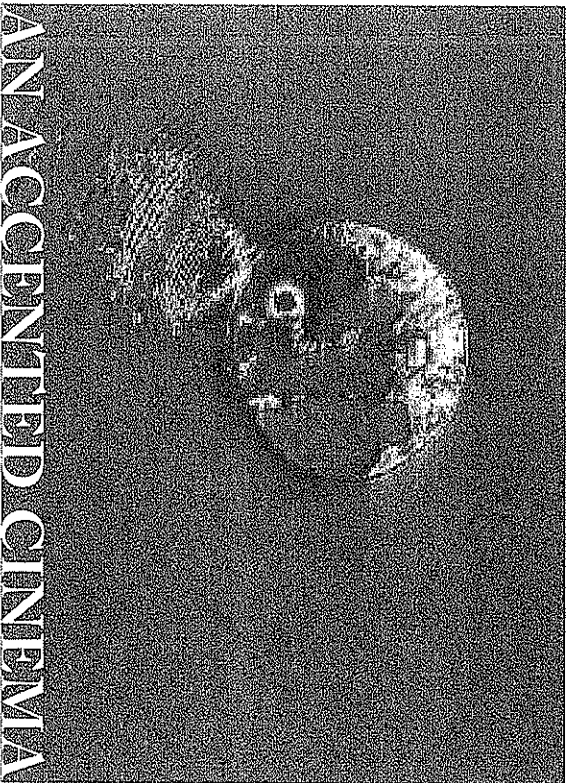


Hamid Naficy



AN ACCENTED CINEMA

Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking

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TO MY MOTHER, FATHER AND
THE REST OF THE FAMILY OVER THERE, AND
TO KELLY AND THE KIDS OVER HERE

Situating Accented Cinema

Accented Filmmakers

The exile and diasporic filmmakers discussed here are “situated but universal” figures who work in the interstices of social formations and cinematic practices. A majority are from Third World and postcolonial countries (or from the global South) who since the 1960s have relocated to northern cosmopolitan centers where they exist in a state of tension and dissension with both their original and their current homes. By and large, they operate independently, outside the studio system or the mainstream film industries, using interstitial and collective modes of production that critique those entities. As a result, they are presumed to be more prone to the tensions of marginality and difference. While they share these characteristics, the very existence of the tensions and differences helps prevent accented filmmakers from becoming a homogeneous group or a film movement. And while their films encode these tensions and differences, they are not neatly resolved by familiar narrative and generic schemas—hence, their grouping under accented style. The variations among the films are driven by many factors, while their similarities stem principally from what the filmmakers have in common: liminal subjectivity and interstitial location in society and the film industry. What constitutes the accented style is the combination and intersection of these variations and similarities.

Accented filmmakers came to live and make films in the West in two general groupings. The first group was displaced or lured to the West from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s by Third World decolonization, wars of national liberation, the Soviet Union’s invasions of Poland and Czechoslovakia, Westernization, and a kind of “internal decolonization” in the West itself, involving various civil rights, counterculture, and antiwar movements. Indeed, as Fredric Jameson notes, the beginning of the period called “the sixties” must be located in the Third World decolonization that so profoundly influenced the First World sociopolitical movements (1984, 180). The second group emerged in the 1980s and 1990s as a result of the failure of nationalism, socialism, and communism; the ruptures caused by the emergence of postindustrial global economies, the rise of militant forms of Islam, the return of religious and ethnic wars, and the fragmentation of nation-states; the changes in the European, Australian, and American immigration policies encouraging non-Western immigration; and

the unprecedented technological developments and consolidation in computers and media. Accented filmmakers are the products of this dual postcolonial displacement and postmodern or late modern scattering. Because of their displacement from the margins to the centers, they have become subjects in world history. They have earned the right to speak and have dared to capture the means of representation. However marginalized they are within the center, their ability to access the means of *reproduction* may prove to be as empowering to the marginalia of the postindustrial era as the capturing of the means of *production* would have been to the subalterns of the industrial era.

It is helpful, when mapping the accented cinema, to differentiate three types of film that constitute it: exile, diasporic, and ethnic. These distinctions are not hard-and-fast. A few films fall naturally within one of these classifications, while the majority share the characteristics of all three in different measures. Within each type, too, there are subdivisions. In addition, in the course of their careers, many filmmakers move not only from country to country but also from making one type of film to making another type, in tandem with the trajectory of their own travels of identity and those of their primary community.

Exilic Filmmakers

Traditionally, exile is taken to mean banishment for a particular offense, with a prohibition of return. Exile can be internal or external, depending on the location to which one is banished. The tremendous toll that internal exile, restrictions, deprivations, and censorship in totalitarian countries have taken on filmmakers has been widely publicized. What has been analyzed less is the way such constraints, by challenging the filmmakers, force them to develop an authorial style. Many filmmakers who could escape internal exile refuse to do so in order to fight the good fight at home—a fight that often defines not only their film style but also their identity as oppositional figures of some stature. By working under an internal regime of exile, they choose their “site of struggle” and their potential social transformation (Harlow 1991, 150). When they speak from this site at home, they have an impact, even if, and often because, they are punished for it. In fact, interrogation, censorship, and jailing are all proof that they have been heard. But if they move out into external exile in the West, where they have the political freedom to speak, no one may hear them among the cacophony of voices competing for attention in the market. In that case, Gayatri Spivak’s famous question “Can the subaltern speak?” will have to be reworded to ask, “Can the subaltern be heard?” Because of globalization, the internal and external exiles of one country are not sealed off from each other. In fact, there is much traffic and exchange between them.

In this study, the term "exile" refers principally to external exiles: individuals or groups who voluntarily or involuntarily have left their country of origin and who maintain an ambivalent relationship with their previous and current places and cultures. Although they do not return to their homelands, they maintain an intense desire to do so—a desire that is projected in potent return narratives in their films. In the meantime, they memorialize the homeland by fetishizing it in the form of cathected sounds, images, and chronotopes that are circulated intertextually in exile popular culture, including in films and music videos. The exiles' primary relationship, in short, is with their countries and cultures of origin and with the sight, sound, taste, and feel of an originary experience, of an elsewhere at other times. Exiles, especially those filmmakers who have been forcibly driven away, tend to want to define, at least during the liminal period of displacement, all things in their lives not only in relationship to the homeland but also in strictly political terms. As a result, in their early films they tend to represent their homelands and people more than themselves.

The authority of the exiles as filmmaking authors is derived from their position as subjects inhabiting interstitial spaces and sites of struggle. Indeed, all great authorship is predicated on distance—banishment and exile of sorts—from the larger society. The resulting tensions and ambivalences produce the complexity and the intensity that are so characteristic of great works of art and literature. In the same way that sexual taboo permits procreation, exile banishment encourages creativity.¹ Of course, not all exile subjects produce great or lasting art, but many of the greatest and most enduring works of literature and cinema have been created by displaced writers and filmmakers. But exile can result in an agonistic form of liminality characterized by oscillation between the extremes. It is a slipzone of anxiety and imperfection, where life hovers between the heights of ecstasy and confidence and the depths of despondency and doubt.²

For external exiles the descent relations with the homeland and the consent relations with the host society are continually tested. Freed from old and new, they are "detritorialized," yet they continue to be in the grip of both the old and the new, the before and the after. Located in such a slipzone, they can be suffused with hybrid excess, or they may feel deeply deprived and divided, even fragmented. Lithuanian filmmaker and poet Jonas Mekas, who spent some four years in European displaced persons camps before landing in the United States, explained his feelings of fragmentation in the following manner:

Everything that I believed in shook to the foundations—all my idealism, and my faith in the goodness of man and progress of man—all was shattered. Somehow, I managed to keep myself together. But really, I wasn't one piece any longer; I was one thousand painful pieces. . . . And I wasn't surprised when, upon my arrival in New York, I found others who felt as I felt. There were poets, and film-makers, and painters—people who were also walking like one thousand painful pieces. (quoted in O'Grady 1973, 229)

Neither the hybrid fusion nor the fragmentation is total, permanent, or painless. On the one hand, like Derridan "undecidables," the new exiles can be "both and neither": the pharmacopoeia, meaning both poison and remedy, the hymen, meaning both membrane and its violation, and the supplement, meaning both addition and replacement (quoted in Bauman 1991, 145–46). On the other hand, they could aptly be called, in Salman Rushdie's words, "at once plural and partial" (1991, 15). As partial, fragmented, and multiple subjects, these filmmakers are capable of producing ambiguity and doubt about the taken-for-granted values of their home and host societies. They can also transcend and transform themselves to produce hybridized, syncretic, performed, or virtual identities. None of these constructed and impure identities are risk-free, however, as the Ayatollah Khomeini's death threat against Salman Rushdie glaringly pointed out.³

Not all transnational exiles, of course, savor fundamental doubt, strive toward hybridized and performative self-fashioning, or reach for utopian or virtual imaginings. However, for those who remain in the enduring and endearing crises and tensions of exile migrancy, liminality and interstitiality may become passionate sources of creativity and dynamism that produce in literature and cinema the likes of James Joyce and Marguerite Duras, Joseph Conrad and Fernando Solanas, Ezra Pound and Trinh T. Minh-ha, Samuel Beckett and Sohrab Shahid Saless, Salman Rushdie and Andrei Tarkovsky, Garcia Marquez and Aron Egoyan, Vladimir Nabokov and Raul Ruiz, Gertrude Stein and Michel Khleif, Assia Djebar and Jonas Mekas.

