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For a Cosmopolitan Cinema – Editorial

James Mulvey, Laura Rascaroli, and Humberto Saldanha

The recent cosmopolitan turn in film studies has coincided with the emergence of a new set of valuable theoretical perspectives. Compared to other disciplines across the humanities and social sciences, cinema has been relatively slow to adopt cosmopolitanism as a critical tool. Dimitris Eleftheriotis suggests that this delay is paradoxically due to the self-evident nature of cinema as a cosmopolitan medium, as films and cinematic culture offer privileged entry points into the various debates that surround the idea of cosmopolitanism ("Cosmopolitanism"). The circulation of films through different nations, localities and platforms displays a plurality of imagined forms of being, as well as forging cultural encounters between others (Chan, "Backstage/Onstage"). For Eleftheriotis, the cosmopolitan aspect of cinema becomes evident at three levels: firstly, in the presence of "multi-ethnic groups of creative personnel"; secondly, through the utilisation of "transnational channels of marketing, distribution and exhibition"; and thirdly, through "stories, characters and settings, in its presentation of relationships between strangers, in its articulation of difference" ("Cosmopolitanism" 203).

At the genesis of this, the fourteenth issue of *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, the concept of cosmopolitanism itself provoked a flurry of hermeneutical deliberation, in particular in the context of a post-9/11 world, where Western perspectives are often characterised by an intolerance of cultural otherness. The rise of nationalist viewpoints buttresses the postindustrial ideologies found in countries such as England and the United States, questioning the cornerstone of the cosmopolitan ideal with regard to democracy and governance (Held). The practical application of cosmopolitanism has been called into question with regard to political and moral agendas (Kendall et al.), along with hospitality and openness to cultural diversity (Hannerz). Scholars who advocate an "actually existing cosmopolitanism" argue against the utopic and normative aspects that surround the concept, transforming cosmopolitanism into a set of attitudes (Beck; Robbins). The "ambient fear" created by globalisation has proven to be a hindrance to the achievement of a more tolerant world, united in diversity (Papastergiadis).

Cinema has become a relevant arena for the discussion and assessment of these conceptual crises. According to Jackie Stacey, numerous scholars have used films "to find imaginative spaces to explore the difficult questions of why difference continues to be so threatening and how the unfamiliar is transformed into otherness … in ways that justify contempt and intolerance" ("Foreword" ix). Stacey also acknowledges that films are able to materialise and envision—in their narratives and visuality—different cosmopolitan outlooks and agendas. Another strand of research originates with Nikos Papastergiadis, who, working on contemporary art, offers a relevant perspective to understand how cinema as a medium locates itself in this context of intolerance. For Papastergiadis, cosmopolitanism can be framed through an aesthetic dimension, and not only from a moral or ethical imperative. Films, for

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instance, can display new worlds and their worldviews, as well as novel locations and cultures. Consumption, in this respect, is considered a relevant aspect of how diversity and otherness can become part of one's daily life, even though such aspect can evoke negative distinctions between forms of high and low culture, core and periphery, West and East. A number of scholars, indeed, recognise that a cosmopolitan aesthetic disposition to the other becomes an ordinary reality, as in Ulrick Beck's concepts of "banal cosmopolitanism" and "cosmopolitanisation". Papastergiadis, on the other hand, believes that, rather than promoting a way of living with cultural difference via consumption, aesthetic cosmopolitanism can be linked to the possibility of embodying politics. In this regard, the scholar believes that art offers—through imagination—worlds that are able to reflect about a "new grounding for the debates on the politics of globalization, the ethics of hospitality, and the culture of cosmopolitanism" (8).

