studies Program), and he would like to thank Professor Gregory M. Sadlek (dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at CSU) and Professor Noah Salomon (director of the Middle East Studies Program at Carleton College) for the opportunity to address students and colleagues at their respective institutions. The value of their feedback was inestimable. Even earlier than the 2013 panel, courses on anthropology, cultural studies, and film, both at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and Harvard University, helped prepare the groundwork for thinking about the film industry as a subject for study in anthropology. The contributions of students in these courses to the formulation of ideas in this book was critical, and we want to thank them for their generous feedback and intellectual stimulation throughout the years. The authors would also like to express their profound gratitude to the anonymous press readers of earlier drafts of this book for their helpful suggestions, all of which were taken seriously and incorporated in multiple revisions, and that we are confident improved the final product immensely. And, of course, thanks to Ken Wissoker for having seen the potential of this book in the first place and having encouraged us to pursue its publication with Duke University Press, and always pushing us to make it better. Steven C. Caton would like to thank his husband, Donald M. Scott, for having been such a stalwart supporter of our project. And Ramyar D. Rossoukh would like to thank Asad Ahmed for the opportunity to participate in the 2015 Brown-Harvard Pakistani Film Festival, “Love, War, and Other Longings,” and Naghmeh Sohrabi, Namita Dharia, and Jared McCormick for listening to his rants.



## Introduction

RAMYAR D. ROSSOUKH AND STEVEN C. CATON

As world economies in the last half century have moved away from manufacturing to communication and information technologies, film industries have concomitantly become more important and more prevalent than at any time in cinema history. “Globally, more than 3,000 feature films reached movie theaters in 2006, bringing in \$23.8 billion in box-office revenues. And total global annual revenues across all distribution channels such as video and DVD, cable, television, and mobile sources were forecasted to be at \$450 billion by the end of 2007, according to the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA). The largest distributors of feature films in 2006 were India with 800, the U.S. with 599, and China with 255” (Young, Gong, and Van der Stede 2008, 28). These figures reflect the prerecession (2006–2007) economy, but not even the recession could dint the upward spiral in film production that we have seen since. Nigeria has one of the most dynamic and profitable film industries in the world (known as Nollywood) and produces more films per week than Hollywood and is second only to Bollywood. According to *Fortune* magazine, “in 2014, the Nigerian government released data for the first time showing Nollywood is a \$3.3 billion sector, with 1844 movies produced in 2013 alone” (Bright 2015). Other thriving film industries are to be found in Turkey, Iran, Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan, and in several Central and Latin American countries (Mexico, Brazil, Cuba, and Argentina). In China, super magnate Wang Jianlin built Qingdao Oriental Movie Metropolis, a vast entertainment center whose movie-production facilities are intended to rival Hollywood’s (Shih and McGee 2015). However, not all national film industries are successful, and some that may at one time have been dominant have now greatly diminished (arguably this is the case, for example, for the Egyptian film industry). And with the

DUKE

UNIVERSITY  
PRESS

shift from analog to digital media, film industries are facing a major challenge, the exact nature and impact of which has yet to be determined but which is bound to be profound. It is anybody's guess which film industries will survive, let alone prosper. Making films may be big business, but it's also risky business. We address these changes and challenges in this introduction.

Not just making money, though, is at stake in film industries; they are also about power and influence. As political agents from nation-states to social movements realize the potential of films for drawing large publics into their political projects, they too have shown increasing interest in creating, supporting, and controlling or otherwise tapping into film industries. "Motion pictures aren't only a significant source of revenue for many countries—they're also instrumental in shaping worldwide impressions of a country's intellectual, historical, and cultural environment" (Young, Gong, and Van der Stede 2008, 28). One need only think of South Korean, Iranian, or Chinese cinema to support this claim. Their respective governments are willing to financially underwrite or in other ways support national film industries because of their symbolic capital, especially when their films win international film festival awards. Social movements are also known to use films for their political purposes. Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) shaped public awareness about climate change and reenergized the environmentalist movement. Feature films can also have that kind of influence. One need only consider the movie *Selma* (2014) or, in an earlier civil rights era, the 1970s television miniseries *Roots*, which was remade in 2016 for television audiences: both are concerned with injustices to African Americans that have spurred today's Black Lives Matter movement. The documentary *Who Killed Vincent Chin?* (1987) also mobilized the Asian American community into forming its own social movement. In another part of the world, less high-profile perhaps yet nonetheless very potent, is the example of Christian evangelicals in West Africa (Meyer 2015) who produce feature films that communicate Christian messages to their born-again audiences. Film industries are being used the world over for political projects of all kinds.

We distinguish analytically between the notion of cinema and film industry. We define cinema as the production of films associated with a certain political (usually national) agenda or a certain aesthetic or cultural movement. Consider in that light Italian Neorealism or the French New Wave or even American independent cinema with its attempt to examine unconventional topics and be culturally or politically edgy: they are all committed to making films in a certain way or to communicating a certain vision of the world. In practical terms, however, they are still dependent on a film industry or industries for their making. The burden of this introduction is to explain what we mean by

film industries, but for the moment let it suffice that they get financing for their films and recoup investments through ticket sales (and/or government subsidies); they make their films in a standardized way, even though the content may be anything but standard or conventional, by hiring personnel skilled in those crafts; and that process involves what we call modules (script writing, on-location shooting, cinematography, etc.) that may be outsourced to sites equipped to carry them out anywhere in the world. Empirically speaking, the study of any one film will in all likelihood require both analytical frameworks. The term “cinema” has been used in film studies literature to cover both senses that we wish to distinguish analytically. In the above discussion of various independently produced films, for example, a film like *An Inconvenient Truth* may be analyzed in relation to a transnational environmental movement cinema, but that does not, in and of itself, help us understand how it was made within the parameters of film industries, which is another question altogether. One might ask, if one wants to understand the influence of Gore’s film, is there any need to understand the process through which his film was made, watched, and commented upon? We claim that there is. Gore’s film could not have been made, let alone seen by millions of viewers, had there not been an industry that produced, marketed, exhibited, and reviewed it, not to speak of movie theaters in which it was shown and a global cable television network that broadcast it.

With this distinction in mind, in the following pages we look at film industries in a way that privileges the notion of modularity. Without getting into details here, we argue that modularity has emerged as the key concept for understanding film industries today, after the collapse of the studio system and the outsourcing of filmmaking tasks around the world. But before we explain in more detail what we mean by “film industries,” we provide a brief history of work done in anthropology on film industries that has either been ignored in film studies or is not known. It is important for anthropologists and film studies scholars to be aware of this history. We wish to create a voice for anthropology and its research on film industries in order for it to be better heard by other disciplines that also work on this subject, disciplines with which we wish to be in dialogue about our mutual interests. There are several such disciplines, and again we cannot be exhaustive in our coverage of them, so we have selected two that we sense are closest to the ethnographic work of anthropologists on film industries: production studies and world cinema.<sup>1</sup> At the end of the introduction, after some thoughts on the profound impact of digital media on contemporary film industries that raise the questions of what remains of our objects of study, film and film industries, we summarize the chapters in the

volume and their contributions to an anthropological understanding of film industries, and in particular of the ethnography of modularity.

### A Brief History of the Anthropology of Film, Television, and Media

Our volume carries the key word *Anthropology* in its title for a reason. Anthropology has studied film industries for over seventy years, and in the last twenty years the number of anthropological works devoted to research on film industries has grown exponentially, thus warranting the claim that it has become a significant subdisciplinary field within the anthropological study of mass media (Spitulnik 1993; Dickey 1997; Mahon 2000; Askew and Wilk 2002; Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod, and Larkin 2002; Mazzarella 2004; Ruby 2005). And yet, what is striking is how few scholars outside of anthropology seem to be aware of the depth and breadth of this field of film industries. Therefore, the introduction reviews the depth and scope of this field, without attempting to be exhaustive (a thorough overview would require a chapter in itself). The aim is to draw attention to the fertility of this field and to argue that it has something distinctive and important to offer the study of film with its emphasis on film industries.

Anthropologist Hortense Powdermaker was very much ahead of her time in studying film industries, not only in her book *Hollywood, the Dream Factory* (1950), for which she did fieldwork in Hollywood on the personnel of the producer and the writer in film production, but also in *Copper Town: Changing Africa* (1962), which looks at the effects of what we call cinema on a segment of African society; in this instance, certain kinds of films that the colonial administration showed to African audiences. At the same time, however, she is concerned with the material or infrastructural side of this “mobile cinema” and how it exhibited its films, an aspect we call film industries. She reflected on how she did her pioneering fieldwork in her memoir, *Stranger and Friend: The Way of an Anthropologist* (Powdermaker 1966), which to this day remains a methodological guidebook for anthropologists of film. In her time, however, the study of cinema, let alone of film industries, was considered outré, and Powdermaker remained an exception, even an outlier within anthropology. For one reason or another, film was not considered a scientific object of study, if indeed an object of study at all.

It was not until the 1980s—thirty years after Powdermaker’s groundbreaking work—that anthropologists began to take up the study of film in a serious way, informed by many theoretical studies of film that had developed in the intervening years.<sup>2</sup> The anthropological approaches tended to reflect the prevalent

focus at the time of film theory on the filmic text that offers a window on a cultural world or as a powerful form of representation that can construct that world (a wonderful example being Elizabeth Traube's [1991] *Dreaming Identities*; see also Dickey [1993] and Armbrust [1996]).

A different type of study from this era is Steven Caton's (1999) *Lawrence of Arabia: A Film's Anthropology*. While Traube looks at a whole set of films made in roughly the same period and asks how they construct identities such as class, race, and gender, Caton focuses on a single film and the process of its transnational production and exhibition; in other words, he asks how the film was exemplary of a film industry at a particular moment in its history. The process entailed what we call modules in film production. These were location scouting (in Jordan); script writing (there were two writers for this film in the end) that looked critically at the story of colonialism in the Middle East (through the adventures of its colonial agent); on-location shooting in "exotic locales" (which included Jordan, Morocco, and southern Spain), in order to draw audiences away from studio television programming; and cinematography that involved special-effects lenses to capture mirages on camera, not to speak of heavy, bulky equipment needed for large-format film stock and lighting equipment to lighten shadows, because high-contrast desert sunlight made shadows appear black, if not opaque. Sound was another important module in this production. Special sound recording equipment captured nuances of sound that were heard in wraparound theater speakers, which gave an immersive aural experience to match the visual one. Personnel were no less important to the film's commodity value. There were highly trained international crews and actors that made the film appear international and a famous director who was making the shift from national to international cinema and from a small-screen to the large-screen Super Panavision format; and finally, transnational marketing and exhibition were crucial modules in the film's ultimate financial success (i.e., investment could not be recouped on domestic ticket sales alone).