Many exile filmmakers and groups of filmmakers are discussed in this book—Latin American, Lithuanian, Iranian, Turkish, Palestinian, and Russian. They are not all equally or similarly exiled, and there are vast differences even among filmmakers from a single originating country.

Diasporic Filmmakers

Originally, "diaspora" referred to the dispersion of the Greeks after the destruction of the city of Aegina, to the Jews after their Babylonian exile, and to the Armenians after Persian and Turkish invasions and expulsion in the mid-sixteenth century. The classic paradigm of diaspora has involved the Jews, but as Peters (1999), Cohen (1997), Tölölyan (1996), Clifford (1997, 244–77), Naficy (1993a), and Safra (1991) have argued, the definition should no longer be limited to the dispersion of the Jews, for myriad peoples have historically undergone sustained dispersions—a process that continues on a massive scale today. The term has been taken up by other displaced peoples, among them African-Americans in the United States and Afro-Caribbeans in England, to describe their abduction from their African homes and their forced dispersion to the new world (Gillroy 1993, 1991, 1988; Mercer 1994a, 1994b,

1988; Hall 1988). In these and other recordings, the concept of diaspora has become much closer to exile. Consequently, as Khashig Tsholyan notes, "diaspora" has lost some of its former specificity and precision to become a "promiscuously capacious category that is taken to include all the adjacent phenomena to which it is linked but from which it actually differs in ways that are constitutive" (1996, 8).

Here I will briefly point out the similarities and differences between exile and diaspora that inform this work. Diaspora, like exile, often begins with trauma, rupture, and coercion, and it involves the scattering of populations to places outside their homeland. Sometimes, however, the scattering is caused by a desire for increased trade, for work, or for colonial and imperial pursuits. Consequently, diasporic movements can be classified according to their motivating factors. Robin Cohen (1997) suggested the following classifications and examples: victim/refugee diasporas (exemplified by the Jews, Africans, and Armenians); labor/service diasporas (Indians); trader/business diasporas (Chinese and Lebanese); imperial/colonial diasporas (British, Russian); and cultural/hybrid diasporas (Caribbeans). Like the exiles, people in diaspora have an identity in their homeland *before* their departure, and their diasporic identity is constructed in resonance with this prior identity. However, unlike exile, which may be individualistic or collective, diaspora is necessarily collective, in both its origination and its destination. As a result, the nurturing of a collective memory, often of an idealized homeland, is constitutive of the diasporic identity. This idealization may be state-based, involving love for an existing homeland, or it may be stateless, based on a desire for a homeland yet to come. The Armenian diaspora before and after the Soviet era has been state-based, whereas the Palestinian diaspora since the 1948 creation of Israel has been stateless, driven by the Palestinians' desire to create a sovereign state.

People in diaspora, moreover, maintain a long-term sense of ethnic consciousness and distinctiveness, which is consolidated by the periodic hostility of either the original home or the host societies toward them. However, unlike the exiles whose identity entails a vertical and primary relationship with their homeland, diasporic consciousness is horizontal and multistated, involving not only the homeland but also the compatriot communities elsewhere. As a result, plurality, multiplicity, and hybridity are structured in dominance among the diasporans, while among the political exiles, binarism and duality rule.

These differences tend to shape exile and diasporic films differently. Diasporized filmmakers tend to be centered less than the exiled filmmakers on a cathected relationship with a single homeland and on a claim that they represent it and its people. As a result, their works are expressed less in the narratives of retrospection, loss, and absence or in strictly partisan political terms. Their films are accented more fully than those of the exiles by the plurality and performativity of identity. In short, while binarism and subtrac-tion in particular accent exile films, diasporic films are accented more by

multiplicity and addition. Many diasporic filmmakers are discussed here individually, among them Armenians. Black and Asian British filmmakers are discussed collectively.

Postcolonial Ethnic and Identity Filmmakers

Although exile, diasporic, and ethnic communities all patrol their real and symbolic boundaries to maintain a measure of collective identity that distinguishes them from the ruling strata and ideologies, they differ from one another principally by the relative strength of their attachment to compatriot communities. The postcolonial ethnic and identity filmmakers are both ethnic and diasporic; but they differ from the post-rudio American ethnics, such as Woody Allen, Francis Ford Coppola, and Martin Scorsese, in that many of them are either immigrants themselves or have been born in the West since the 1960s to nonwhite, non-Western, postcolonial émigrés. They also differ from the diasporic filmmakers in their emphasis on their ethnic and racial identity within the host country.

The different emphasis on the relationship to place creates differently accented films. Thus, exile cinema is dominated by its focus on there and then in the homeland, diasporic cinema by its vertical relationship to the homeland and by its lateral relationship to the diaspora communities and experiences, and postcolonial ethnic and identity cinema by the exigencies of life here and now in the country in which the filmmakers reside. As a result of their focus on the here and now, ethnic identity films tend to deal with what Werner Sollors has characterized as "the central drama in American culture," which emerges from the conflict between descent relations, emphasizing bloodline and ethnicity, and consent relations, stressing self-made, contractual affiliations (1986, 6). In other words, while the former is concerned with being, the latter is concerned with becoming; while the former is conciliatory, the latter is restorative. Although such a drama is also present to some extent in exile and diasporic films, the homeland location of the drama makes the ethnic and identity films different from the other two categories, whose narratives are often centered elsewhere.

Some of the key problematics of the postcolonial ethnic and identity cinema are encoded in the "politics of the hyphen." Recognized as a crucial marker of ethnicity and authenticity in a multicultural America, group terms such as black, Chicano/a, Oriental, and people of color have gradually been replaced by hyphenated terms such as African-American, Latino-American, and Asian-American. Identity cinema's adoption of the hyphen is seen as a marker of resistance to the homogenizing and hegemonizing power of the American melting pot ideology. However, retaining the hyphen has a number of negative connotations, too. The hyphen may imply a lack, or the idea that hyphenated

people are somehow subordinate to unhyphenated people, or that they are "equal but not quite," or that they will never be totally accepted or trusted as full citizens. In addition, it may suggest a divided allegiance, which is a painful reminder to certain groups of American citizens.⁴ The hyphen may also suggest a divided mind, an irrevocably split identity, or a type of paralysis between two cultures or nations. Finally, the hyphen can feed into nativist discourses that assume authentic essences that lie outside ideology and predates, or stand apart from, the nation.

In its nativist adoption, the hyphen provides vertical links that emphasize descent relations, roots, depth, inheritance, continuity, homogeneity, and stability. These are allegorized in family sagas and mother-daughter and generational conflict narratives of Chinese-American films such as Wayne Wang's *Eat a Bowl of Tea* (1989) and *The Joy Luck Club* (1993). The filmmakers' task in this modality, in Stuart Hall's words, is "to discover, excavate, bring to light and express through cinematic representation" that inherited collective cultural identity, that "one true self" (1994, 393). In its contestatory adoption, the hyphen can operate horizontally, highlighting consent relations, disruption, heterogeneity, slippage, and mediation, as in Trinh T. Minh-hà's *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (1985) and Srinivas Krishna's *Masala* (1990). In this modality, filmmakers do not recover an existing past or impose an imaginary and often fetishized coherence on their fragmented experiences and histories. Rather, by emphasizing discontinuity and specificity, they demonstrate that they are in the process of becoming, that they are "subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power" (Hall 1994, 394). Christine Choy and Rene Tajima's award-winning film *Who Killed Vincent Chin?* (1988) is really a treatise on the problematic of the hyphen in the Asian-American context, as it centers on the murder of a Chinese-American by out-of-work white Detroit autoworkers who, resentful of Japanese car imports, mistook him for being Japanese.

Read as a sign of hybridized, multiple, or constructed identity, the hyphen can become liberating because it can be performed and signified upon. Each hyphen is in reality a nested hyphen, consisting of a number of other intersecting and overlapping hyphens that provide inter- and intraethnic and national links. This fragmentation and multiplication can work against essentialism, nationalism, and dyadism. Faced with too many options and meanings, however, some have suggested removing the hyphen, while others have proposed replacing it with a plus sign.⁵ Martin Scorsese's *ITALIANAMERICAN* (1974) cleverly removes the hyphen and the space and instead joins the "Italian" with the "American" to suggest a fused third term. The film title by this most ethnic of New Hollywood cinema directors posits that there is no Italianness that precedes or stands apart from Americanness. In this book, I have retained the hyphen, since this is the most popular form of writing these compound ethnic designations.

The compound terms that bracket the hyphen also present problems, for at the same time that each term produces symbolic alliance among disparate members of a group, it tends to elide their diversity and specificity. "Asian-American," for example, encompasses people from such culturally and nationally diverse roots as the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Korea, Japan, Thailand, China, Laos, Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaysia, India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. To calibrate the term, such unwieldy terms as "Southeast Asian diasporas" have also been created. Similar processes and politics of naming have been tried for the "black" British filmmakers.