The Eurocentric legacy inherent in cosmopolitanism, as well as the universalist aspirations that exclude divergent understandings and perceptions of being in the world, propose a type of homogeneous commitment to cover all realities that are afar from the core. In mainstream literature, the notion of cosmopolitanism is generally associated with a Western genealogy, evoking the ancient times, where cosmopolitanism was understood as a normative idea to address one's detachment from one's community of birth or desire to connect to other regions. According to Robert Fine and Robert Cohen, the term re-emerged in the Enlightenment mainly via Immanuel Kant, as a means to express, among other things, a universal form of hospitality and civic obligation to humankind, in which societies should be guided by shared values of equality and freedom. The scholar Walter Mignolo articulates a different line of thought, questioning the concept's imperialist, elitist and hierarchical connotations, and positioning cosmopolitanism as an inclusive space that comprises a set of diverse projects that can be conceived and performed by actors from a range of cultural and political backgrounds. The establishment of positive, postuniversal conceptions at once undermine the negative and Eurocentric aspects of cosmopolitanism and shift its broader concerns—changing it from a project of empires, a way of seeing the world through a Western lens, or a type of class-conscioussness belonging to frequent travellers (Calhoun) to a concept capable of addressing "the unique features of our global historical moment: exploding population growth combined with dwindling natural resources on the one hand, and increasingly mobile, interconnected, diasporic and also competing cultural worlds on the other" (Will 9).

Nevertheless, evoking a contemporary notion of cosmopolitanism, as used today in disciplines spanning the social sciences and humanities, is not without issue. This becomes apparent through an examination of the multilayered, discipline-specific perspectives, preoccupations and methodologies connected with the concept (Delanty). According to Vertovec and Cohen, current understandings of the term cosmopolitanism can be assigned to five main groups: as a sociocultural condition dealing with transnational mobilities, senses of belonging and identity building; as a philosophy or worldview related to global justice and world citizenship; as a political project beyond the borders of the nation-state, as an attitude or disposition to engage with the world, and the cultural different other; and, finally, as a practice or competence of (again) engaging with the world and the other. In this regard, if cosmopolitanism has so many definitions and scopes, raising a whole range of interpretations and perspectives, how can the concept garner the necessary methodological validation to become relevant—or maintain its importance—in film studies? Also, if interpretations of cosmopolitanism are so diverse, how should the most appropriate approach to investigate

cinematic texts and cultures be determined? Finally, what does a cosmopolitan approach to film studies aim to achieve?

Unsurprisingly, given these premises, to date perspectives on cosmopolitanism within film studies have been multiple. From the conception of cosmopolitanism as a framework to analyse cinematic texts and film cultures, to the establishment of a cosmopolitan cinema, scholarship has reflected such multiplicity of meaning. It is possible to identify four key areas in this debate. The first relates to the representational level of film, and emphasises how cinematic stories have materialised and performed cosmopolitan outlooks through the representation either of alterity, the marginalised other, and migrant subjectivities (Bergfelder; Bondejberg; Rovisco; Eleftheriotis, "Cosmopolitanism"), or of identity transformations in a globalised context, in which national boundaries are reshaped, and the formation of new and fluid forms of belonging takes place (Rascaroli; Schindler and Koepnick). Within this first group, there are also analyses of films that portray the world as a whole, not only by presenting different regions, but also by emphasising the challenges brought about by globalisation, such as migrancy, dislocation, the rearticulation of borders, etc. (Azcona; Deleyto; Lopes; Roberts, "*Baraka*"). A second area of research spans the mobile characteristics of creative and artistic crews, such as the sojourner director, who moves across borders to shoot films in different territories of the globe (Mills), or the cosmopolitan auteur, and their condition of cultural displacement, which, in turn, is materialised in their oeuvre (Eleftheriotis, "Foreignness"); or such as the cosmopolitan star, who, despite his or her ethnicity, is able to travel through a range of cultural cinematic contexts, performing his or her "otherness" for Western audiences (Hu). Cosmopolitanism is also invoked to reflect on film culture, commonly framed as a project that denotes the establishment of sophisticated arenas of global film appreciation, such as film festivals (Iordanova; de Valck; Schwartz), and the existence of audiences that are interested in the appreciation of otherness through consumption (Andrew; Roberts, "Film Culture"), and/or regarding fandom and its embrace of cinematic difference through foreign films (Smith). The latter area of studies evokes cosmopolitanism as a manner of promoting engagements. Felicia Chan, in a recent monograph, discusses cosmopolitan cinema as one which "enables articulations of encounters with difference" mediated by cinematic language and cultural institutions (*Cosmopolitan Cinema* 6). In a different register, Sean Cubitt calls cosmopolitan cinema those productions that can promote global engagements with a range of audiences spread around the world. Finally, another area of research includes investigations of cinematic language and studies the adoption of international (or global/hegemonic) styles and aesthetics, deemed to be cosmopolitan, by a range of world cinemas, either to acquire global visibility, or to showcase a sophisticated style at a local level, or to promote transformations in one's own national culture (Melgosa; Prysthon; Regev).