The point of an anthropological analysis is to show that what we call the film is in myriad and sometimes profound ways the product of this complex industrial process and attendant technologies, which are missed if we focus only on the filmic text and its reception by different publics. Take, for example, the filming of the desert in which T. E. Lawrence campaigned: in order for it to be seen at all on the wide screen, each frame had to be artfully filled with visual details, not only so the viewer's eye would be pulled laterally across the wide screen but so that depth of field could be created to provide visual perspective. The technology of wide-screen filming required special lenses and rather large, bulky equipment, which had to be made mobile through tracks on sand dunes

so that the camera could move fluidly with the actors in the *mise-en-scène*. Such filmmaking translated into a more dynamic and sensuous or embodied image on the screen and turned it into a more competitive commodity with audiences used to watching television screens. What Caton could not do was carry out fieldwork on this industrial process of filming, which he had to reconstruct by working in the archives on the film and by research on the nature of the film industry in its day; yet what was provided was an anthropological framework nonetheless for studying the industrial side of film production.

While anthropologists like Faye Ginsburg (1991) did pioneering work on indigenous peoples' media practices such as video filming that were used for cultural programming or in identity politics movements, it would be difficult—and probably inappropriate—to place such practices within the industrial framework developed in this volume. The process of filmmaking was less about standardization and production values, let alone commodification, than about utilizing small, easy-to-operate, and mobile media for largely political-cultural aims. Fieldwork was based not so much on the making of such films, as in Powdermaker's earlier pioneering study, as on film reception by publics and critics, and explaining those in terms of specific cultural and historical contexts or in terms of class, gender, race, and other cultural identities constituting film-viewing publics.

At roughly the same time that Ginsburg was doing her work on indigenous media, the anthropological investigation of media expanded to television (Kottak 1990; Naficy 1993; Rofel 1994; Dornfeld 1998; Mankekar 1999; Abu-Lughod 2005) and to different national television programming and its publics, especially melodramas, and of late attention has also turned to television news as well (see chapter 3, this volume, for example). The question of industry has been kept in the background of most of these anthropological inquiries, if not occluded entirely, with emphasis instead on the politics of reception in the public sphere. Yet with television, the question of industry is inescapable, unlike the smaller-scale, artisanal mode of production that has marked indigenous media, and it behooves us to bring this framework into sharper focus. For example, writers, directors, and actors move across film and television industries, working in both media, and many movies are made for television or, if they are not made for television, are broadcast on television, broadening their reception.

In our view, one work on the television industry needs to be singled out because it has been ignored or underappreciated, and that is Barry Dornfeld's extraordinary ethnography published in 1998, several years ahead of the curve in the scholarship on television. It is a major ethnography of a production unit



within public television that created the seven-hour television series *Childhood*, which aired in the United States and England in 1991–1992. He was hired as a researcher for the series and throughout the production process had access to the television program’s producers, writers, and directors. Through his extensive prior experience as an independent filmmaker, he also had an insider’s perspective on the television and film industries. Dornfeld situated his contribution within the then-burgeoning field of anthropology of media studies. Yet there are clear overlaps between Dornfeld’s seminal study and what would later become production studies, launched by John T. Caldwell’s (2008) celebrated *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television*, which we talk about in detail below: for example, the focus on the production process (in dynamic interaction with reception), analysis of this process in terms of film industrial constraints—especially the bottom line—as well as their creative possibilities, and going beyond the technical issues of production to include its social aspects, especially the way the creators are constantly trying to imagine how audiences might respond to their message. Finally, Dornfeld looks at the cultural production of public television as an agent within American public culture at large, an especially urgent question given the large audiences its flagship series usually attracts, and one that is of particular interest to anthropologists. The result was a pioneering work, and yet Dornfeld’s study is hardly ever cited in the production studies literature, let alone discussed.

Despite Dornfeld’s pioneering work, attention to film industries was not entirely absent in the late 1990s and early 2000s, as evidenced, for example, in the work of anthropologist Brian Larkin (2008; see also Acland [2003] on mid-1980s commercial movie business). He shifted the problem of understanding film industries away from commodification to one of materiality and specifically of urban infrastructure (which becomes central in the work of Jacobson [2015]); nonetheless, his is still an ethnography of the Nigerian film industry under colonial rule for the most part, or how films were made and exhibited within that system and as impacted by certain infrastructural materialities.

By the early 2000s, the anthropological analysis of film industries took off, in terms of the numbers of such works as well as their empirical richness and theoretical sophistication. Kevin Dwyer’s (2004a) *Beyond Casablanca: M. A. Tazi and the Adventure of Moroccan Cinema* is in many ways seminal in this regard. To be sure, he uses the term “Moroccan cinema” rather than Moroccan film industry to describe the object of his study, the oeuvre (rather than a single film) of Moroccan film director M. A. Tazi, whom Dwyer knew and proceeded to

have a long-term conversation with (building on his theoretical and procedural notion of dialogue; see Dwyer 1982); yet we would claim that its concerns are about film industries nonetheless. Some of the main questions he poses of Tazi and his oeuvre are: What are the conditions—economic, social, political—under which he, as a filmmaker, had to work, within both Moroccan and global film industries? And given such conditions, how can a filmmaker like Tazi be creative according to his own artistic lights?

At this historical moment in the field, one might have expected a return to Hollywood, Powdermaker's earlier terrain, but it was instead non-Western hegemonic film industries that came to the forefront of ethnography, most notably Bollywood in trail-blazing works by Rachel Dwyer and Jerry Pinto (2011) and Tejaswini Ganti (2012a). Fieldwork since then has been done on other regional powerhouses such as the Tamil industry known as Kollywood (Pandian 2015), the Nigerian film industry or Nollywood (Jedlowski and Santanera 2015; Miller 2016), the Bangladeshi film industry (Hoek 2014), the Hong Kong film industry (Martin 2017), the Ghanaian video film industry (Meyer 2015), and many others. Independent cinema, under the shadow of Hollywood's hegemonic production forces, also became the object of ethnographic inquiry at this time, most notably in Sherry Ortner's (2013) investigation of U.S. independent filmmakers and how they view their themes and filmmaking practices as an alternative to Hollywood. Young-a Park's (2015) study of a collective of independent South Korean filmmakers and their efforts to change society through their filmmaking is a non-U.S.-based example of independent cinema, and another instance of how anthropology's cross-cultural and comparative approach contributes to a broader understanding of independent film outside the U.S. and Europe.

We believe this is a good moment for an edited volume such as ours on the anthropology of film industries that captures the range and depth of this ongoing fieldwork, and we hope it will attract readers from a large number of disciplines concerned with visual and media studies, economics, culture, and politics. Anthropology raises to the fore the interesting question of whether the histories of cinema and film industries around the world are simply the same history (because of an industry that got its start in Hollywood and was exported globally) or whether we have to speak of histories (because of distinct national industries that were entangled in different economies as well as distinct political and cultural projects), or both (which is more likely the case). Dwyer's chapter in this volume is an attempt to write a history of the current moment in Moroccan film industry and cinema that parallels research done on the history of film industries and of Hollywood in particular (Gubak 1969;



Schatz 1981; Balio 1985, 1993; Neale and Smith 1998; Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson 2003; Gomery 2005; Scott 2005), but shows how the Moroccan film industry's particular history (especially due to colonialism and nationalism) and specific cultural circumstances make it distinct. In this regard, it is closer to the work of film historian Priya Jaikumar (2006), who shows how the Indian film industry changed in the period 1930–1940, due not to the stimulus of cinema, whether national or global (like Hollywood), so much as the lure of colonial film markets. This comparative perspective is also what an anthropology of film industries can provide that is often lacking in other approaches mentioned above that focus on a single industry such as Hollywood or Bollywood (for an exception, see Curtin 2007; Govil 2015a; Jin 2020).

To repeat, anthropology brings to the study of film industries a comparative perspective that allows one to see their differences or uniqueness as well as their commonalities by being part of global film industries. Anthropology also shows how film practices are grounded in other cultural practices that are not necessarily particular to film industries but shape them nonetheless; and vice versa, how film industries influence the sociocultural world they depict and at the same time operate within. All the chapters in this volume talk about one aspect or another of this grounding of film practice in local realities.

## Our Dialogue with Other Film Studies Approaches

### *Production Studies*

As the anthropology of film burgeoned in the 1990s, another somewhat related approach, which had the virtue of doing fieldwork on film industries, came to fruition under the name of production studies, though its origins are in film and media studies programs rather than anthropology departments. In the 1990s, largely as the result of John T. Caldwell and his students at UCLA, production studies came into being that looked critically but also ethnographically at film (as well as other) industries. And yet, though it crisscrossed many of the theoretical interests and methodological practices of anthropology, it is surprising how muted, awkward, and even strained the conversation between the two has been to date. Production studies has tended to see its relationship to anthropology largely in terms of method (and to some extent also theory, especially that of Clifford Geertz), but it does not seem to acknowledge that anthropology too has been constructing film industries as an object of study for its own disciplinary sake for quite some time (reference to Powdermaker being the extent of its obligatory nod to that history).

Broadly put, production studies questions the assumption made by people in film industries that their practices are purely technical and aesthetic, or supposedly value neutral, by demonstrating that they are cultural or culturally constructed. Consider Caldwell's (2008) *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television*, a major book on film and television, whose fieldwork took ten years to complete (1995–2005), which is a foundational text in production studies. It draws from the ideas of Clifford Geertz (1973) on culture as a text to argue that film industries (a singular and totalizing view is explicitly disavowed) produce a plethora of often conflicting views about the making of a movie that can be traced in promotional literature, documentary films about the making of a movie, and appearances on television by the film's director and actors. The deeper point is that these commentaries are not only about a specific film but film industries at large, the roles of filmmakers in them, and the way they want others, including the general public, to view themselves and their artistic projects. He calls these "critical industrial practices" and suggests that they construct "a kind of indigenous cultural theory that operates outside of academia" (Caldwell 2008, 5).