Independent film distributors, such as Third World Newsreel, Learn-First Run Films, and Women Make Movies, exploit the hyphen and the politics of the identity cinema by classifying these films thematically or by their hyphenated designation. Such classifications create targets of opportunity for those interested in such films, but they also narrow the marketing and critical discourses about these films by encouraging audiences to read them in terms of their ethnic content and identity politics more than their authorial vision and stylistic innovations. Several postcolonial ethnic and identity filmmakers are discussed individually and collectively.

Diaspora, exile, and ethnicity are not steady states; rather, they are fluid processes that under certain circumstances may transform into one another and beyond. There is also no direct and predetermined progression from exile to ethnicity, although dominant ideological and economic apparatuses tend to favor an assimilationist trajectory—from exile to diaspora to ethnic to citizen to consumer.

Mapping Accented Cinema's Corpus

It may be difficult to appreciate the geographic dispersion and the massive size of the accented cinema and the wide range of films that it has produced since the 1960s. To get a grip on this amorphous entity, I conducted a case study of Middle Eastern and North African accented filmmakers, a summary of which is presented in the following close-up section.

Close-Up: Middle Eastern and North African Filmmakers

These filmmakers are a prime example of the new postcolonial, Third World, and non-Western populations in the West whose work forms the accented cinema. Although their emigration to Europe and the Americas is not new, there has been a massive surge in their transplantation since the 1960s. Accurate figures for their various population types (refugees, émigrés, exiles, etc.) are difficult to obtain and vary based on the definition of each type and the data sources that are consulted. In the United States, the 1990 Census Bureau data showed that the total number of those who trace their ancestry to the

Middle East is nearly 2 million (exact figure: 1,731,000) out of a total U.S. population of approximately 250 million. Among these, there are 921,000 Arabs, 308,000 Armenians, 260,000 Iranians, and 117,000 Israelis. The largest concentration of Middle Easterners in the United States, and in the Western world, some 300,000 people, is found in Los Angeles (Bozorgmehr, Der-Martirosian, and Sabagh 1996).

The Middle Eastern and North African filmmakers form a surprisingly large and diverse group, numbering 321 filmmakers from sixteen sending countries who made at least 920 films in twenty-seven receiving countries, mostly in Europe and North America.⁶ In terms of output, Iranian filmmakers topped the list (with 307 films), followed by Armenians (235), Algerians (107), Lebanese (46), Palestinians (35), Turks (25), Moroccans (25), Tunisians (23), and Israeli/Jewish filmmakers (24). The majority of the filmmakers were men, reflecting the dominance of patriarchy within the sending nations and the general pattern of migrations worldwide, which have favored the emigration of men ahead of their families to establish a beachhead for chain migration. This gender imbalance also reflects the belief, common to many Middle Eastern and North African societies, that cinema is not a socially acceptable, religiously sanctioned, and economically feasible enterprise for women. The patriarchal ideologies of the receiving countries, too, contributed to women's underrepresentation.

The historical factors that caused the migration and the density, variety, and cultural and economic capital of the displaced populations in the receiving countries are factors that favored accented filmmaking. Algerian filmmakers made their films almost exclusively in France, the country that until 1961 colonized Algeria and to which Algerians emigrated in massive numbers after their independence. Likewise, the majority of Turkish filmmakers worked in Germany, where historical relationship favored Turkish guest workers. On the other hand, Armenians made films in a number of European and North American countries, commensurate with their worldwide diaspora. Likewise, a social revolution dispersed many affluent Iranians to North America, where they made most of their films. European countries with receptive immigration policies toward Iranians, such as France, Germany, Holland, and Sweden, also proved favorable to the filmmakers.

The accented filmmakers' films, too, form a highly diverse corpus, as many of them are transnationally funded and are multilingual and intercultural. They range widely in types, from amateur films to feature fiction films, and from animated films to documentaries to avant-garde video (television films and series were not considered).

The magnitude, diversity, and geographic reach of the Middle Eastern and North African immigration give us an idea of the larger scattering of the peoples across the globe and of the movement of cultural and intellectual capital from the Third World to the First World.⁷ Clearly, we are facing a mammoth,

emergent, transnational film movement and film style. However, unlike most film movements and styles of the past, the accented cinema is not monolithic, cohesive, centralized, or hierarchized. Rather, it is simultaneously global and local, and it exists in chaotic semiautonomous pockets in symbiosis with the dominant and other alternative cinemas.

The Stylistic Approach

How films are conceived and received has a lot to do with how they are framed discursively. Sometimes the films of great transplanted directors, such as Alfred Hitchcock, Luis Buñuel, and Jean-Luc Godard, are framed within the "international" cinema category.⁸ Most often, they are classified within either the national cinemas of their host countries or the established film genres and styles. Thus, the films of F. W. Murnau, Douglas Sirk, George Cukor, Vincent Minnelli, and Fritz Lang are usually considered as exemplars of the American cinema, the classical Hollywood style, or the melodrama and noir genres. Of course, the works of these and other established directors are also discussed under the rubric of "auteurism." Alternatively, many independent exiled filmmakers who make films about exile and their homelands' cultures and politics (such as Abid Med Hondo, Michel Khleif, Mira Nair, and Ghassen Ebrahimi) or those minority filmmakers who make films about their ethnic communities (Rea Tajiri, Charles Burnett, Christine Choy, Gregory Nava, Haile Gerima, and Julie Dash) are often marginalized as merely national, Third World, Third Cinema, identity cinema, or ethnic filmmakers, who are unable to fully speak to mainstream audiences. Through funding, festival programming, and marketing strategy, these filmmakers are often encouraged to engage in "savrage filmmaking," that is, making films that serve to preserve and recover cultural and ethnic heritage. Other exilic filmmakers, such as Jonas Mekas, Mona Hatoum, Chantal Akerman, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Isaac Julien, and Shirin Neshat, are placed within the avant-garde category, while some, such as Agnès Varda and Chris Marker, are considered unclassifiable.

Although these classificatory approaches are important for framing films to better understand them or better market them, they also serve to overdetermine and limit the films' potential meanings. Their undesirable consequences are particularly grave for the accented films because classification approaches are not neutral structures. They are "ideological constructs" masquerading as neutral categories (Altman 1989, 5). By forcing accented films into one of the established categories, the very cultural and political foundations that constitute them are bracketed, misread, or effaced altogether. Such traditional schemes also tend to lock the filmmakers into discursive ghettos that fail to reflect or account for their personal evolution and stylistic transformations over time. Once labeled "ethnic," "ethnographic," or "hyphenated," accented filmmakers

remain discursively so even long after they have moved on. On the other hand, there are those, such as Gregory Nava, Spike Lee, Euzhan Palcy, and Mira Nair, who have made the move with varying degrees of success out of ethnic or Third World filmmaking and into mainstream cinema by telling their ethnic and national stories in more recognizable narrative forms.

One of the key purposes of this study is to identify and develop the most appropriate theory to account for the complexities, regularities, and inconsistencies of the films made in exile and diaspora, as well as for the impact that the liminal and interstitial location of the filmmakers has on their work. Occasionally such a theory is explicitly embedded in the films themselves, such as in Jonas Mekas's *Lost, Lost, Lost* (1949–76), Fernando Solanas's *Tangos: Exile in Gardel* (1985), and Prajna Parasher's *Exile and Displacement* (1992). More often, however, the theory must be discovered and defined as the film moves toward reception, by marketers, reviewers, critics, and viewers. Such a deductive process presents a formidable challenge. It requires discovering common features among disparate products of differently situated displaced filmmakers from varied national origins who are living and making films in the interstices of divergent host societies, under unfamiliar, often hostile, political and cinematic systems. I have opted to work with a stylistic approach, designating it the "accented style."⁹ Stylistic history is one of the "strongest justifications for film studies as a distinct academic discipline" (Bordwell 1997, 8). But stylistic study is not much in vogue today. Fear of formalism, lack of knowledge of the intricacies of film aesthetics and film production techniques, the importation of theories into film studies with little regard for the film's specific textual and spectatorial environments—all these can share the blame.

In the narrowest sense, style is the "patterned and significant use of technique" (Bordwell and Thompson 1993, 337). Depending on the site of the repetition, style may refer to a film's style (patterns of significant techniques in a single film), a filmmaker's style (patterns repeated in unique ways in a filmmaker's oeuvre), or a group style (consistent use of technique across the works of several directors). Although attention will be paid here to the authorial styles of individual filmmakers, the group style is the central concern of this book. In general, the choice of style is governed by social and artistic movements, regulations governing censorship, technological developments, the reigning mode of production (cinematic and otherwise), availability of financial resources, and the choices that individual filmmakers make as social and cinematic agents. Sometimes group style is formed by filmmakers who follow certain philosophical tendencies and aesthetic concerns, such as German expressionism and Soviet montage. The accented group style, however, has existed only in a limited, latent, and emergent form, awaiting recognition. Even those who deal with the accented films usually speak of exile and diaspora as themes inscribed in the films, not as components of style. In addition, the overwhelming majority of the many valuable studies of filmmaking in exile and diaspora have been narrowly focused on the works of either an individual

filmmaker or a regional group of filmmakers. There are, for example, studies (both lengthy and brief) devoted to the filmmakers Raul Ruiz, Fernando Solanas, Valeria Sarmiento, Amos Gitai, Michel Khleif, Abid Med Hondo, Chantal Akerman, Jonas Mekas, Atom Egoyan, and Trinh T. Minh-ha, and there are studies centered on Chilean exile films, Arab exile cinema, *beur* cinema, Chicano/a cinema, Iranian exile cinema, and black African, British, and American diasporic cinemas. While these works shed light on the *modus operandi*, stylistic features, politics, and thematic concerns of specific filmmakers or of regional or collective diasporic films, none of them adequately addresses the theoretical problematic of an exile and diasporic cinema as a category that cuts across and is shared by all or by many of them.¹⁰ My task here is to theorize this cinema's existence as an accented style that encompasses characteristics common to the works of differently situated filmmakers involved in varied decentered social formations and cinematic practices across the globe—all of whom are presumed to share the fact of displacement and deterritorialization. Such a shared accent must be discovered (at least initially) at the films' reception and articulated more by the critics than by the filmmakers.