This brief overview of the literature evidences not only the lack of conceptual agreement among the outlined perspectives, but also the diversity of agendas, methodologies and applicability of the term to specific research questions. Such variety of usages turns cosmopolitan cinema into an open, indeterminate and plural notion. While for some scholars such openness brings uncertainty and should be foreclosed by a proper conceptualisation of the term (Kendall et al. 15), Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha, Carol A. Breckenridge, and Dipesh Chakrabarty defend, in the face of this proliferation of meanings, that we should eschew specifications and maintain freedom and fluidity of approach. For the authors, indeed, there are many forms of cosmopolitanism and ways of being cosmopolitan, so much so that "specifying cosmopolitanism positively and definitively is an uncosmopolitan thing to do" (Pollock et al. 3). We align ourselves with the latter position and, accordingly, in this issue of *Alphaville* we draw on a plural idea of cosmopolitan cinema. Accepting that the concept has a variety of

meanings that can be adapted to different contexts implies the assumption of a multiplicity of ways to frame it, which are firmly located in different localities, histories and temporalities.

If contemporary cosmopolitanisms represent divergent ways of seeing and belonging to the world that generate a range of cultural identities, identifications, and also detachments, then it is not possible or productive to ask for a singular conception of cosmopolitan cinema. Adopting the polycentric vision proposed by Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, we wish to address cosmopolitanism in a way that considers and discusses the world from the vantage point of its many cultural locations and dynamics, thus escaping binarism, while at the same time focusing on the networks that are being developed today between the global and the local. The pluralist but historically and materially grounded methodological framework of this issue has produced contributions that demonstrate how notions of cosmopolitanism facilitate new analyses of filmic representation and narrative, of the circulation of film and its engagement with global audiences, and of cinema as an institution and of its relationship with other institutions. By proposing an idea of cosmopolitan cinema this issue and its contributors do not advocate for the mere introduction of a new, specific, singular conceptual "brand", which might come to replace established concepts such as those of world cinema or transnational cinema. Instead, echoing Felicia Chan, we advocate for and demonstrate a perspective that investigates "the conditions and contexts necessary for a cinema to be understood as 'cosmopolitan'" within its multiplicity of meanings (*Cosmopolitan Cinema* 16).



Figure 1: Uneasy cosmopolitanism in Michael Haneke's *Code Unknown.* Arte France Cinéma, 2000. Screenshot

Cinema, we believe, can provide aesthetic encounters performed in imagined social spaces between the self, the other or the stranger, thus providing fertile ground for contemporary debates on cosmopolitanism. These engagements allow us to critically examine the continuous metamorphosis of difference in terms of coexistence. Jacques Derrida highlights a binary logic implicit in cosmopolitanism, and uses hospitality as a lever to examine the contradictory interplay between the conditional and the unconditional. As Derrida explains, hospitality is conditional, in that it is only offered to certain others; this is to preserve the power

imbalance in favour of the host, while the stranger is expected to behave in a fashion that maintains this structure. This conditional practice derives from an unconditional hospitality whereby the other is welcomed without restriction with regard to behaviour. This Derridean double bind exploits the gap between the intent of the unconditional through the perversion of the conditional: "Hospitality is culture itself and not simply one ethic amongst others" (Derrida 16). The universality of the cosmopolitan ideal exposes the particularity of the laws made to protect the self in relation to otherness. Derrida calls for an experiential and experimental cosmopolitanism, echoing Emmanuel Levinas's position on personal responsibility for the other.