One of the many impressive qualities of this book is the rich array of ethnographic practices Caldwell brings to bear on his study of film and television industries, including interviewing hundreds of industry personnel, attending countless industry meetings, and going to many film festivals, not to speak of extensive archival research to get a sense of the history of the practices he is studying. Another of the book's achievements is its "studying up" (Nader 1974), or the ability of the investigator to contact people at the highest industry levels, access to whom is usually jealously guarded.<sup>3</sup> Another milestone in production studies is Vicki Mayer's (2011) imaginative *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy*, which concentrates on those laborers in media industries that are not the producers, writers, directors, and actors who were the subjects of research by scholars such as Rosten (1941), Powdermaker, Gitlin (1994), and Caldwell, but rather the mid-rung and even low-level workers whose contributions to film and television production frequently remain invisible and certainly unheralded. Such below-the-line workers range from offshore laborers who assemble the television sets on which programs are watched back in the U.S. to reality-show videographers in the soft-core porn industry, and several other labor sectors in between. Unlike above-the-line workers like directors, producers, script writers, and actors, these film industry workers do not have the power to deny or restrict access to the investigator, and in fact often have powerful reasons and incentives to talk to him or her about their position in the industry and how they are

exploited by it. This shift to below-the-line was not only occasioned by the difficulties of studying industry higher-ups, however, but also by economic restructuring of both film and television industries from the 1990s onward. This was a time when production became more decentralized and transnational by being outsourced to offshore production facilities such as color labs, sound studios, and editing houses. What Mayer adds is an important political-economic analysis of media industrial labor that was either missing or underanalyzed in previous production studies research (for a similar critique of production studies, see Curtin and Sanson 2016, 9). In her ethnography we see how workers are often underpaid, have little job security, and usually do not have guilds or trade unions to protect them from abusive labor conditions.

Despite its affinity with anthropological field methods, production studies has not engaged very deeply with the anthropology of film and media. Caldwell (2008, 11) inexplicably states, “I do not consider this book [*Production Culture*] necessarily anthropological (in part because of the cross-sector, cross-industry scope of my project).” Why an anthropological approach might preclude an examination of such scope is not altogether clear. Instead, he offers, “I do hope that by attempting to describe new developments with more precise terminology this book may at least have some *pre*-anthropological and *pre*-social science value” (11, emphasis added). Such an attitude may betoken either excessive modesty, or an unexamined discomfort with being closely associated with anthropology and the social sciences more generally, or an attempt to carve out a distinctive and separate field, or perhaps all of the above.

To anthropologists like ourselves, however, it seems apparent that Caldwell’s ethnographic gaze and theoretical framing are significantly connected to our own, whether production studies acknowledges this or not.

Since Caldwell’s and Mayer’s contributions to production studies, two edited volumes have been published (Mayer, Banks, and Caldwell 2009; Banks, Conor, and Mayer 2016), perhaps in an attempt to consolidate diverse research under one rubric (which, of course, our volume tries to do as well). Their essays attempt to extend the field’s theoretical insights, media industry coverage (besides film and television, also included are radio, comic strips, sports, and popular music), and to some extent production studies’ interdisciplinary reach (however, the work is still squarely situated within film and media studies). And though the transnational dimension has been expanded, it is significant that there are only two—albeit excellent—ethnographic essays on non-U.S. and non-European film industries (Jedlowski 2016; Lo 2016). As one of those ethnographers admits, “With a few exceptions, the emerging field of production studies has dealt mainly with the analysis of Western film

industries, thus leaving out [*sic*] of its radar the wide range of experiences that has developed over the past few years around the African continent” (Jedlowski 2016, 176).

What is also telling about the above citation is its restriction of film industries to Africa when, of course, anthropological studies of film have now ranged across many regions in the world, including but not limited to the African continent. The need is to examine these industries in comparative perspective, as our anthropology of film industries calls for us to do. The comparison is not only a question of how Hollywood has dominated other national cinemas, or outsourced its production to media facilities abroad, as important as these trends continue to be; it is also a matter of understanding how states and private capital abroad are building their own film industries, whether successfully or not, which tap into local audiences as big as or even bigger than Hollywood’s, and they do this within local contexts of labor and commodity markets, politics, and social organization, not to speak of distinctive local traditions of visual representation that are never quite the same across these burgeoning film industries. Furthermore, while film industries are emerging around the globe and to some degree share certain technological and aesthetic practices in common, they are nonetheless grounded in their own historical and cultural specificities that end up shaping their practices and products. This comparative perspective is what anthropologists have been investigating for some time now and offers a powerful corrective to the Euro-American focus in production studies.<sup>4</sup>

### *World Cinema*

Insofar as our collection of essays looks at the question of how film industries have gone global in their production and reception (for example, filming in multiple international locations, using internationally known stars, doing their image editing in a studio located in one country and their sound editing in another, aiming for crossover audiences in different parts of the world, and so forth), it intersects with the concerns of world cinema.

World cinema is concerned precisely with the question that has come late to the former fields but has been at the forefront of the anthropology of film industries since its inception; that is, whether local cinemas and film industries can arise outside of hegemonic Western forms such as Hollywood, and whether new and different kinds of theory about film might emerge as a result of analyzing them. World cinema’s “poly-centric approach” focuses on national, transnational, diasporic, and realist cinema projects through in-depth examination of specific cases that represent each project or a combination of

them (Nagib, Perriam, and Dudrah 2012).<sup>5</sup> The point of having such a focus is the claim that new theorizations of cinema might emerge that go beyond the psychoanalytic frameworks that dominated film studies beginning in the 1970s (e.g., Mulvey 1975). World cinema sees itself as strongly connected to transnational cinema (which has been around since at least the 1980s), though claiming to have a more politically radical bent, including questioning ideas about filmmaking imposed by a national cinema or a hegemonic film industry that marginalizes certain agents in the filmmaking process.

Finally, and here the intersection with our volume's approach to the study of film industries may be most profound, world cinema is interested in how filmmaking, though powerfully transnational in all the ways adumbrated above, nevertheless has to come to terms with local social realities, be they economic, political, or cultural, that affect the artistic/theoretical/activist projects they are committed to.

In that regard, the work of Ashish Rajadhyaksha (2009, 2012) might be the most illuminating. He posits the question of what a theory of cinema might look like that can accommodate "Indian cinema" (i.e., a national project). In many ways, his answer to that question entails an analysis of film industries as developed in this volume, including capital that goes into financing Indian cinema, but it also highlights that industry's relationship to the Indian state. Indeed, his argument is that the Indian state is particularly important for understanding Indian cinema as a national project, and not for the reason that one might assume, by supporting cinema in its formative stages, but rather the opposite, by keeping its distance from it. The Indian state deemed Indian cinema illegitimate, largely because of its decentralized filmmaking processes that seemed to elude quality control and other concerns. But that relationship to the state changed in the 1980s as the Indian film industry became transformed, and it now receives both state ideological support and substantial corporate investment. How has that changed relationship then also changed Indian cinema?

World cinema has several important intersections with the anthropology of film industries, but it might be fair to claim that the latter has a clearer and stronger commitment to fieldwork. The idea that new theory can emerge in the study of non-Western cinema parallels the anthropological notion of theory being grounded in place-specific fieldwork. That is to say, anthropological theory is not simply about analytic categories derived from abstract postulates and their logical or systemic interconnections that are then applied to local realities in order to make sense of them; it is also about the creation of new analytic categories when more abstract theory fails or lacks the ability to make sense

of those concrete realities. Those ideas or categories emerge in the course of doing fieldwork in new places, and we speak of them as being grounded in that sense. If those analytic categories then have legs and can be applied to fieldwork in other places, they become generalizable; yet the cycle will start over again, and newly grounded theory will yet again emerge in the process of applying such categories. It is one of the strengths of all the chapters in this volume that they put forward new ideas or new perspectives that emerged from fieldwork conducted on film industries in quite different places in the world.

### **What Is the Anthropology of Film Industries?**

If earlier we delineated a brief history of anthropological work on film, that is not the same as attempting to delineate a field that we call the anthropology of film industries. We turn to this task next.

We acknowledge our indebtedness to a large literature in film studies on the economics of film industries that has dealt with sources of financing, marketing and distribution, labor, organization of work in terms of studio systems, and so on (among others, Guback 1969; Allen and Gomery 1985; Balio 1985, 1993; Wasko 2003; Mayer 2011; Curtin and Sanson 2016). In this volume, what we talk about with regard to financing and markets is directly related to their concerns. And Kevin Dwyer's chapter on the Moroccan film industry also intersects with some of their concerns and methods (particularly statistical).

However, our approach to film industries draws on a different genealogy of political economy than the scholarship above. We are not as much concerned with describing the economics of specific film industries as with exploring theoretically the categories needed to analyze such industries. For us, those categories go back to the Frankfurt School, particularly the seminal essay by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno ([1944] 1989) on the culture industry, as well as key figures of that era who were in conversation with them, namely, Walter Benjamin (1969) and Siegfried Kracauer ([1947] 2004, [1960] 1997, [1963] 1995). According to Marx, alienation is the general malaise the worker succumbs to in the capitalist system of production, and Benjamin and Kracauer in particular saw film as a "distraction" from the tedium of the workplace and its alienation, reinvigorating the worker's senses. We might add that the relief is only temporary, the worker being sent back into the workplace and suffering from alienation all over again, the result being that the capitalist system is, in effect, an "iron system" from which there is no escape.

A significant theorist in the background of the Horkheimer and Adorno essay is Max Weber, and, indeed, their formulation of the culture industry as

an iron system (a system that is inescapable and in a sense imprisoning) echoes Weber's indictment of legislative rationality as an iron cage. One of their formulations of a culture industry is that it standardizes the production of artworks as commodities in order to produce them quickly and for the masses. This standardization is part of a larger calculus or rationality in which the means and ends of production are connected to each other in the most efficient, logical, and profitable way (however these values may be understood). Besides rationalization, another key Weberian idea is reenchancement, which is connected in fact to rationality. One of the effects of rationalization, according to Weber ([1922] 1958), was the loss or marginalization of the spiritual in daily life, and one might argue that film is a key way in which this reenchancement is achieved in modern life.

How, then, have these theories informed our understanding of film industries if it is not film as an object or text, nor even the relation of such an object or text to a complex historical or social context, that is the primary issue here? We lay out our theory of film industries below in terms of the following main ideas: commodification, standardization, or organization, and modularity (perhaps the most important feature of film industries).