The components of the accented style, listed in Table A.1 (Appendix A), include the film's visual style; narrative structure; character and character development; subject matter, theme, and plot; structures of feeling of exile; filmmaker's biographical and sociocultural location; and the film's mode of production, distribution, exhibition, and reception. I have devoted entire chapters to some of these components or their subsidiary elements, while I have dealt with others in special sections or throughout the book.

Earlier, I divided accented cinema into exile, diasporic, and postcolonial ethnic films—a division based chiefly on the varied relationship of the films and their makers to existing or imagined homelaces. Now I draw a further stylistic distinction, between feature and experimental films. The accented feature films are generally narrative, fictional, feature-length, polished, and designed for commercial distribution and theatrical exhibition. The accented experimental films, on the other hand, are usually shot on lower-gauge film stock (16mm and super-8) or on video, making a virtue of their low-tech, low-velocity, almost homemade quality. In addition, they are often nonfictional, vary in length from a few minutes to several hours, and are designed for nontheatrical distribution and exhibition. The feature films are generally more exile than diasporic, and they are often made by older émigré filmmakers. On the other hand, the experimental films and videos are sometimes more diasporic than exile, and are made by a younger generation of filmmakers who have been born or bred in diaspora. The experimental films also tend to inscribe autobiography or biography more, or more openly, than the feature films.¹¹ In them, the filmmakers' own voice-over narration mediates between film types (documentary, fictional) and various levels of identity (personal, ethnic, gender, racial, national). Although narrative hybridity is a characteristic of the accented cinema, the experimental films are more hybridized than the feature films in

their intentional crossing and problematization of various borders, such as those between video and film, fiction and nonfiction, narrative and nonnarrative, social and psychic, autobiographical and national.¹²

Accented Style

If the classical cinema has generally required that components of style, such as mise-en-scene, filming, and editing, produce a realistic rendition of the world, the exile accent must be sought in the manner in which realism is, if not subverted, at least inflected differently. Henry Louis Gates Jr. has characterized black texts as "mulatto" or "mulatta," containing a double voice and a two-toned heritage: "These texts speak in standard Romance and Germanic languages and literary structures, but almost always speak with a distinct and resonant accent, an accent that Signifies (upon) the various black vernacular literary traditions, which are still being written down" (1988, xxiii). Accented films are also mulatta texts. They are created with awareness of the vast histories of the prevailing cinematic modes. They are also created in a new mode that is constituted both by the structures of feeling of the filmmakers themselves as displaced subjects and by the traditions of exile and diasporic cultural productions that preceded them. From the cinematic traditions they acquire one set of voices, and from the exile and diasporic traditions they acquire a second. This double consciousness constitutes the accented style that not only signifies upon exile and other cinemas but also signifies the condition of exile itself. It signifies upon cinematic traditions by its artisanal and collective modes of production, which undermine the dominant production mode, and by narrative strategies, which subvert that mode's realistic treatment of time, space, and causality. It also signifies and signifies upon exile by expressing, allegorizing, commenting upon, and critiquing the conditions of its own production, and deterritorialization. Both of these acts of signifying and signification are constitutive of the accented style, whose key characteristics are elaborated upon in the following. What turns these into attributes of style is their repeated inscription in a single film, in the entire oeuvre of individual filmmakers, or in the works of various displaced filmmakers regardless of their place of origin or residence. Ultimately, the style demonstrates their dislocation at the same time that it serves to locate them as authors.

Language, Voice, Address

In linguistics, accent refers only to pronunciation, while dialect refers to grammar and vocabulary as well. More specifically, accent has two chief definitions: "The cumulative auditory effect of those features of pronunciation which identify where a person is from, regionally and socially" and "The emphasis which

makes a particular word or syllable stand out in a stream of speech" (Crystal 1991, 2). While accents may be standardized (for example, as British, Scottish, Indian, Canadian, Australian, or American accents of English), it is impossible to speak without an accent. There are various reasons for differences in accent. In English, the majority of accents are regional. Speakers of English as a second language, too, have accents that stem from their regional and first-language characteristics. Differences in accent often correlate with other factors as well: social and class origin, religious affiliation, educational level, and political grouping (Asher 1994, 9). Even though from a linguistic point of view all accents are equally important, all accents are not of equal value socially and politically. People make use of accents to judge not only the social standing of the speakers but also their personality. Depending on their accents, some speakers may be considered regional, local, yokel, vulgar, ugly, or comic, whereas others may be thought of as educated, upper-class, sophisticated, beautiful, and proper. As a result, accent is one of the most intimate and powerful markers of group identity and solidarity, as well as of individual difference and personality. The flagship newscasts of mainstream national television and radio networks have traditionally been delivered in the preferred "official" accent that is, the accent that is considered to be standard, neutral, and value-free.

Applied to cinema, the standard, neutral, value-free accent maps onto the dominant cinema produced by the society's reigning mode of production. This typifies the classical and the new Hollywood cinemas, whose films are realistic and intended for entertainment only, and thus free from overt ideology or accent. By that definition, all alternative cinemas are accented, but each is accented in certain specific ways that distinguish it. The cinema discussed here derives its accent from its artisanal and collective production modes and from the filmmakers' and audiences' deterritorialized locations. Consequently, not all accented films are exile and diasporic, but all exile and diasporic films are accented. If in linguistics accent pertains only to pronunciation, leaving grammar and vocabulary intact, exile and diasporic accent permeates the film's deep structure: its narrative, visual style, characters, subject matter, theme, and plot. In that sense, the accented style in film functions as both accent and dialect in linguistics. Discussions of accents and dialects are usually confined to oral literature and to spoken presentations. Little has been written—besides typographical accentuation of words—about what Taghi Modarressi has called "writing with an accent".

The new language of any immigrant writer is obviously accented and, at least initially, inarticulate. I consider this "artifact" language expressive in its own right. Writing with an accented voice is organic to the mind of the immigrant writer. It is not something one can invent. It is frequently buried beneath personal inhibitions and doubts. The accented voice is loaded with hidden messages from our cultural heritage, messages that often reach beyond the capacity of the ordinary words of any language. . . . Perhaps it is their [immigrant and exile writers'] personal language that

can build a bridge between what is familiar and what is strange. They may then find it possible to generate new and revealing paradoxes. Here we have our juxtapositions and our transformations—the graceful and the awkward, the beautiful and the ugly, sitting side by side in a perpetual metamorphosis of one into the other. It is like the Hundback of Notre Dame trying to be Prince Charming for strangers. (1992, 9)

At its most rudimentary level, making films with an accent involves using on-camera and voice-over characters and actors who speak with a literal accent in their pronunciation. In the classical Hollywood cinema, the characters' accents were not a reliable indicator of the actors' ethnicity.¹³ In accented cinema, however, the characters' accents are often ethnically coded, for in this cinema, more often than not, the actor's ethnicity, the character's ethnicity, and the ethnicity of the star's persona coincide. However, in some of these films the coincidence is problematized, as in the epistolary films of Chantal Akerman (*News from Home*, 1976) and Mona Hatoun (*Measures of Distance*, 1988). In each of these works, a filmmaking daughter reads in an accented English voice-over the letters she has received from her mother. The audience may assume that these are the voices of the mothers (complete coincidence among the three accents), but since neither of the films declares whose voice we are hearing, the coincidence is subverted and the spectators must speculate about the true relationship of the accent to the identity, ethnicity, and authenticity of the speaker or else rely on extratextual information.

One of the greatest deprivations of exile is the gradual deterioration in and potential loss of one's original language, for language serves to shape not only individual identity but also regional and national identities prior to displacement. Threatened by this catastrophic loss, many accented filmmakers doggedly insist on writing the dialogues in their original language—to the detriment of the films' wider distribution. However, most accented films are bilingual, even multilingual, multivocal, and multiacentric, like Egoyan's *Calendar* (1993), which contains a series of telephonic monologues in a dozen untranslated languages, or Raúl Ruiz's *On Top of the Whale* (1981), whose dialogue is spoken in more than a half dozen languages, one of them invented by Ruiz himself. If the dominant cinema is driven by the hegemony of synchronous sound and a strict alignment of speaker and voice, accented films are counterhegemonic insofar as many of them de-emphasize synchronous sound, insist on first-person and other voice-over narrations delivered in the accented pronunciation of the host country's language, create a slippage between voice and speaker, and inscribe everyday nondramatic pauses and long silences.