In an article on Michael Haneke's *Code Unknown* (*Code inconnu: Récit incomplet de divers voyages*, 2000), Jackie Stacey asserts that "cosmopolitanism is often more easily defined by its absence than its presence" ("Uneasy Cosmopolitans" 163). The absence of cosmopolitanism suggests a lack of ethical responsibility towards the other, while its presence is the aspirational possibility of an openness to otherness. Cosmopolitanism is not a rigid set of principles applicable only to the presence of hatred, but an ethical encounter with otherness steeped in the responsibility of self-reflection. Cinema provides a space to critically explore representations of the other—and this issue provides authors with the opportunity to experiment with cosmopolitanism, and to (self)-reflect on otherness in cinema.

The issue comprises eight articles. The first group of articles address issues pertaining to the politics of the representation of the other, which continue to be pressing today in both fictional and documentary film texts and practices. The articles in the second group focus on cosmopolitan institutions, with a special emphasis on their dynamics, on how such spaces are (per)formed, and, finally, on their establishment as venues where mediation, encounters and exchanges among different others, agents and cultures may take place. The issue also includes a dossier on the European University Film Award (EUFA), a cosmopolitan teaching-and-learning project currently involving twenty different European countries. Inspired by the successful experiment of the Prix collégial du cinéma québécois (PCCQ), EUFA is motivated by the desire to foster reciprocal understanding, collaboration and debate among European students.

Addressing contemporary film texts and casting strategies, then, the first three articles in the issue assess modes of engagement with the other by mobilising notions of cosmopolitanism, exoticism, difference and openness, and argue for complex and imaginative understandings of filmic representations of identities and cultures.

In "Encounters with Cultural Difference: Cosmopolitanism and Exoticism in *Tanna* (Martin Butler and Bentley Dean, 2015) and *Embrace of the Serpent* (Ciro Guerra, 2015)", Daniela Berghahn engages with otherness and cosmopolitanism through an innovative approach which addresses exoticism as a mode of engagement with cultural difference, rescuing it from its use as a pejorative term, rehabilitating it through a dialogue with cosmopolitanism. The author draws on the commonalities between exoticism and cosmopolitanism, highlighting empathy and positivity towards the other as key aspects in each concept. Using the award-winning films *Tanna* and *Embrace of the Serpent* as examples, Berghahn describes a new form of exoticism which, she argues, is inflected by cosmopolitanism, empowering marginalised communities by challenging westernised values and knowledge. In terms of narrative, representation and cinematic practices, the presence of cosmopolitanism is highlighted through the reimagining of the encounter as a reciprocal process, rather than a hierarchical model of consumption of the exotic other.



Figure 2: The exotic other in *Tanna* (Bentley Dean and Martin Butler, 2015). Contact Films, 2015. Screenshot.

Felicia Chan's "Cosmopolitan Pleasures and Affects; Or Why Are We Still Talking About Yellowface in Twenty-First-Century Cinema?" engages with what can be perceived as an absence of cosmopolitan values. Examining contemporary casting practices, Chan discusses the resurgence in issues of yellowfacing and whitewashing in Hollywood filmmaking as anachronistic in light of the recent cosmopolitan turn in cinematic theory and practice. Chan presents these representations of race as part of a complex and subjective picture, arguing against a universalised approach in favour of a cosmopolitanism that would balance local contexts, productions and reception, with an acknowledgement of the complexity of representing otherness in a sensitive and culturally appropriate manner. Chan invites the reader to consider issues of yellowfacing and whitewashing in terms of the cosmopolitan pleasures and affects they produce, and furthermore, to challenge the conditions placed upon a cosmopolitan openness to difference.