### *Commodification*

To answer these questions, attention has to be paid, first of all, to the fact that a film is, as Horkheimer and Adorno ([1944] 1989) reminded us more than half a century ago, a commodity and therefore part of a capitalist system. In their day, the exchange value of film commodities was primarily with other film commodities, but with the rise of television in the 1950s, film industries faced serious competition for commodity sales with television industries. The relationship of these industries is a complex one, and Amrita Ibrahim's chapter in this volume looks at this relationship with regard to Indian television news and Bollywood dramas. Whether we are talking about film or television industries, however, what Horkheimer and Adorno pointed out about commodity thinking and profit making that affect casting and plot, the casting of the actors based on the bankability of the star of the moment, and scripts on the popularity of a certain story line, still applies: it is about standardizing the commodity so that it can be mass produced in a quick and efficient manner to make a profit.<sup>6</sup> (We talk more about standardization in our discussion of film practices below.)

Having made the distinction of film as a commodity, we hasten to add that we do not conceptualize film industries in a base/superstructure relationship, where industries are the base and culture or politics is the superstructure;



rather, we see film industries and their attendant ideologies as thoroughly imbricated. Conversely, to understand the commodity side of movie making also means more than following the financing of films (either by governments or private investors) or their profitability or the wage-labor pools their production taps into: it means studying the way a film production is organized to deliver a certain commodity or filmic product.<sup>7</sup> We also speak of industry in the plural, or industries, in order to suggest that there is no monolithic business model of how films are made worldwide.

While the criticism is often voiced by independent filmmakers and others that film industries limit if not stifle individual artistic creativity by subjecting artists to the bottom line—which is why they seek other kinds of financing and pursue their work out of passion for their projects (Ortner 2013)—it is nonetheless arguable whether independent or alternative cinemas could exist without mainstream film industries; the talent is often the same in both, and independent filmmakers are dependent on industry studios for distribution of their works (many mainstream industry companies even have their own independent or alternative film units with their own budgets and production targets). There have also been cases where a film industry has been mobilized for something other than profit, as was the case for the American and German film industries during World War II, which means that an understanding of film industries cannot stop at or be reduced to its commodity aspects, and yet such moments are episodic and hardly the norm. The example of Soviet cinema also shows that films can be made without the commodity being foremost in the filmmakers' reckoning of their artistic product, and yet the ways in which such products were made nonetheless closely resembled commercial film industries in the West (Roth-Ey 2011).

In other words, films are part of business enterprises that are supposed to make money, and we propose that their workings be studied ethnographically. Being part of global capitalism, film industries require anthropological analysis like any other industry such as mineral extraction, agricultural production, or pharmaceuticals.

### *Organization of Film Industries*

Perhaps it is easiest to see what we mean by “structure” of film industries by going back to the beginnings of Hollywood, when the making of a film was explicitly modeled on the automobile assembly line innovated by Henry Ford, a point alluded to by Powdermaker (1950) in the subtitle to her book on Hollywood, *The Dream Factory*. Business models have tended to see the organization of classic film industries such as Hollywood in terms of the vertically



integrated studio, whose personnel acquire the financing, hire the talent, and market the final product; that is, as a centralized system of production under a powerful studio or production company (Schatz 1981; Balio 1985; Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson 2003; Gomery 2005; Scott 2005; Jacobson 2015). These studios also owned theaters across the country that showcased their films. We do not need to go into the details of what happened next, but the studio system began to break up at the end of the 1940s when the courts abrogated the studios' monopoly over the exhibition part of the film industry, followed by the freeing up of actors to work outside their studios. By the 1970s, which is often called the beginning of post-Fordist capitalist production, the vertically structured firm, including the Hollywood studio system, began to decentralize and lateralize—that is, the component parts of commodity production such as photography, editing, sound, music, and so on were contracted out to specialty production houses around the world because the cost was lower without sacrificing quality—while the main creative forces behind the film (the producer and director) were responsible for assembling and refining the pieces of the film into a finished product and often under a production company name.

Whereas films for the most part today are not produced in the centralized and hierarchical, top-down fashion they were in the heyday of Hollywood, that organizational structure hasn't gone away either (the example of China's Qingdao Oriental Movie Metropolis cited earlier dramatically underscores the fact that it is by no means defunct), and powerful production studios like Disney, Amazon, and Netflix are now reinventing the model of the vertically integrated firm in the way they hire directors to make films that they finance for viewing exclusively on their subscription-based streaming platforms. How, then, do we conceptualize film industries in such a way to accommodate both a centralized and a decentralized model of film production while retaining the fundamental idea that it is organized?

Let us try to clarify what this complex organizational structure looks like in terms of three different models.

- 1 To maintain national film industries (whatever they might look like) and national cinemas; this is a case where a film industry on the model of Hollywood or Bollywood is maintained (even in the face of forces mitigating against it). This swimming against the stream may be in order to gain symbolic capital for countries with prestige film industries or political projects that want to keep control over their film industries rather than outsourcing their production tasks.

- 2 To persuade film companies to film inside their countries because of (a) the perceived beauty of their landscapes or the cutting-edge look of their cityscapes (what has sometimes been called “harvesting” or “mining” for scenery), and (b) infrastructure, where countries or cities become a global film industry hub by providing film companies with state-of-the-art production and postproduction services and facilities (in-country transportation services, traffic management, and police protection, as well as generous tax breaks and other economic incentives).
- 3 To build giant global media companies that produce and create their own content, which they sell on their own network platforms to individual subscribers. These conglomerates are in a sense a return to the older-style hegemonic film industry of yesteryear (Hollywood), except that they produce content in an array of media in addition to film, particularly television programs. Because of the complexity (and newness) of this model, we elaborate it at the end of the introduction.

Some countries strive to achieve just one of these endeavors; others, some combination of them. All but one of the contributors in this volume have done fieldwork on national film industries and cinemas, and arguably even the exception (Jessica Dickson) traces what appears to be an emergent virtual reality (VR) film industry in Johannesburg, South Africa. But Johannesburg also conforms to (2) above in that it has become the preferred cityscape of an imaginary apocalyptic urban space in many contemporary Hollywood sci-fi movies, which is then incorporated into action sequences through digital effects achieved in its postproduction studios. As Dickson also discovered, South African filmmakers are now trying to build on their virtual reality expertise by creating a national cinema of their own aimed at imagining an African future (1). Arab Gulf countries like Abu Dhabi, while not necessarily building their own national film industries (like Iran or Egypt) or advancing a cinema particular to the Gulf, have nevertheless built an infrastructure—in terms of both facilities and trained personnel—to allow international film companies to film inside the UAE without having to re-create or transport their production infrastructure overseas. This is in keeping with the UAE’s larger global business model, which is to become a world hub for the global flow of ideas, money, and people. In addition, the UAE has certain iconic urban landmarks that are transnationally recognizable, such as the ultraluxurious Emirates Palace in Abu Dhabi or the Burj Al Khalifah in Dubai, the tallest building in the world (2), which have been filmed on location and then inserted digitally into action sequences shot in film studios in Hollywood (Vivarelli 2015).

In order to trace these differences in organization, we propose to look at film industries cross-culturally, ranging from Hollywood to Bollywood, and from Iran to Hong Kong, in order to reveal their diversities, distinctiveness, and commonalities. We will examine both dominant or hegemonic forms of such industries as well as alternative or subdominant industries.

### *Standardization: Personnel, Practices, and Training*

Standardization may be more important than profit making. We just mentioned the great Soviet film industry that was not capitalist driven, and yet it was an industry because it exhibited many of the same standardized modules that are present in capitalist film industries such as Hollywood. On a lesser scale the same can be said for the Cuban film industry (at least with the rise of its communist regime). And there are mixed examples (Iran for one) of a prestige national cinema that is heavily state subsidized alongside commercial cinema that is paid for by capital investment and market sales: both operate according to standardized procedures.

Let us, then, try to grasp more clearly how films are made in standardized ways. First, filmmakers are personnel, or specialized workers identified by the roles they play in film production such as producer, director, actor, technical crew, writer, cinematographer, publicist, and so forth; and though a single person might take on more than one role in any given production, the roles are nevertheless thought of as distinct, entailing different yet well-defined tasks. Film professionals are those people in the industry who have attained standards in their tasks that are recognized by other fellow professionals (or certified by training bodies). These personnel may also belong to unions and guilds that help regulate film production in order to protect workers, guarantee a respectable wage, and ensure the artistic values of the final product.

Second, personnel are expected to carry out their tasks according to certain standardized practices. For example, a cinematographer is expected to know how to operate the camera and use lighting; an art director, how to acquire or make props and decorate sets; a sound recordist, how to capture the sounds of the film, like dialogue and background noise; an actor, to have rehearsed their lines and be prepared to take direction; wardrobe and make-up crew, whose tasks are probably self-explanatory; and so forth.

Third, the labor for carrying out these standardized practices has to be trained, which can take at least three distinct forms. Personnel are usually trained (often in film schools and/or apprenticeships) in order that they might perform their tasks rationally and up to certain industry standards. As Lotte Hoek (2014, 74) explains for the Bangladeshi film industry, “in lieu of filmmaking institutions,

filmmaking skills were and continue to be passed along through apprenticeship.” Anand Pandian (2015, 11) makes a similar point about the Tamil film industry: “Young men—more rarely, young women—come as apprentices into trades as varied as cinematography, choreography, and editing with almost no formal training.” But on-the-job training is important as well and is not the same as an apprenticeship (even though apprentices usually learn their art or trade while working with a master). On-the-job training is exactly what the term implies: learning the skill while working on a job and being supervised by whatever skilled technician is at hand. The worker’s relationship to the expert usually ends when the job does. Probably no industry relies only on one of these forms of labor. Even Hollywood relies on apprenticeship, especially because of the strong guild system that it works with. Countries with film industries that have neither film schools nor guilds, or weak ones if they do, will rely on apprenticeship and on-the-job training to build personnel.

But successful filmmaking can also be irrational in relation to standardized practices and safety codes mandated by certain film industries. What is interesting is the deliberate transgression of this standardized process, as Sylvia Martin explores in chapter 6, on “edgework,” or when filmmakers ask their crews and actors to take risks to secure the “stolen shot,” the shot that entails certain dangers that excite audiences and presumably sells at the box office. The risks often contravene industry safety codes or general public safety, and even though filmmakers are aware of these rules, they break them anyway.