At the same time that accented films emphasize visual fetishes of homeland and the past (landscape, monuments, photographs, souvenirs, letters), as well as visual markers of difference and belonging (posture, look, style of dress and behavior), they equally stress the oral, the vocal, and the musical—that is, accents, intonations, voices, music, and songs, which also demarcate individual

and collective identities. These voices may belong to real, empirical persons, like Mekas's voice narrating his diary films; or they may be fictitious voices, as in Marker's *Letter from Siberia* (1958) and *Sunlas* (1982), or they may be accented voices whose identity is not firmly established, as in the aforementioned films by Akerman and Hatoun. Sergei Paradjanov's four feature films are not only intensely visual in their tableau-like mise-en-scène and presentational filming but also deeply oral in the way they are structured like oral narratives that are told to the camera.

Stressing musical and oral accents redirects our attention from the hegemony of the visual and of modernity toward the acousticity of exile and the commingling of premodernity and postmodernity in the films. Polyphony and heteroglossia both localize and locate the films as texts of cultural and temporal difference.

Increasingly, accented films are using the film's frame as a writing tablet on which appear multiple texts in original languages and in translation in the form of titles, subtitles, intertitles, or blocks of text. The calligraphic display of these texts de-emphasizes visuality while highlighting the textuality and translational issues of intercultural art. Because they are multilingual, accented films require extensive titling just to translate the dialogues. Many of them go beyond that, however, by experimenting with on-screen typography as a supplementary mode of narration and expression. Mekas's *Lost, Lost, Lost*, Trinh's *Suriname Vêt Green Name Nam*, and Tajiri's *History and Memory* (1991) experiment with multiple typographical presentations of English texts on the screen linked in complicated ways to the dialogue and to the voice-overs, which are also accented in their pronunciation. In cases where the on-screen text is written in "foreign" languages, such as in Suleiman's *Homage by Assimilation* (1991) and Hatoun's *Measures of Distance*, both of which display Arabic words, the vocal accent is complemented by a calligraphic accent. The inscription of these visual and vocal accents transforms the act of spectatorship, from just watching to watching *and* literally reading the screen.

By incorporating voice-over narration, direct address, multilinguality, and multivocality, accented films, particularly the epistolary variety, destabilize the omniscient narrator and narrative system of the mainstream cinema and journalisms. Film letters often contain the characters' direct address (usually in first-person singular), the indirect discourse of the filmmaker (as the teller of the tale), and the free indirect discourse of the film in which the direct voice contains the indirect. Egoyan's *Calendar* combines all three of these discourses to create confusion as to what is happening; who is speaking, who is addressing whom, where the diegetic photographer and his on-screen wife (played by Egoyan and his real-life wife) leave off and where the historical persons Atom Egoyan and Aysinê Khanjian begin. The accented style is itself an example of free indirect discourse in the sense of forcing the dominant cinema to speak in a minoritarian dialect.

Embedded Criticism

As Dick Hebdige has noted, style—any style—is “a gesture of defiance or contempt, in a smile or a sneer. It signals a Refusal” (1979, 3). The accented film style is such a gesture, smile, or sneer of refusal and defiance. Although it does not conform to the classic Hollywood style, the national cinema style of any particular country, the style of any specific film movement or any film author, the accented style is influenced by them all, and it signifies upon them and criticizes them. By its artisanal and collective mode of production, its subversion of the conventions of storytelling and spectator positioning, its critical juxtaposition of different worlds, languages, and cultures, and its aesthetics of imperfection and smallness, it critiques the dominant cinema. It is also highly political because politics infuses it from inception to reception. For these reasons, accented cinema is not only a minority cinema but also a minor cinema, in the way that Deleuze and Guattari have defined the concept (1986).

However, this should not be construed to mean that the accented cinema is oppositional cinema, in the sense of defining itself primarily against an unaccented dominant cinema. Produced in a capitalist (if alternative) mode of production, the accented films are not necessarily radical, for they act as agents not only of expression and defiance but also of assimilation, even legitimization, of their makers and their audiences. As such, accented cinema is one of the dialects of our language of cinema.

Accented Structures of Feeling

Since the accented style is not a programmatic, already formed style, one may speak of it as an emergent “structure of feeling,” which, according to Raymond Williams, is not a fixed institution, formation, position, or even a formal concept such as worldview or ideology. Rather, it is a set of undeniable personal and social experiences—with internal relations and tensions—that is still in process, often indeed not yet recognized as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating, but which in analysis (though rarely otherwise) has its emergent, connecting, and dominant characteristics, indeed its specific hierarchies. These are often more recognizable at a later stage, when they have been (as often happens) formalized, classified, and in many cases built into institutions and formations. (1977, 132)

The accented style is one such emergent category—not yet fully recognized or formalized. Its structure of feeling is rooted in the filmmakers’ profound experiences of deterritorialization, which oscillate between dysphoria and eu-

phoria, cellbacy and celebration. These dislocatory feeling structures are powerfully expressed in the accented films’ chronotopical configurations of the homeland as utopian and open and of exile as dystopian and claustrophobic (to which I devote two chapters of this book).

In some measure, what is being described here is similar to the feeling structures of postmodernism. In speaking about the formation of a new mass audience for postmodernist art, Fred Pfeil notes that experiencing such art is characterized by “a very unstable play between a primal delight and primal fear, between two simultaneous versions of the primary aggressive impulse, that which seeks to incorporate the world into itself and that which struggles to prevent its own engulfment. This dialectic is the postmodern ‘structure of feeling’ (1988, 386). To the extent that the accented and postmodernist cinemas both immerse us in these dystopic and euphoric moments of unresolved polarity, they are similar. However, not all postmodernist films are diasporically or exilically accented, while all accented films are to some extent postmodernist. Accented films differ from other postmodernist films because they usually posit the homeland as a grand and deeply rooted referent, which stops the postmodernist play of signification. Since exile (more than diaspora) is driven by the modernist concerns and tropes of nationalism and state formation, which posits the existence and realness of the earth, mountains, monuments, and seas as well as of the peoples, histories, politics, and cultures of the homeland, many exilically accented films are intensely place-bound, and their narratives are driven by a desire either to recapture the homeland or to return to it. As a result, during the liminal period of displacement, the postmodernist playfulness, indeterminacy, and intertextuality have little place in exilic politics and cinema. The referent homeland is too powerfully real, even sacred, to be played with and signified upon. It is this powerful hold of the homeland that imbues the accented structures of feeling with such sadness and sense of terminal loss as described by Edward Said:

Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exile’s life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement. The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind for ever. (1990b, 357)

Sadness, loneliness, and alienation are frequent themes, and sad, lonely, and alienated people are favorite characters in the accented films.

Only when the grand return to the homeland is found to be impossible, illusory, or undesirable does the postmodernist semiosis set in. Then the nostalgia for the referent and the pain of separation from it may be transformed into a nostalgia for its synecdoches, fetishes, and signifieds—the frozen sounds

and images of the homeland—which are then circulated in exilic media and pop culture (including wall calendars, as in Egoyan's *Calendar*)¹⁴

Multiple sites, cultures, and time zones inform the feeling structures of exile and diaspora, and they pose the representation of simultaneity and multimediality as challenges for the accented films. Citing Sergei Eisenstein, George Marcus offered montage as a methodology that not only encodes multiple times and sites but also self-consciously problematizes the realist representation of the world. In the accented cinema, as in the multimediated ethnography that Marcus describes, this is achieved by critical juxtapositions of multiple spaces, times, voices, narratives, and foci (1994).

Tactile Optics

The human body is experienced from both sides of the phenomenological divide: externally, by means of mirrors, photography, film, electronic sensors, and other peoples' reactions; and internally, by means of our own vision, organs of balance, and proprioception (Sobchack 1999). In traumatic forms of expulsion and exile, especially when they are coupled with racism and hostility in the new country, the certainty and wholeness of the body (and of the mind) are often put into doubt. The body's integrity, requiring a coincidence of inside and outside, is threatened, as a result of which it may be felt to be separated, collapsed, fractured, eviscerated, or pitched. The exilic dislocation can be experienced simultaneously both at quotidian and profound and at corporeal and spiritual levels. The impact of dislocation on language has already been discussed. The dominance of vision—an accepted fact of modernity (Jay 1993)—is attenuated for the exiles by the prominence of the other senses, which continually and poignantly remind them of their seemingly irrevocable difference, loss, or lack of fit. A particular fragrance on a hillside, a stolen glance in a restaurant, a body brush in a crowded street, a particular posture by a passenger in an elevator, a flash of memory during daily conversations, the sound of familiar words in one's native tongue heard from an adjoining car at a red traffic light—each of these sensory reports activates private memories and intensifies the feeling of *displacement*, a feeling that one may have suppressed in order to get on with life. However, just as frequently and powerfully, these very reports may serve the opposite function of restoration and *emplacement*—by reestablishing connections.