Sukhmani Khorana's "'Now I Fight for Belonging': A Cosmopolitan Refugee Meets Regional Australia in *Constance on the Edge*" examines political aspects of cosmopolitanism through a former refugee in the Australian documentary *Constance on the Edge* (Belinda Mason, 2016). Cosmopolitanism as a political ideal is examined through its manifestations in discourses of refugee advocacy in Australia. Representations of refugee narratives are discussed in the context of contemporary Australian political policy, with a close examination of the conditions placed upon refugees by their hosts. Khorana draws attention to the stereotypical representations of the stoic refugee, highlighting the constraints and expectations in terms of the juxtaposition between victimhood and resilience, and how these perceptions impact on integration experiences. Her article offers a position on cosmopolitanism that balances the local with the global, without favouring one over the other. Otherness is displayed, discussed and celebrated as a means of empowerment, with an openness to the challenges faced by the other in the struggle for belonging in a society which places conditions on hospitality.

Embracing the tension implicit in such a stance, the author calls for a politics of solidarity in which cosmopolitan cinema facilitates the audience's understanding of similarities and differences in the other.



Figure 3: Hospitality and solidarity in Belinda Mason's *Constance on the Edge*.
Constance on the Edge Pty Ltd, 2016. Screenshot.

As acknowledged by Monica Sassatelli, due to globalisation, decolonisation and multiculturalism, museums and other national art institutions came to assume trans- and post-national aspects. David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt and Jonathan Perraton maintain that, in a globalised context, the weakness of the nation-state state gave rise to the formation of supranational institutions, which in turn, in Pheng Cheah's words, are grounded in cosmopolitan forms of "global reach in their regulatory functions as well as global forms of mass-based political consciousness or popular feelings of belonging to a shared world" (218). Similarly, the five articles in the second section of this issue of *Alphaville* see cinematic institutions as sites of cosmopolitanism. In line with Jasper Chalcraft, Gerard Delanty, and Monica Sassatelli's observations, these articles frame cinematic institutions as arenas that can either be agents or products of cosmopolitan relationships (111).

Dina Iordanova's contribution, "Global Film at Global Airlines", may be placed in the first group described by Chalcraft et al., as it understands airlines as agents or arenas where cosmopolitan encounters are promoted. Observing that airlines offer dynamic programmes of film screening, including a diverse range of blockbusters, arthouse films, and classics, Iordonova proposes to see them as cosmopolitan territories of film consumption for global audiences. Through the use of distribution data, analysis and anecdote, she argues that airline programming is akin to that of festivals; in fact, that global airlines remain one of the few platforms of conviviality where global cinema is truly represented. Iordanova also points out that on-board spaces of exhibition are relevant cultural venues deserving of academic investigation. By proposing the ideas of the "cosmopolitan viewer", a representative of the new class of global travellers, and of the "cosmopolitan programme", responsible for offering to the

passengers the experience of accessing worlds, the article outlines new methodological categories from which research on global airlines could emerge.



Figure 4: Visiting the cosmopolitan Côte d'Azur. Jean Vigo's *À propos de Nice*. Pathé-Natan, 1930. Screenshot.

Cinematic institutions, in this case seen as a product of cosmopolitan relationships, are also central to Dorota Ostrowska's "Cosmopolitan Spaces of International Film Festivals: Cannes Film Festival and the French Riviera". Seeing the Cannes Film Festival as a product of the expansion of the Côte d'Azur's cosmopolitan, carnivalesque and exclusive space and project, Ostrowska argues that this festival is not only based in the Riviera, but also reflects its dynamics. In particular, she proposes that the celebrated event is a continuation of the myth and phenomenon of the Riviera of the pre–Second World War era. Using Marc Augé's anthropological ideas of place and non-place she first investigates the establishment of the French Riviera as a festivalised space, mainly drawing on sources such as the diaries of travellers and visitors to the area; she then assesses how features of the development of the Riviera, including the creation of gardens with exotic plants and the arrival of celebrated modernist artists, are reflected in the cosmopolitan aspect of the Cannes Film Festival.