### *Modularity*

Besides commodification and trained personnel practicing their trade according to certain standards, our concept of film industries stresses the modules through which films are made, marketed, and exhibited. Several recent ethnographies of film industries have in fact stressed this idea using other terms. In *Reel World: An Anthropology of Creation* a Tamil film producer by the name of G.D. says as much to anthropologist Anand Pandian: “Very soon after we first met, G.D. began to draw a triangle onto a page on his daily planner. ‘Filmmaking is a *process*,’ he explained, dividing up the figure into a stack of five horizontal slabs, ‘a process of step-by-step activity.’ The script was the foundation. Then came the cast and technicians, then the shooting and the studio work, and finally, at the apex of the triangle, marketing and distribution. All of these layers, the producer declared authoritatively, ‘add value’ to the project” (2015, 41, emphasis added). Pandian does not necessarily subscribe to this bottom-up or hierarchical vision of Tamil filmmaking, suggesting that the process is, if not entirely haphazard, certainly more open-ended. For example,

if control over the production process is an ever-present anxiety, it is no more so than in the camera work, especially as most shooting takes place on location rather than in the studio and is thus subject to the vagaries of outdoor lighting (109–110). Further, Pandian suggests that this is not an exceptional instance in the Tamil film industry; rather, it is one of its defining conditions, a contingency of external factors that can impinge at any moment upon the filmmaking process to cause an alteration of plans or expectations, to which filmmakers must respond (as the subtitle of his book suggests) creatively (141). Of course, even classic Hollywood movies have been made in the face of contingencies and uncertainties of one sort or another. Consider the making of *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) by the fastidious technician David Lean, who faced the difficulties of filming in wind-swept desert terrain with large, unwieldy camera equipment, not to mention political opposition within Jordan to filming in the country in the first place, and a budget overrun so enormous that the producer had to reign in the production and complete it in Spain and Morocco. All of these contingencies required creative solutions on the part of the director, the film crew, the actors, and the producer. And so the questions are: Is it about a difference of degree or scale of film industries that make them more or less vulnerable to contingency or chance; or, more interestingly, is this contingency or chance a generative or creative principle within film industries generally? The process of filmmaking is always subject to contingency or chance, but the latter rarely destroys the process outright or makes it superfluous. Studies attuned to the process of the filmmaking, thus, allow us to recognize the indeterminacy of the work: the ways that it is shaped and the result of constraints and possibilities found in diverse contexts, some not readily apparent in the locations of their production. It allows us to appreciate how a work not only has different meanings and stakeholders at different times but how it is the accumulation of all these that result in the final text.

In her ethnography *Cut-Pieces: Celluloid Obscenity and Popular Culture in Bangladesh*, Lotte Hoek (2014) also takes up the idea of process to talk about the Bangladeshi popular film industry, which she describes as having “components” such as script writing, set building, sound mixing, fight direction, or comedy acting. She argues that these component tasks have “relative autonomy” from each other (77). For example, it is clear that a set is not designed or built from scratch to suit the setting of a particular film story; it is rather a “generic” idea of what a slum, say, looks like, in which the film’s action takes place. “Every set could be organized under basic categories like ‘godown,’ ‘hospital,’ or ‘bar’” (78) and could be rented from the Bangladesh Film Development Corporation, or FDC, if it was too expensive to build from scratch. The

result is that many films have an “FDC look” to them (and not necessarily to the detriment of their artistic integrity or audience appeal). Something similar occurred in the classic Hollywood film industry, where studios would rent their outdoor locations or their prefabricated town sets to companies making cowboy westerns (Jacobson 2015, especially chapter 5). What Hoek is talking about is what Brian Jacobson calls “infrastructure” (see also Larkin 2008), or the materials and construction that go into the making of the set, and from our point of view what is interesting is the industrial or standardized aspect of their production. As Hoek writes, “Yugantor’s team [Yugantor is an FDC staff member who instructed set builders] built standardized sets for most films in production at the FDC, irrespective of the intricacies of a particular plot” (2014, 78). Another example of what we call modularity comes out of the work of film historian Daisuke Miyao (2013) and his book *The Aesthetics of Shadow: Lighting and Japanese Cinema*. He is concerned with the emergence of a certain look that Japanese filmmakers promoted in their films, in part to make their films more distinctive and appealing to Japanese film audiences in the 1930s, that foregrounds shadow. This is not a minor or insignificant technical feat, for it requires film lighting experts who were learning from each other across world film industries (for example, Japanese cinematographers promoting certain Hollywood lighting techniques that in turn required certain kinds of film stock as well as lighting equipment) and testing these out in their films. The point for us is that aesthetic questions of the filmic text were inextricably tied to the modularity of lighting in global film industries at the time.

Does this modularity itself have a structure? Ethnographies that have been attuned to the processes of filmmaking have suggested at least two: hierarchy (usually in the form of a director and producer) and linearity or sequence of modules being performed (as in the traditional tripartite division of preproduction, production, and postproduction). Lately, however, there has been some controversy among film theorists surveying film industries in the wake of digitization (see below) as to whether linearity or sequencing in the process has given way to simultaneity combined with spatial dispersion (that is, outsourcing of production modules to studios around the world, with the production head assembling them into the final product). That this simultaneity and dispersion of production modules is taking place seems undeniable, but even theorists like Hye Jean Chung (2018) who have advanced the study of digital film industries concede that modularity of production is still key. For similar reasons, modularity is the centerpiece of our theory of film industries.

To think about standardization in film industries more precisely, the notion of modules is helpful. (Among the modules that have become standardized



in film industries are production, script writing, directing, acting, on-location shooting, cinematography, editing, marketing, exhibition, censorship, critical reviewing, and, lately, postproduction digital visual effects.) A module specifically conveys the notion of a standardized part that an industry deploys to produce an automobile or a building. But there is another aspect to modularity, which is that a module moves from one domain or area of production to another, depending on need or desire. Though it may be standardized internally, it is not stable or fixed but can move flexibly to be part of another production, another movie. Finally, though each module is in a practical sense discrete, it still needs to be coordinated with other modules for the final product to emerge. Modularity may imply movement, but that movement is coordinated to fit with other modules in the production system. Modules are the reason that different aspects of a film can be uncoupled from each other and then made in different countries of the world—depending on cost or production values—with color printing being done in a Paris studio, editing in London, sound mixing in Los Angeles, and visual effects in South Africa. Modules are why film crews can be international and still ensure a standard production value, because they depend on commonly held expectations of work and excellence. And because these modules are found in other media, personnel can move from one media industry to another; for example, from film to television to the music industry and back again.

Modules are deliberate and received ways of thinking about filmmaking, the things that filmmakers talk about when they describe how a film is made. As an example, note in Pandian's ethnography of the Tamil film industry how G.D. talks about the things that make up filmmaking and their structural relationship to each other. Nevertheless, it is also the case that the practice highlighted in a particular filmmaking module may also occur in other modules, often in a discrete, though still self-conscious way. For example, editing is a module typically associated with the creation of the final cut, when an editor, often with the input of the director, splices footage, according to the guidelines of the script. But editing may also occur in exhibition, when censors insist that a film be altered, or when a film is cut by the distributor because of its length, perhaps to increase ticket sales. And before a film is released, it is sometimes previewed by audiences (the reception module) who are shown alternative versions, typically of the ending, to judge which they prefer, and the film is edited according to their tastes. The fact that filmmaking practices foregrounded in a particular module migrate to other modules foregrounding other practices does not invalidate the theoretical notion of a module per se, though it does complicate how we analyze empirically the way filmmaking practices and modules relate

to each other. It might help to think about the difference anthropologically, in terms of the distinction between emic and etic categories, where emic categories are the modules of filmmaking and the etic categories are how these are realized in actual filmmaking, with all its contingencies.

It is again important to reiterate that modularity has not gone away as an analytic for understanding how films are made industrially even in digital media. The sequencing of modules is now less important because different modules can be worked upon simultaneously in the production process in different places. For Chung (2018), this is an argument for seeing spatialization of production as being more important than its temporalization, though perhaps it is more fair to assert that both temporal-spatial frames have been affected in ways that we have yet to fully understand. Rather than thinking of sequencing, perhaps we should think of reflexive reiteration (repetition, of course, also being a temporal process) as important in today's filmmaking, where the director and producer can see the filmic text produced in outsourced locations and ask for corrections or changes to be made. In any case, this spatialization is made possible by outsourcing the work of making a film to different studios around the world that specialize in that module's production, something that Dickson explores in chapter 7, on South African VR production, and a factor that Thomas Elsaesser (2013) argues has increased in the digital age with profound economic effects on digital industries. A modular approach to the study of film production helps us find commonalities within and across different industries and better grasp the links and influences among them, while also suggesting what makes industries distinctive in specific contexts.

### Fieldwork and Ethnography

Several of the disciplines that work on film industries claim to be doing qualitative fieldwork, including what is arguably the hallmark of social anthropology, "participant observation." But despite these claims, this fieldwork often comes across as little more than interviews with industry personnel (whether above or below the line) as well as attending industry functions and parties, with almost no participation in the actual processes of making films themselves. Ganti (2014) has made this criticism in her comments on how film industries have been studied in media and production studies. It is argued by many industry scholars that such participation is virtually impossible given how closed and guarded the industry is, and yet anthropologists have done just that (Rossoukh in chapter 2 and Martin in chapter 6, this volume, are cases in point). How much an industry is closed to outsiders varies from one industry to the next,



and given anthropology's more non-European/American reach, it may be easier for anthropologists to do this kind of participant observation in film industries such as Bollywood or Nollywood than Hollywood; but it is not necessarily precluded in Hollywood either.

We must remind ourselves that most anthropological fieldwork cannot be done in a few weeks or even a few months, not because of the scope or scale of what is studied (traditionally, this has in fact been relatively modest—a village here, a group of people there, or at several sites at one time to see how global phenomena flow through them) but rather that the object of study doesn't come into focus right away but over time. It is true that we enter the field with some preliminary sense of what it is we are after, but that sense changes as time goes on, making the object a moving target, so to speak. (Again, see Ganti [2014] for a similar point.) So much of fieldwork in production studies (and media industry studies) starts with the assumption that the object of inquiry, the production process, is what is to be studied, and the challenge is to glean what that process might mean to the personnel involved in it, including differences of point of view. But long-term fieldwork on that process is likely to reveal (a) that what people say they do and what their discourse means is quite different from what they say it means on other occasions and to people other than the researcher, let alone what they do in their work setting; and (b) that the analysis of what is being said and done in and about the process keeps changing, depending on where one is in the process and what one learns about it over time. In other words, both temporality and positionality are key to anthropological fieldwork, and neither is adequately addressed in the film industry literature.