Since some of the most poignant reminders of exile are non-visual and deeply rooted in everyday experiences, they tend to emphasize tactile sensibilities. As formulated by Michael Taussig, the sense of everydayness includes “much that is not sense so much as sensuousness, an embodied and somewhat automatic ‘knowledge’ that functions like peripheral vision, not studied contemplation, a knowledge that is imagetic and sensate rather than ideational” (1992, 8). This peripheral, distracted, tactile vision of the new location is repli-

cated in the accented films’ “tactile optics,” that is, their nonlinear structure, which is driven by the juxtaposition of multiple spaces, times, voices, narratives, and foci—the montage effect. This effect, in turn, is propelled by the memory, nostalgic longing, and multiple losses and wishes that are experienced by the diegetic characters, exilic filmmakers, and their audiences. Significantly, such a distracted mode of being in the world is also characteristic of postmodern living. Given that distracted vision and glance are also characteristic of television viewing, as opposed to film spectatorship, which is largely gaze-driven, this may partially account for the affinity of the accented experimental filmmakers for televisuality.

In addition to the distracted aesthetics of montage, the tactile optics involves the style of filming. Some filmmakers force the audience to experience the diegesis by means of the texture of the film, video, and computer screens (as in Egoyan's *Nest of Kin*, *Speaking Parts*, and *Calendar* and in Marker's *Sunles*). Some use long takes, which allow the spectators time to leisurely project themselves into the diegesis to the point of occupying it (as in Tarkovsky's *Nostalgia* and in Michael Snow's *Wavelength*, 1966–67). Single-frame filming and audio sampling capture fleeting moments of vision, memory, and voice, replicating distracted attention (as in Meïas's *Walkers*, part of which is filmed in single frame, or in Trinh's *Reassemblage* (1982), in which unfinished words and sentences are repeated in different iterations). Texture is suggested by emphasizing aromatic and sensual experiences (as in Ang Lee's *Eat Drink Man Woman* [*Yinshi Nan Mu*] 1994), by showing nature's elemental forces (as in Artavazd Pelechian's *Seasons* [1982] and in Ivens and Lorian's *A Tale of the Wind* [1988]); or by inscribing extremely claustrophobic urban spaces (as in Yilmaz Guney's *The Wall* [1983], Terik Baser's *40 m² Germany* [1986], Sohrab Shahid Saless's *Utopia* [1982], Yuri Ilenko's *Swan Lake: The Zone* [1990], and Yilmaz Arslan's *Passages* [1982]). A thematic focus on journey, traveling, and nomadic wandering (as in Tarkovsky's *Stalker* [1979], Ulrike Ottinger's *Johanna d'Arc of Mongolia* [1989], and Rachid Bouchareb's *Chab* [1990]) can also be a source of varying textures.¹⁵

Tactility is also promoted by the nonaudiovisual ways in which displaced people experience the audiovisual media. Located at the intersection of difference and alterity, they experience every film in the context of awareness of that difference. Certain images, sounds, characters, actors, accented speech, gestures, stories, locations, and quality of light within the film may remind exilic spectators of what Laura Marks calls their private “sense memories” (1994, 258), that is, each spectator's recollections of the images, sounds, smells, people, places, and times they have left behind.

The exilic structures of feeling and the tactile optics are reminiscent of Dudley Andrew's designation of “poetic realism” as an “optique” that characterizes the classic French films of the late 1930s. By his formulation, optique “suggests the ocular and ideological mechanisms of ‘perspective,’ both of which aptly play roles in the medium of film” (1995, 19). In its multiple contract with

industry and audiences, optique is similar to genre, and in positing a spontaneous, idiosyncratic, and authentic relationship between films and their makers, it resembles style. The accented style is an exotic optique because it provides both an ocular and an ideological perspective on deterritorialization. The ocular is encoded in the tactile optics and the ideological in the structures of feeling and synaesthetic sensibilities of the style.

Third Cinema Aesthetics

The genealogy of the accented style may be traced not only to the epochal shifts of postcolonialism and postmodernism but also to the transformation of cinematic structures, theories, and practices since the 1960s. Specifically, it begins with the emergence and theorization of a Latin-American cinema of liberation, dubbed "Third Cinema," and its later elaboration by Teshome H. Gabriel and others. Drawing upon the Cuban revolution of 1959, Italian neorealist film aesthetics, Griersonian social documentary style, and Marxist analysis, Brazilian filmmaker Glauber Rocha issued his passionate polemic, "The Aesthetics of Hunger," and Argentinian cinéastes Fernando Solanas and Spanish-born Octavio Getino, makers of the massive film *The Hour of the Furnaces* (*La Hora de los Hornos*, 1968), published their famous manifesto, "Towards a Third Cinema." These were followed by an avant-gardist manifesto, "For an Imperfect Cinema," written by the Cuban filmmaker Julio Garcia Espinosa.¹⁶ Other "revolutionary" cinematic manifestos were issued in North Africa and the Middle East.¹⁷ In France, the SLON (later ISKRA) and Dziga Vertov groups, among others, and in the United States, Newsteel and other groups picked up the clarion call of these manifestos and issued their own summons for new radical cinematic practices. The Latin-American polemics and manifestos in particular, including *The Hour of the Furnaces*, critiqued the mainstream, capitalist, "first cinema" and the petit bourgeois, authorial "second cinema"; in their place they proposed a new research category of "Third Cinema"—a cinema that is not perfect, polished, or professional.¹⁸ Indeed, in its formal practices, *The Hour of the Furnaces* is a clear progenitor of the accented style.

The accented cinema is one of the offshoots of the Third Cinema, with which it shares certain attributes and from which it is differentiated by certain sensibilities. As Gabriel elaborated, although Third Cinema films are made chiefly in the Third World, they may be made anywhere, by anyone, about any subject, and in a variety of styles and forms, as long as they are oppositional and libertarianist (1982, 2–3). As a cinema of displacement, however, the accented cinema is much more situated than the Third Cinema, for it is necessarily made by (and often for) specific displaced subjects and diasporized communities. Less polemical than the Third Cinema, it is nonetheless a political cinema that stands opposed to authoritarianism and oppression. If Third Cinema films generally advocated class struggle and armed struggle, accented films favor

discursive and semiotic struggles. Although not necessarily Marxist or even socialist like the Third Cinema, the accented cinema is an engagé cinema. However, its engagement is less with "the people" and "the masses," as was the case with the Third Cinema, than with specific individuals, ethnicities, nationalities, and identities, and with the experience of deterritorialization itself. In accented cinema, therefore, every story is both a private story of an individual and a social and public story of exile and diaspora. These engagements with collectivities and with deterritorialization turn accented films into allegories of exile and diaspora—not the totalizing "national allegories" that Jameson once characterized Third World literature and cinema to be (1986).

Third Cinema and accented cinema are alike in their attempts to define and create a nostalgic, even fetishized, authentic prior culture—before contamination by the West in the case of the Third Cinema, and before displacement and emigration in the case of the accented cinema. Like *The Hour of the Furnaces*, accented films are hybridized in their use of forms that cut across the national, typological, generic, and stylistic boundaries. Similarly, many of them are driven by the aesthetics of provisionality, experimentation, and imperfection—even amateurism—and they are made in the artisanal, low-cost mode of "cinema of hunger." In sum, despite some marked differences, both accented films and Third Cinema films are historically conscious, politically engaged, critically aware, generically hybridized, and artisanally produced. The affinity of the two cinemas and the impact of the one on the other are paralleled in the lives of some of the filmmakers, such as Fernando Solanas from Argentina and Miguel Littín from Chile, who moved from the Third Cinema in the 1960s to the accented cinema of the 1980s and beyond.

Border Effects, Border Writing

Border consciousness emerges from being situated at the border, where multiple determinants of race, class, gender, and membership in divergent, even antagonistic, historical and national identities intersect. As a result, border consciousness, like exile liminality, is theoretically against binarism and duality and for a third optique, which is multiperspectival and tolerant of ambiguity, ambivalence, and chaos.

The globalization of capital, labor, culture, and media is threatening to make borders obsolete and national sovereignty irrelevant. However, physical borders are real and extremely dangerous, particularly for those who have to cross them. In recent years no region in the world has borne deadlier sustained clashes over physical (and discursive) borders than the Middle East and the former Yugoslavia. The collisions over physical and literal lands, even over individual houses and their symbolic meanings, are also waged in the accented films. Since their widely received formulation by Anzaldúa (1987), borderland consciousness and theory have been romanticized, universalized, and co-opted by

ignoring the specific dislocatory and conflictual historical and territorial grounds that produce them. However, borders are open, and infected wounds and the subjectivity they engender cannot be postnational or post-al, but interstitial. Unequal power relations and incompatible identities prevent the wound from healing.

Since border subjectivity is cross-cultural and intercultural, border filmmaking tends to be accented by the "strategy of translation rather than representation" (Hicks 1991, xxiii). Such a strategy undermines the distinction between autochthonous and alien cultures in the interest of promoting their interaction and intertextuality. As a result, the best of the border films are hybridized and experimental—characterized by multifocality, multilinguality, asynchronicity, critical distance, fragmented or multiple subjectivity, and transborder amphibolic characters—characters who might best be called "shiffters." Of these characteristics, the latter bears discussion at this point.