Fieldwork (the methods by which data are obtained and collected) and ethnography (the semiotic forms in which the results of the fieldwork are presented in print or other media) are deeply contested practices within anthropology, and we do not propose to resolve the contestation by offering our own definitions or prescriptions. Rather, our plea is to be as inclusive and capacious as possible in our use of anthropological methods.

For example, filmic textual analysis may not have seemed anthropological to anthropological readers of such texts as Traube's or Caton's, because such analysis was not part of a conventional or traditional repertoire of fieldwork practices (being associated primarily with film studies); and yet there is no reason to suppose ipso facto that textual analysis couldn't be considered a field technique like textual translation, kinship diagrams, or property surveys and mapping, which have long been the staple of anthropological fieldwork. An analysis of the film's text (understood as the sound-image nexus that is present

on the screen when the film is viewed) is not the same as understanding one of the film industry's key modules, the script or screenplay (and the difference between that screenplay and what ends up on the screen is investigated by Ros-soukh in chapter 2 as well as Caton, in chapter 5, and Ganti, in chapter 1), and so what may seem like a throwback to an older form of film studies should not be discounted when it still proves to be useful. The notion of the filmic text has been imaginatively reworked by Constantine Nakassis and Amanda Weidman (2018), drawing on film theory, to talk about the sound-image as being not only representational but performative (see chapter 5, this volume, for a deeper discussion of their ideas). Or consider phenomenological analyses of the screen such as by Vivian Sobchack (1992) in her book *The Address of the Eye*, in which she argues for the screen's subjectivity that is on par with our own, the screen being able to address the viewer and make him or her over in in its own image (and we might add sound). Whether representational, performative, or subjective, the filmic text and its analysis are indispensable to film industry approaches.

What we include within the rubric of fieldwork is much greater than that, such as interviews with film industry personnel and film audiences, the study of film industry publicity such as professional magazines, participant observation in film industry modules such as acting, directing, photography, marketing, and cinema exhibition, and the ways in which film industries try to guide film reception through trailers, advertisements, and film reviews. The object of study has widened from the filmic text to the social context, and now from the social context to the global industry that produced the film commodity.

Having distinguished between fieldwork and ethnography, something needs to be said about the latter, which anthropology claims for its own as a distinct genre of writing. This gets us back to positionality in fieldwork, in fact, or the point—political as well as intellectual—that we come from when we study something like film industries. We have said that fieldwork is a process that unfolds over time, with the result that we understand what we are looking at differently at different points in that temporal flow, and no one point (for example, the end of the process) is necessarily definitive. Furthermore, we tend to encounter what we are looking at from a particular perspective, depending not only on our own interests but also the particular circumstances in which the work is conducted. These multiple and different ways of knowing are all valid in writing up what we claim to know about any given subject, and ethnography should reflect these epistemological aha moments and not just report the findings. The chapters in this volume engage in this kind of reflexive ethnographic writing, in which the authors share with the reader how they got to know what they claim to know about the film industry in question.

The stylistic methods for how this is achieved vary from chapter to chapter (in chapter 2, for example, it is by Rossoukh talking about his encounter over the long term with the filmmakers of a particular film and their dissatisfaction with its filmic text, and then how they tried to rectify it with a digital editing process newly introduced to the Iranian film industry at the time).

### **Digital Media and the Question of Film Industry**

Film industries have constantly transformed themselves through the invention of new technologies or in response to the emergence of new media that compete with them. Consider the more dramatic or blatant examples of those shifts. The introduction of sound threatened the way films had been made in the earlier silent era, with their reliance on the close-up, the gesture, and dramatic bodily movement, but it ushered in the talking picture, in which dialogue opened up new possibilities of acting, not to mention storytelling. Black-and-white photography reigned supreme for decades, leading to the glories of film noir, until the introduction of color in the 1930s, not to mention 35 mm and then Super Panavision soon thereafter. Many decried the shift, while others welcomed the richer palette of colors and greater expansiveness of the viewing experience. With the introduction of television to audiences in the 1950s, the film industry responded by creating the wide-screen theater, photographing in Super Panavision, and filming in exotic locales. Rather than television eclipsing film, as was feared in some quarters, the two media have grown alongside, and in fruitful interaction with, each other. In each instance of technological change, film industries have adapted and continued to thrive.

Today the emergence of digital technology seems to pose the same challenges as did these earlier technologies for film industries (for a review of anthropological work on digital media, see Coleman [2010] and Horst and Miller [2012]; for a stimulating discussion of digital processes' impacts on filmmaking, see Casetti [2015]). Analog processes, on which earlier film and television depended, record information about image and sound as continuous, with varying degrees of intensity or amplitude in the wavelength. Digital processes record the same information differently, parsing the wave into bits of information (with their own degrees of intensity or amplitude) and then using high-speed computers to combine these bits in just about any way the producer or listener wants. Image and sound manipulation are immeasurably enhanced, and while film industries have always been interested in that, the question is whether a matter of degree is leading to a difference in kind (i.e.,

that what we have been calling film industries is no longer tenable). Imaging is no longer a matter of the iconic-indexical representation of the world but a matter of creating a virtual world, one that exists purely as a projection or product of the modes or media representations themselves. The difference would be between a world whose events physicists are able to represent through complex mathematical representations and worlds that exist because they are the logical outcomes of mathematical equations or theorems, regardless of whether they exist or not in the natural world. Much of our world has been transformed by digital technology, from computers and CDs to medical interventions and working robots, and the film industry is no exception.

For the most part, films are still made using analog processes, but now visual effects can be inserted or computer generated alongside them (for example, the film *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* in 1998), and high-tech studios are built in which such films can be tweaked or enhanced in the postproduction process through computer-generated digital media (see chapter 7, this volume). Whereas the use of visual effects in *Roger Rabbit* was revolutionary in its day, it has no comparison to the importance of such effects in films today. “Of the 25 top-grossing films of the 21st century so far, 20 have been visual-effects showcases like ‘Avatar,’ ‘The Avengers’ and ‘Jurassic World.’ (The other five were entirely animated, like ‘Frozen.’) The typical blockbuster now spends about a third of its production budget on visual effects” (Picket 2017, 68).

The real question is whether film industries are entering into a brave new world of film production by adopting digital technology, leading to the near replacement of traditional industry personnel by digital media and their highly skilled operators, and leading to a highly flexible and essentially nonlinear process of image execution and work (though a process nonetheless). Another way to imagine this is to say a digital film is still created using modules, but they are now performed by the computer as directed by highly specialized programmers and in just about any order that they want. Digital media have allowed different understandings of representing reality that could not be entertained before, due to the influence of video gaming, virtual reality, and augmented reality, for example.

Not only production is affected but also the viewing experience, ranging in materiality from the screen on one’s smartphone or personal computer to the immersive home theater experience of a mounted wall screen with surround sound. This proliferation of the ways in which a film can be exhibited raises the question of what a film is when it is reformatted and reedited to fit the different sizes of exhibition (though arguably this question has always been raised regarding film made for theaters that is reformatted for television). Is it the film

formatted for release on theater screens around the country and the world? Or is it the film reconfigured for viewing on one's smartphone? In all probability it is both, and other versions in which it can be seen or experienced, without necessarily threatening the film's ontological reality. But what happens when film viewers can download a film on their computer and then digitally alter it according to their own whim, which is now the case? Has a line been crossed? Perhaps at this point it is less film as a product or object that we are talking about than a complex process of appropriation or re-creation through which multiple agents can make filmic events and view them flexibly in different venues. Digital media literature speaks of "remediation" (Bolter and Grusin 2000) and of "convergence" (Jenkins 2006) to capture the way images presented in one medium can be manipulated by audiences in another medium for their own purposes.

But if that is the case, this only reinforces the view of film as a process, except that now it is expanded across different media and not just within them. That is, consumers can now become creators of film, not just consumers of a finished product. Or what was once the consumer of an image product now is also the creator of it and the marketer on YouTube and other platforms. In our terms, this is a new type of personnel made possible by digital media. Of course, what hasn't changed is that we are still talking about commodities, though made primarily for individual or collective consumption. But if such film processes are to have any life in the market, they will have to be produced according to certain standards set by the media-networking world and in line with that community's expectations. We are thus back to professionalization and standards, one of our defining criteria of film industries. It is noteworthy that in digital media industries (Elsaesser 2013) the question of personnel as a module does not disappear, only that some personnel within that module disappear while others newly emerge. For example, a more prominent role in classic narrative film, such as the scriptwriter, now may be more in the background of the production process, whereas the digital media artist is now on a par with the older cartoon animator. Even actors have been transformed as performing artists before the camera. Personnel is thus an analytic of lasting salience in film industries even though the roles are constantly shifting. It's not that expertise disappears but that it gets redefined.

Even if analog versions of film were to disappear except as curated or archival objects and the production of film through digital media completely replaced them (just as the computer replaced the typewriter), we would still be faced with the problem of studying them as part of an industry, albeit the exact features and organization of which may not as yet be clear. This may perhaps

be the most exciting emergent form of film industries that ethnographers can work on today.

In the introduction to their book *The Promise of Cinema: German Film Theory, 1907–1933*, Anton Kaes, Nicholas Baer, and Michael Cowan write:

The rise of digital media has provoked no shortage of debates about what cinema has been and will become. To some observers, film seems to be a thing of the past, an artifact of twentieth century visual culture, a relic of the Fordist era with its industrial rhythms and distinct division of labor and leisure. Others point to cinema's unanticipated afterlives in film festivals and retrospectives, compilation films and museum installations, online archives and virtual cinephilic communities. From the latter perspective, cinema is not so much disappearing as morphing into exciting new forms and hybrids, whose uncharted trajectories bear an uncanny resemblance to the cinema's beginnings more than a hundred years ago. (2016, 1)

Let us remind ourselves that the diversity of filmmaking forms and practices at the beginning of the twentieth century were in the interest not only of art but also of the commodity, and that this in turn was embedded within a sprawling, inchoate industry. The same no doubt can be said about digital media. While allowing artistic breakthroughs of numerous kinds, they are still driven by the same interests, and capital is bound to organize those interests in the form of an industry, whose outlines we have yet to discern. And if film studies can look to the beginning of the film industry to see what seems to be emerging now with the spread of digital media and the proliferation of platforms it has encouraged, let us suggest that anthropology can compare what is happening in the world of filmmaking today and perhaps paint a clearer, more comprehensive picture of it. Even if modes of appropriation and re-creation are now individualized or democratized (where, in a sense, anyone with the basic digital equipment and platforms can be their own filmmaker), individuals or groups making such films are still cultural agents operating within social relations and groups—hence requiring anthropological analysis.

### The Contents and Organization of the Volume

Earlier work on film industries tended toward a stage model of film production, from production to postproduction and finally exhibition and reception. What our discussion of film industries here suggests is that this stage model is no longer helpful and that modularity, the key theoretical concept in our



understanding of film industries, should replace it. This does not mean that modularity does not have issues of temporality built into it, but that it transcends fixed or stable notions of either space or time in the production process. In some ways, modularity is the key idea of work and production in the COVID-19 era: work need not have to be done from nine to five or in a fixed office space; now it can be done anywhere that is deemed safe and secure and coordinated temporally with the locations of colleagues also working away from their traditional work spaces. Modularity is a key facet not only of industrial production, including film, but of our everyday lives.

The modules we have proposed as a convenient way of tackling the ethnography of film industries also informs the organization of the essays (with one exception, to be discussed below), with each essay focusing on one or more of a film's modules in the process of its production. Above all, they show how an industrial perspective teaches us something about film we have not discerned clearly enough before.

We do not see any necessary order to the chapters as they appear in the volume, nor did we strive for comprehensiveness in our coverage of film industries. Rather, we hope the chapters, singly and in combination, drive home the main arguments the volume is making. To grasp these, we do suggest that the chapters lend themselves to comparison because they show what is the same across film industries in the ways we have defined here but also, and more crucially for an anthropology of film industries, what is different about them due to the grounding and embedding of industrial practices in distinct political, economic, and sociocultural contexts. We argue that this is not simply a matter of specificity or particularity but rather a deep interconnection or entanglement of industry with location and place, which is why we use the plural "industries" to talk about our subject matter. A comparison of chapters also reveals the nature of anthropological fieldwork and the thickness of ethnographic description that is required not only of film production but also of the locations and places in which the production takes place. Most anthropologists who study film industries also study the society and culture in which such industries operate, and they go more deeply into these contexts as a matter of course. It is hoped the reader will appreciate that anthropological fieldwork at its deepest goes beyond the interview or the attending of film industry events but is a matter of digging in the ground that the film industry presupposes for its work but whose students rarely undertake. To put the point differently, anthropological fieldwork often begins where such production studies fieldwork leaves off.

Chapter 1, by Tejaswini Ganti, examines what we would call a module in certain film productions, namely that of dialogue translation and also dubbing

(where a professional—often an actor—speaks the lines of a film's character in a local language shared by the film's audience, and does so in a way that matches the lip movements of the on-screen character). Dubbing, of course, has long been a concern for animated or cartoon films, but these don't necessarily entail translation problems, a particular concern for films shot in one language and then distributed for foreign exhibition to audiences who speak a different language. Such is the case, for example, in the Hindi film industry's rereleasing of Hollywood blockbuster movies for local audience consumption. Because of the fact that they are significant money makers for the Hindi film industry, the number of such releases for the Hindi market is on the rise, occasioning the questions of good and effective translation and dubbing for Hindi film professionals who want to challenge past stereotypes of shoddy work in this area of the Hindi film industry.

In her analysis of what professional film translators and dubbers say and do about their practices, Ganti performs an ethnography of language or of basic notions and values of language Hindi-speaking professionals harbor that go beyond the production but in the end deeply affect it. She asks what linguistic ideology professionals of a certain social status and educational level share about language translation for Hindi film audiences, and how such ideas affect the way they render spoken English into idiomatic, colloquial, and class-inflected Hindi. Not only is this chapter an ethnographic look at a key film industry component rarely considered in production studies, it is also a contribution to the linguistic anthropology of spoken Hindi.

The module Ramyar Rossoukh focuses on in chapter 2 is editing, a process that was profoundly changed at the very time the film he analyzes, *The Willow Tree*, went into postproduction. The change was the introduction of a new technology, specifically digital editing systems (which have supplanted their earlier analog equivalents) with the power to quickly and almost seamlessly change the order of the frames, insert new frames as needed, and even alter the look of frames to suit the artistic aims of the director. As Rossoukh demonstrates in his meticulous recounting of the making of the film, the filmmakers were disappointed in the test screening of the rough cut, lamenting the fact that the Islamic allegory that was to be imparted by the story somehow got, in Freudian terms, repressed. The irony was that the high professional standards the director brought to the making of the film seemed to expunge its spiritual message. The editing challenge was a return of the repressed, or a revival of the Islamic message, through constant dialogue between the filmmakers about the revised (and re-revised) filmic texts made possible by digital editing.



One has to understand how the Iranian film industry is connected to deeper issues in Iranian society, a matter that can only be explored ethnographically. Digital editing takes on nontechnical meaning for the way it brings the spiritual meaning of the film to life, which is why Rossoukh refers to it as the “digital divine.” But there is an even more profound point that would be lost were the ethnography to stop with the production itself. It is necessary to understand how film production is entangled in a larger history and context of the uses of film to reenchant society with religious fervor. Putting the editing module within this Islamic project helps us better understand the deep entanglement of film industry and society. It was not just the film as an artistic project that was saved (in a religious sense) but the film industry, or so it is hoped.

Chapter 3, by Amrita Ibrahim, is about a crime-show genre on Indian television news that uses Indian cinema to narrate its stories. As such, it conforms to the modules of script writing and editing in film and television industries. This is an example of how industries have ties to each other in terms of the flow of labor, ideas, and capital, alluded to here. It does not help us understand this interindustrial exchange by analyzing film and television as separate entities. Film and media scholars have referred to this as “transmedia storytelling,” arguing that this is becoming more prominent today (Jenkins 2006; Casetti 2015). Ibrahim’s chapter can thus be read as an ethnography of this phenomenon in the Indian context.

Ibrahim tells a rich and complex history of Indian television, arguing that it shifted from event programming to “flows” (Williams [1974] 2003) in which viewers experience television as subtle rhythms and moving images rather than as programming content. One reason for this shift had to do with the opening up of Indian television to private investment and international cable networks in the 1990s, when viewers gained access to a much larger number of channels and could switch between channels to establish not only their own content choice but also their own viewing rhythms, or flows.<sup>8</sup> The main creative agents of this fusion of news and cinema are not the journalists working on the scene to cover a crime but particular journalists working in the newsroom as writers and editors who create a story that can be narrated by drawing from their deep knowledge of, and work experience in, Bollywood cinema. Naturally, it was those personnel in the editing room with deep knowledge of film and work experience in the film industry who had a leg up in creating the kind of news that television channels were looking for. The editors retrieved filmic scenes, musical tracks, and iconic dialogues from their vast knowledge of popular film culture and through them narrated a crime story. Ibrahim argues that these personnel

are creative as “cultural vectors,” who, by example of their own careers as “self-made” men in the television industry (and they are almost all men), provide a neoliberal alternative to the traditional story of self-fashioning dependent on wealth, caste, metropolitanism, and religion. Unintentionally, their biographies become vectors of individual transformation for others within the Indian public sphere, calling for an ethnography that goes beyond the production.

Lotte Hoek’s essay, chapter 4, is unique in its ethnography of film criticism (in the guise of film censorship), a relatively neglected topic in the study of film industries. It is also important to note that ethnography here goes beyond the film production to an ethnography of the state (the censorship board), with the result that production within the film industry is immeasurably enriched and complicated. One of the main points to be gleaned from Hoek’s analysis of Bangladeshi film censorship is that it attempts to set the conditions for the production of an exhibition film rather than an effort to control it after production is over. Or, as she puts it in her chapter, “it is at this point that censorship becomes a part of the film production process (a site in the industrial process of making a film) as well as a critical reflection on that process.” She refers to “cinematic discernment” as being central to film censorship, notions of what constitutes not only “proper” but also “quality” film production in all of its various modules. For example, it might be objected that the cinematography and acting are below industry standard or that the script is “not a narrative.” More interesting still is that this discernment is a matter of artistic taste as much as it is of legal judgment, thus troubling the distinction between law and art that is often invoked in the realm of censorship (that is, that censorship supposedly operates in the realm of law and not in artistic or sensorial experience).

This emphasis allows her to go more deeply into the question of what censorship is and how it operates in context, a relatively neglected topic in film studies. She claims that censorship in the Bangladeshi film industry is different from what William Mazzarella (2013) found for the Hindi film industry (and most other cases of censorship examined to date), in that the former is less about something objectionable about the image or the scene’s content than it is about artistic form. The notions of what is or is not artistic freedom, of how much government should regulate film production, if at all, and of the separation, if any, between art and its esthetic imperatives on the one hand and government and its sense of civic obligation on the other are not the same in this context (and the broader South Asian one) and what film industries in the U.S. and Europe face.

The relationship of the filmic script to politics is something that Steven Caton also addresses in chapter 5, discussing a Yemeni film, *A New Day in Old*

*Sana'a* (2005), except that the censorship in that case has to do with content rather than form. The other point to note is that in contrast to other essays in this volume, which examine full-blown film industries from Bollywood and Hollywood to Hong Kong and from Iran to Morocco, Caton's contribution looks at the other end of this industry spectrum, involving a country, the Republic of Yemen, with no film industry to speak of, though with ambitions to develop one. The production of the film was meant to be the incubator for this emergent industry. But even before production began, the film got into trouble, and the essay traces what Caton calls the "politics of culture" swirling around the controversies of the Old City as a cultural space in which on-location shooting was embedded. Cultural studies gave us an understanding of culture conflicts that surround artistic works, and Caton draws inspiration from this approach to delve into the politics of culture surrounding the Old City of Sana'a as an "Arab capital" as well as cultural conflicts around certain Western artistic performances that took place in its urban space. But the ethnography reveals that these conflicts went deep into the production, from script writing to on-location shooting, a subject not often considered by cultural studies. Political problems intensified when on-location shooting began because production was seen as an alien and threatening force in a deeply gendered and religious urban space.