In linguistics, shiffters are words, such as "I" and "you," whose reference can be understood only in the context of the utterance. More generally, a shifter is an "operator" in the sense of being dishonest, evasive, and expeditious, or even being a "mimic," in the sense that Homi Bhabha formulated, as a producer of critical excess, irony, and sly civility (1994). In the context of border filmmaking, shiffters are characters who exhibit some or all of these registers of understanding and performativity. As such, they occupy a powerful position in the political economy of both actual and diegetic border crossings. For example, in Nava's *El Norte*, a classic border film, the shiffters consist of the following characters: the *pollo* (border-crossing brother and sister, Enrique and Rosa); the coyote (the Mexican middleman who for a fee brings the *pollo* across); the *migra* (the U.S. immigration officers who chase and arrest Enrique); the *pacheco* (Americans of Mexican descent who speak Mexican Spanish imperfectly); the man in the film who turns Enrique in to the immigration authorities); the *chola chola* and *pachucal pachuco* (young inhabitants of the border underworld who have their own dialect called *caló*); and the U.S.-based Mexican or Hispanic contractors who employ border crossers as day laborers (among them, Enrique).¹⁹ The power of these border shiffters comes from their situationist existence, their familiarity with the cultural and legal codes of interacting cultures, and the way in which they manipulate identity and the asymmetrical power situations in which they find themselves.

Accented films inscribe other amphibolic character types who are split, double, crossed, and hybridized and who perform their identities. As liminal subjects and interstitial artists, many accented filmmakers are themselves shiffters, with multiple perspectives and conflicted or performed identities. They may own no passport or hold multiple passports, and they may be stranded between legality and illegality. Many are scarred by the harrowing experiences of their own border crossings. Some may be energized, while others may be paralyzed by their fear of partiality. Their films often draw upon these biographical crossing experiences.

Themes

Understandably, journeys, real or imaginary, form a major thematic thread in the accented films. Journeys have motivation, direction, and duration, each of which impacts the travel and the traveler. Three types of journeys are explored in this book: outward journeys of escape, home seeking, and home founding; journeys of quest, homelessness, and loss; and inward, homecoming journeys. Depending on their directions, journeys are valued differently. In the accented cinema, westering journeys are particularly valued, partly because they reflect the filmmakers' own trajectory and the general flow of value worldwide. The westering journey is embedded, in its varied manifestations, in Xavier Koller's *Journey of Hope* (1990), Nizamettin Arif's *A Cry for Bako* (1992), and Ghassem Ebrahimi's *The Suitors* (1989). In Nava's *El Norte*, a south-north journey lures the Mayan Indians from Guatemala to the United States.

There are many instances of empowering return journeys: to Morocco in Faridah Ben Lyazid's *Door to the Sky* (1989), to Africa in Raquel Gerber's *Ori* (1989), and to Ghana in Halie Gerima's *Sankofa* (1993). When neither escape nor return is possible, the desire for escape and the longing for return become highly cathartic to certain icons of homeland's nature and to certain narratives. These narratives take the form of varied journeys: from the dystopic and irresolute journey of loss in Tarkovsky's *Stalker* (1979) to the nostalgically celebratory homecoming journey in Mekas's *Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania* (1971–72) to the conflicting return journey to Japan and China in Ann Hui's *Song of the Exile* (1990).

Not all journeys involve physical travel. There also are metaphorical and philosophical journeys of identity and transformation that involve the films' characters and sometimes the filmmakers themselves, as in Mekas's films or in Ivens and Loridan's *A Tale of the Wind*.

Authorship and Autobiographical Inscription

If poststructuralism considered authors to be outside and prior to the texts that uniquely express their personalities, and if cinestructuralism regarded authors as structures within their own texts, poststructuralism views authors as fictions within their texts who reveal themselves only in the act of spectating. Poststructuralist theory of authorship is thus embedded in theories of ideology and subject formation, and it privileges spectatorial reading over that of authoring. Roland Barthes went so far as to declare that "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author" (1977, 148). In this figuration, the author as a biographical person exercising parentage over the text disappears, leaving behind desiring spectators in search of an author. This author whom they construct is neither a projection nor a representation of a real author but

a fictive figure within the text (Barthes 1975, 27). According to this formulation, the fictional structure or subject "Atom Egoyan" whom the spectators discover in the films of Atom Egoyan is not the same as, and does not necessarily map out onto, the empirical person named Atom Egoyan. Since texts create subject positions for both authors and spectators, poststructural theory must deal with the construction of both authors and spectators. Spectators, however, like authors, are not only subjects of texts but also—Barthes to the contrary—subjects in history, negotiating for positions within psychosocial formations, producing multiple readings and multiple author and spectator effects. The classical Hollywood cinema's invisible style creates filmic realism by promoting the impression of cohesiveness of time, space, and causality. As a result, diegetic reality appears to be authorless, natural, and mimetic, in an organic relationship to the profilmic world. As John Caughie notes, "The removal or suppression of the clear marks of 'authored discourse' transforms ideology from something produced out of a locatable, historical, determined position into something natural to the world" (1981, 202).

My project in this book is precisely to put the locatedness and the historicity of the authors back into authorship. To that extent, accented cinema theory is an extension of the authorship theory, and it runs counter to much of the postmodern theory that attempts to either deny authorship altogether or multiply the authoring parentage to the point of "de-originating the utterance."²⁰ However, film authors are not autonomous, transcendental beings who are graced by unique, primordial, and original sparks of genius. Accented film authors are literally and figuratively everyday journeyman and journeywomen who are driven off or set free from their places of origin, by force or by choice, on agonizing quests that require displacements and emplacements so profound, personal, and transformative as to shape not only the authors themselves and their films but also the question of authorship. Any discussion of authorship in exile needs to take into consideration not only the individuality, originality, and personality of unique individuals as expressive film authors but also, and more important, their (dis)location as interstitial subjects within social formations and cinematic practices.

Accented films are personal and unique, like fingerprints, because they are both authorial and autobiographical. Exile discourse needs to counter the move by some postmodern critics to separate the author of the film from the enunciating subject in the film, for exile and authorship are fundamentally intertwined with historical movements of empirical subjects across boundaries of nations—not just texts.

To be sure, there are postmodern accented filmmakers, such as Egoyan and Caveh Zahedi, in whose films the relationship of the authoring filmmaker to both the text and the authoring structure within the text is one not of direct parentage but of convoluted performance. However, the questioning of the bond linking autobiography to authorship should not be used as a postmodern-

ist sleight of hand to dismiss the specificity of exile conditions or to defuse their subversive and empowering potentiality. Such a move comes at the very moment that, for the diasporized subalterns of the world, history, historical agency, and autobiographical consciousness have become significant and signifying components of identity, artistic production, and social agency. Accented authors are empirical subjects who exist outside and prior to their films.

In the accented cinema, the author is in the text in multiple ways, traversing the spectrum of authorship theories, from poststructuralism to poststructuralism. In a longitudinal and intertextual study of the films of individual filmmakers, we may discover certain consistencies from which we can construct an authorial presence within the films. It is thus that authors become discursive figures (Foucault 1977) who inhabit and are constructed not only by history but also by their own filmic texts. How they inhabit their films, or, in Bordwell's term (1989, 151–68), how they are "personified" varies: they may inhabit them as real empirical persons, enunciating subjects, structured absences, fictive structures, or a combination of these. In the accented films, determining the mode of habitation of the author within the text is a complex task, even in films in which the filmmakers appear as empirical persons and as themselves either audiovisually (Mekas's films, including *Lost, Lost, Lost*), or only visually (Suleiman's *Chronicle of Disappearance*), or only vocally and as the film's addressee (Akerman's *News from Home*), or as fictional characters (Egoyan's *Calendula*) or as author surrogates (Naderi's *Mambatan by Numbers* and Shahid Saleh's *Raise for Africa*, 1991). In all these cases, filmmakers are engaged in the performance of the self. In short, because of their interstitiality, even in situations of self-inscription exile authors tend to create ambiguity regarding their own real, fictive, or discursive identities, thus problematizing Philippe Legendre's "autobiographical pact," which requires that the author, the narrator, and the protagonist be identical (1989, 5).

Exilic authorship is also a function of the filmmakers' mode of production. In fact, in their multiple incarnations or personifications, the authors are produced by their production mode. If the cinema's dominant postindustrial production modes privilege certain kinds of authorship, then the artisanal accented production modes must favor certain other authorial signatures and accents. It is worth bearing in mind that such signatures or accents signify both the various incarnations of their authors and the conditions of exile and diaspora. The interpretation of these signatures and accents depends on the spectators, who are themselves often situated astride cultures and within collective formations. Hence, the figures they cut in their spectating of the accented filmmakers as authors are nuanced by their own extratextual tensions of difference and identity.

To further demonstrate the explanatory power of the accented style, a case study of Atom Egoyan's style is presented in the next close-up section, based on an examination of his feature films, a review of the literature by and about

him, and my extensive discussions with him (Naficy 1997a). Although some of the components of Egoayan's accented style constitute his personal authorial signature, there are many components that he shares with other accented filmmakers.