The rest of the chapter is an ethnography of the Old City as that culturally coded space and the normative strictures on seeing and being seen that the production violated, occasioning bitter and at times violent local opposition. To unsettle the film industry's naive assumption that the film crew can parachute down unproblematically in a landscape or a city, to do its on-location module, and then leave as if nothing was disturbed in the process, Caton develops the idea of dis-location shooting to capture the precariousness of the actual situation. But to reiterate the broader point that connects back to an anthropology of film industries, it was only an ethnography of urban space whose insights were then brought to bear on film production that deepened the author's understanding of this dis-location.

Sylvia J. Martin, in chapter 6, examines the practice of "shot stealing," film industry jargon for filming a scene on location without getting permission from, or financially compensating, the people who are being filmed or the owner of the property. Shot stealing is done by directors to enhance the excitement or spontaneity or memorableness of a movie, and hence its commodifiability, and Martin argues that shot stealing goes back to the earliest days of film with its "cinema of attractions," when collisions, explosions, and chases of one sort or another were built into stories for the visual excitement they provided and to

draw audiences into the cinema houses (nickelodeons as they were called). The kind of work shot stealing requires Martin calls “edgework.” She extends this analysis of edgework from stunt workers and camera operators to actors more generally on the set. And the analogy is extended to other risks and dangers of filmmaking, such as on-location shooting in illegal or dangerous places or engaging in dubious financing.

In addition to the complicated logistics of setting up these shots, Martin was concerned with the ethical difficulties film productions face in putting crew and actors—some of them minors—at considerable physical and emotional risk on the set. Having worked in two different film industries, Hollywood and Hong Kong, since 2003, she compares edgework and its ethics in the two, showing how differently these two industries respond to ethics because of their particular economic constraints: downsizing (and competition from Hollywood, in the case of Hong Kong) that has exacerbated job insecurity on the one hand; smaller budgets and tighter film schedules that have increased pressures on directors, crews, and actors on the other to speed up filmmaking; and cutting corners to enhance the bottom line that compromises safety standards on the set. The relative precarity of workers in the two industries has also affected the tendency to protest or strike for improved labor conditions, including greater safety for edgework. Martin’s essay reveals the importance of comparison across film industries to show that, despite certain universals such as commodification, standardization, and so on, these do not play out in the same way when these industries are grounded in complex local economies and political circumstances. It is an ethnography of the latter that takes us beyond the productions to the wider contexts in which such production is entangled.

The comparison of film industries Martin does in her chapter, we would like to extend across the next two chapters by comparing two different but related film industries at the most macro level. The two chapters deal critically with the question of the relationship between a film industry and a cinema. What is necessary within a film industry to make possible a certain cinema? What challenges do cinema projects face in terms of their economic viability? These questions get us back to one of the main arguments of our volume: the analytical distinction between the concepts of cinema and film industry.

Jessica Dickson did fieldwork at a Johannesburg, South Africa, film workshop, attended by VR innovators and film creators from both the Global South and North, in which the challenges of using VR were debated, and where examples of films that employed it were shown and evaluated. The larger cultural context in which this emergence of VR in Africa has to be understood, as was made clear by participants in the workshop, is an ongoing debate about postcolonial

visions of Africa's future, which Dickson lays out in all their complexities. For the VR workshop participants, the more specific question was whether and to what degree VR is especially suited to imagining Africa's futures within African (as opposed to a non-African hegemonic) cinema, however configured. As with the emergence of anything else new, the debates over both VR and African futures are unsettled, leaving us with no lasting answers or clear-cut directions, and Dickson's careful, complex, and nuanced ethnography brings this out while at the same time capturing something of the excitement of this creative moment in African film cinemas.

But the workshop Dickson attended also contained a cautionary tale for creative artists hoping to tap into VR, which was offered by film industry specialists from the Global North: the industry might not yet be in place in South Africa to make this venture possible. None of this visionary project will take off unless there is an industry behind it. And they don't really know what that industry looks like. Where will the financing come from? How is production organized? Where is production done? Who will control it? How will it be coordinated? And that's only the production side. How will the films be marketed and exhibited? In other words, one can imagine a cinema that is both culturally stimulating and politically important, but without an industry to base it on, it can't take off. The tensions between cinematic aspirations on the one hand and industrial conditions of possibility (or impossibility) for those cinemas on the other are very real and poignant.

This difference between a cinema and an industry is also explored in Kevin Dwyer's chapter on Moroccan cinema, an established and critically acclaimed world cinema that is nonetheless facing enormous economic challenges. But the question is not just one of economic challenges but about how modularity is dispersed spatially across different countries, both in order to save money and to maintain or enhance quality. Dwyer scales up the analysis of film industries from particular modules to the most macro level and over a longer period of time, what we might call the pattern of the parameters of film industries. Dwyer shows how Moroccan filmmakers, for example, often contract with film production sites in France (whose government partially subsidizes the work as a form of foreign assistance) for this work. Understanding these complex national and global interdependencies and their impact on small-scale film production such as Morocco's is one of the key questions anthropologists of film industries need to grapple with. However, Dwyer's essay is really a critical examination of the Moroccan film industry as a whole over several decades and the complex and even delicate balancing that had to take place between national and transnational forces, between state and private financing, between

censorship and freedom of artistic expression (a point also raised in the essays by Hoek and Caton), and a host of other macro factors.

Another key parameter is the interdependence of media industries such as film and television, which Dwyer analyzes in chapter 8 for the Moroccan case, as do also Ibrahim and Martin in chapters 3 and 6, respectively. This interdependence is critical for understanding how film professionals can survive when their industries are ailing by moving into television, and vice versa (see also Martin 2017). Technological interdependence extends to global production sites within national film industries. Thus, some pricey filmmaking modules such as music and sound effects or editing can be completed more cheaply and at a higher standard by specialized studios in other countries (what Martin [2017] calls assemblages).

What this last point underscores but is revealed in each chapter is the importance of modularity in understanding film industries, and perhaps at no other time more so than in the present. The module is universal but gets entangled in local realities. And an accounting of those realities requires an ethnography of those local realities that then loops back to the understanding of the module to show how it depends on contingencies outside itself. We have to practice ethnography on two levels, the ethnography of the wider contexts in which the production is entangled and the ethnography of the production, and then to understand the dialectical relationship between the two.

### Notes

1. Of course, film studies (including the history of film), production/reception studies, and cultural studies have long been at the forefront of film analysis and criticism, and they inform our work in important ways, but they seem less concerned with the question of film industries per se than the latter.
2. Among the exciting theoretical developments were Soviet and French film criticism (such as the *Cahiers du cinéma*) and before that the 1930s Frankfurt School and its attendant scholars (Benjamin and Kracauer) whom 1980s scholars were reading arguably for the first time when translations became available. Semiotic-structuralist analyses of the filmic text from the perspective of the subject's gaze (Metz 1982) and Lacanian-inspired feminist theoretical perspectives (Mulvey 1975) dominated 1970s film theory, followed by critiques of these approaches from a Foucauldian framework of the subject's discursive (as opposed to psychoanalytic) construction (Copjec 1994), or from a Frankfurt School–Habermasian framing of the public sphere (and counterpublic sphere) where the viewing subject might identify with the screen's representation and organization of experience (Hansen 1991). As innovative and influential as these theories were, it is fair to say that they concentrated their attention on the camera apparatus and on the film as a filmic text rather than on film industries. Even Marxist



film criticism (Eisenstein 1949), one of the oldest film criticisms in the literature, was more concerned with a formal analysis of the filmic text, particularly of montage editing, than it was with film as an ideological apparatus connected to film industries and the capitalist system.

- 3 This is something that Todd Gitlin's *Inside Prime Time* (1994; originally published in 1983), a study of American television in the 1970s and 1980s, had also accomplished. But with regard to access, it turns out that these works are very much the exception, and as Sherry Ortner (2010) slyly suggests, "studying sideways" may be a more practical alternative to studying up (that is, to talk to these highly placed industry personnel about some shared commonality with the investigator such as cultural or political interests, education, identity in terms of class, race, gender, or sexuality, or even age, and to approach indirectly more sensitive and critical issues about their privileged positions).
- 4 Like production studies, media industry studies has obvious connections to the anthropology of film industries. Media industry studies is a field that was launched by Jennifer Holt and Alisa Perren (2009; for an update on this field, see Holt and Perren 2019; Herbert, Lotz, and Punathambekar 2020). There have been some sharp criticisms of this field (Govil 2013; Schatz 2014), not a few of them by people who have contributed to it. But we ask, what are the theories and methods that can be said to be distinctive of this nascent field? Or is media industry studies a conglomerate of other fields doing the heavy lifting, more about facilitating the exchange of knowledge across fields than it is about bringing a distinctive set of questions, methods, and analytical framings to bear in the study of media industries?
- 5 There is now a vast literature on national cinemas and some important critical anthologies (Hjort and MacKenzie 2000; Williams 2002; Vitali and Willemen 2006). Some film scholars have proposed the term "transnationalism" to capture the complex interplay of global, national, and local forces involved in contemporary film production and exhibition (Berry 2010; Ďurovičová and Newman 2010; Higbee and Song 2010; Elsaesser 2019).
- 6 To be sure, Adorno (1975) had some second thoughts about his critique in his essay "Culture Industry Reconsidered," and it has been pointed out numerous times that he tended to give little critical agency to the viewers of film in the public sphere. But to argue, as some have, that this failing is somehow reflective of the Frankfurt School's approach as a whole is a gross oversimplification. Jürgen Habermas ([1962] 1989) is arguably the last member of that school, and he was very much concerned about the possibilities of reflexive and critical debate in the public sphere, which logically includes film. Film theorists such as Miriam Hansen (a student in fact of Adorno) combined Habermas's idea about the critical public sphere with a theory of film-viewing audiences to talk about counterpublics and identification with subjectivities constructed on the screen (Hansen 1991).
- 7 For a complex discussion of the forces of capital, labor, and media production, see Michael Curtin's (2007) concept of "media capital."
- 8 For a fascinating comparative case study of the transformation of the television industry in Japan during roughly the same period, see Lukács (2010).