Close-Up: Atom Egoayan's Accented Style

In the early 1990s, Atom Egoayan was considered to be the "most original" Canadian director next to David Cronenberg (Arzaman 1991, 70; Ansen 1992). He was also called "the most accomplished Canadian director of his generation" (Johnson 1991, 68) and Canada's first multicultural feature filmmaker "grant-magnet and prize pony" (Balley 1989, 46), a characterization he derided. His films occasionally received criticism on grounds of being "dishonest and posturing, more like-intellectual masturbation" (Kempsey 1990, D3), or for being "pretentious" and "elegantly empty" (Maslin 1989, C16). However, they were such a favorite of international film festivals and critics that he was regarded as "a child of the festival circuit" (Handling 1993, 8). It was at these festivals that his films received high praise and almost universal critical acclaim. Calling him one of the most talented directors at the 1987 Montreal Film Festival, Wim Wenders publicly turned over his \$5,000 award for *Wings of Desire* (1988) to Egoayan for directing *Family Viewing* (1987). *The Adjuster* (1991) won the Special Jury Prize at the 1991 Moscow Film Festival, and the Cannes International Film Festival gave Egoayan the International Critics Prize for *Exotica* in 1993 and the Grand Prize for *The Sweet Hereafter* in 1997. With each film, both his cult following and his general popularity grew.

Egoayan was born in Egypt in 1960 to two artists, who were descendants of Armenian refugees. His parents ran a successful furniture store until the rising tide of Nasserist nationalism and the parochialism of the local Armenian community encouraged their emigration in 1962 to Victoria, British Columbia. Egoayan was three years old at the time. The only Armenian family in the area, they set up another furniture store called Ego Interiors (Atom Egoayan's film company is called Ego Film Arts). Although Egoayan spoke Armenian as a child, he gave it up when he entered kindergarten to forestall ethnic embarrassment and harassment. He also refused to speak Armenian at home, and whenever his parents spoke Armenian to him, he covered his ears. At eighteen, he moved to Toronto and became what he thought was a fully assimilated Canadian, graduating with honors in international relations from the University of Toronto. While there, he led a socially active life, writing plays, publishing film criticism in the school paper, and working on student films. Egoayan's first short film, *Howard in Particular* (1979), was made in Toronto and was followed by several more shorts. His contact at the university with nationalist Armenian students placed him on a trajectory of increased ethnic awareness.

Egoayan's output may be divided into three general categories: short films, television films and episodic series, and feature films. Despite the increasingly wide reception, even popularity, of some of his features and television films, so

far Egoayan has remained an independent filmmaker, relying on a variety of funds from local and regional arts councils, private sources, his own earnings, and Canadian and European television networks. This independent and alternative mode of production is a characteristic of the accented film practice and is constitutive of its accented style. Another contributor to this style and to his authorship is Egoayan's multiple functions in his films: he has written and directed all of his features; edited several of them (*Next of Kin* [1984], *Family Viewing*, and *Calendar*); functioned as executive producer or producer in many of them (*Next of Kin*, *Family Viewing*, *Speaking Parts*, *Calendar*, *Exotica*, and *The Sweet Hereafter*); and acted in one feature (*Calendar*) and several shorts. He has also played the classical guitar sound track for two of his features (*Next of Kin* and *The Adjuster*). In addition, his wife, Arsinée Khanjian, has starred in all of his features and coproduced *Calendar* with him. Other on-camera talent and off-camera crew members have been regular participants in his films.

As I discuss in the section on the mode of production, performing multiple functions and employing a repertory of talent and crew give accented filmmakers, such as Egoayan, fuller control over both the authorship and the cost of their projects. At the same time, however, this control deepens their interest in limiting their options. As such, Egoayan's films tend to inscribe more fully his own biography, personal obsessions, and auteurist vision and style.

Issues of race, ethnicity, and submerged ethnicity are not limited to "ethnic" films. In fact, much of the mainstream Hollywood cinema is "saturated" with submerged ethnic and racial resonances (Shohat 1991, 219). On closer examination, it will be seen that Egoayan's films are also suffused with such submerged resonances and that his filmic career is one of increased ethnicization, which emerges fully in *Calendar*. His films embody many attributes of the accented style, including the inscription of closed and claustrophobic spaces both in the films' mise-en-scène and in the filming; ethnically coded mise-en-scène, characters, music, and iconography; multilinguality and accented speech by ethnic characters and actors; epistolarity by means of letters, video, and the telephone; tactile uses of video and technological mediation of all reality; slippery, guarded, and obsessive characters who camouflage or perform their identities and secret desires; ethnic characters who either are silent or are present but only on video; inscription of journeys of identity and of return journey to the homeland; the instability and persistence of memory that can be recorded, recorded over, remembered nostalgically, erased, and played back repeatedly; and fragmented structures of feeling and narratives.²¹

Certain Armenian sensibilities further accent Egoayan's films: looks, gestures, expressions, postures, and certain thematic concerns with family structures, Armenian history, religiosity, ethnicity, and diasporism. Added to these ethnocultural sensibilities are Egoayan's personal proclivities and his feeling structures as a subject inhabiting the liminal slipzones of identity, cultural difference, and film production practice. Another enabling component of his accented style is his expression of those sensibilities and feelings in certain juxtapositions, narra-

tives, and themes that are at times so paradoxical as to require a knowing audience for their full appreciation. Like all accented speech, Egoyan's style has produced results that are fabulous and grotesque, charming and offensive.

These components of the accented style are present in the corpus of Egoyan's feature films, and to a large extent in each of his films. It is important to emphasize, however, that the identification of the accented style in his work in no way diminishes the heterogeneity of his films and the multiplicity of their meanings. My intention is not to reduce Egoyan to an essential exile or ethnic subject. There is none! Rather, it is to analyze his accented style and the hitherto more or less latent currents, crosscurrents, and structures in his public image and films.²² By neither conforming to nor exhausting the paradigm of the accented style, Egoyan's films confirm the importance of authorship as a marker of difference. His most glaring differences with the paradigm are his suppression of orality and his intense emphasis on the visual, vision, and voyeuristic structures of looking. In addition, although memory is significant in all his films, it does not particularly promote tactility or "tactile vision" (*Speaking Paris* excepted). There is almost no significant scene in any of Egoyan's films, except *Next of Kin*, in which the synaesthesia of meal preparation or of eating of food is figured. Likewise, open spaces, landscape, nature, and the human relation with them had no place in any of his feature films until *Calender*—his most exile work.

This examination of Egoyan's works also demonstrates the elasticity of the concept of style as a critical approach to exile and diasporic cinema. Like many of the filmmakers discussed, both Egoyan and his cinema are nomadic and hybridized. The films combine aspects of exile feature films and diasporic experimental films. His early features, especially the exilically pivotal *Calender*, integrated the high-gloss, narrative-driven attributes of the former with the small-scale, experimental, home-video dimensions of the latter, while his later films—*The Adjister*, *Exotica*, and *The Sweet Heratfer*—belong almost entirely to the feature film form. His wider critical and commercial success since *Exotica* is pushing him across another divide: away from the alternative and interstitial modes of production and toward the mainstream independent mode of production. By traveling across forms and modes, Egoyan himself is transformed. How he will respond to the undeniable allure of the big budgets, high gloss, and massive audience that the postindustrial cinema promises remains to be seen.

Like all approaches to cinema, the accented style attempts to reduce and to channel the free play of meanings. But this approach is driven by its sensitivity to the production and consumption of films and videos in conditions of exile liminality and diasporic transnationality. The style designation also allows us to reclassify films or to classify certain hitherto unclassifiable films. Thus, Meekas's *Lost, Lost, Lost*, which has been variously regarded as documentary, avant-

garde, or diary film, will yield new insights if reread as an accented film. If one thinks of Buñuel as an exile filmmaker, as does Marsha Kinder (1993), further understanding about his films, hitherto unavailable, will be produced. Likewise, a rereading of Miguel Littín's docudrama *The Jackal of Nahuelro* (*El Chacal de Nahuelro*, 1969), turns it into a protoexilic film containing many components of the accented style in emergent form, even though at first blush the story does not warrant such an interpretation.

The accented style helps us to discover commonalities among exile filmmakers that cut across gender, race, nationality and ethnicity, as well as across boundaries of national cinemas, genres, and authorship. References to filmmakers in this book range far and wide, from Godard to Melas, from Akerman to Med Hondo, and from Solanas to Trinh. Approached stylistically, films can be read, reread, and back-read not only as individual texts but also as sites of struggle over meanings and identities. By problematizing the traditional schemas and representational practices, this approach blurs the distinction, often artificially maintained, among various film types such as documentary, fiction, and avant-garde. All of these types are considered here.

The accented style is not a fully recognized and sanctioned film genre, and the exile and diasporic filmmakers do not always make accented films. In fact, most of them would wish to be in Egoyan's place, to move out of marginal cinema niches into the world of art cinema or even popular cinema. Style permits the critics to track the evolution of the work of not only a single filmmaker but also a group of filmmakers. As I discuss in the chapters on mode of production, Asian Pacific American filmmaking has gradually evolved away from an ethnic focus toward diasporic and exile concerns, while Iranian exile filmmakers have evolved toward a diasporic sensibility. These evolutions signal the transformation of both filmmakers and their audiences. They also signal the appropriation of the filmmakers, their audiences, and certain features of the accented style by the mainstream cinema and by its independent offspring. Because it goes beyond connoisseurship to situate the cinéastes within their changing social formations, cultural locations, and cinematic practices, the accented style is not hermetic, homogeneous, or autonomous. It meanders and evolves. It is an inalienable element of the social material process of exile and diaspora and of the exile and diasporic mode of production.