Monia Acciari also places her interest in the field of film festival studies. In her article "Film Festivals as Cosmopolitan Assemblages: A Case Study in Diasporic Cocreation", festivals are conceived as venues that reflect cosmopolitan agency, and also as spaces that are driven by a less normative idea of cosmopolitanism. Acciari proposes to rethink festivals through the idea of "cosmopolitan assemblage", which she describes as a space made up of a number of cosmopolitan manifestations. She argues that such perspective allows one to investigate instances of "symbolic", "cultural" and "transitional border-crossing", all of which affect film festival programming both directly and indirectly. Taking a case study of the first Leicester Asian Film Festival from an insider's perspective, and using new independent Indian cinema to discuss otherness and strangeness, the author frames film festivals as a border. With a methodology built on textual film analysis, audience research and the interdisciplinary aspect

of cosmopolitanism, the article examines the challenges faced by identity-related film festivals and engages with the cultural, social and political issues that have a bearing on the distribution of new Indian cinema abroad.



Figure 5: Ciro Guerra's cosmopolitan cinematic margins: *The Wind Journeys*. Ciudad Lunar, 2009. Screenshot.

The idea of institutions as promoters of cosmopolitan relationships is also evoked in "The Films of Ciro Guerra and the Making of Cosmopolitan Spaces in Colombian Cinema" by Maria Luna and Philippe Meers. Discussing film festivals as spaces of global and cultural legitimisation, the authors investigate the dynamics involved in the internationalisation of Colombian filmmaker Ciro Guerra and his oeuvre, through what they call "cosmopolitan cinematic margins". This concept, they argue, can help us to interpret the content, narrative and style of films of cinematically marginal nations that have attracted global attention. The same concept is mobilised by Luna and Meers to analyse the novel status of contemporary Colombian cinema within the space of major international film festivals. The notion of cosmopolitan cinematic margins offers a critical, situated methodology "from below", which is employed in two distinct but interrelated strands of investigation. The first pertains to Guerra's use of natural locations, the recurrent figure of the traveller, and the representation of remote Colombian landscapes/cityscapes. Luna and Meers believe these formal elements were central to the positive reception of Guerra's films in the festival circuit, but also discuss, in their second strand of investigation, the correlation between the coproduction and national funding received by his films and the visibility they achieved in the festivals.

Anne Kustritz is interested in critical versions of cosmopolitanism, and on how they are represented respectively in two contemporary TV shows based on Sherlock Holmes's narrative universe, BBC's *Sherlock* (2010–) and CBS's *Elementary* (2012–). In her "Imperial and Critical Cosmopolitans: Screening the Multicultural City on *Sherlock* and *Elementary*", Kustritz argues indeed that imperial cosmopolitanism is related to a colonial node in which the

global circulation of commodities and people leads to the rise of segregation, social differentiation and ethnocentrism. Critical cosmopolitanism, on the contrary, is concerned with the increase of contacts between people from a range of cultural and social backgrounds, promoting mutual understanding, solidarity, and political empathy. With a special emphasis on cityscapes, the scholar sheds light on the relationships established between Holmes and other characters/citizens on both TV shows, highlighting that while *Sherlock* frames London from above as a space where social distance is kept, New York in *Elementary* is portrayed from a street-level as a multicultural city.





Figures 6 and 7: Contemplating the polygamy of place: for a cosmopolitan cinema. Aki Kaurismaki's *Le Havre*, Sputnik, 2011 (above). Nuri Bilge Ceylan's *Distant* (*Uzak*), NBC Ajans, 2002 (below). Screenshots.

It is indeed apt to close this issue of *Alphaville* at street level—a space governed by what Ulrich Beck has called the "polygamy of place", the condition by which we are

increasingly attached to several places at once, belonging in different worlds (43). The street is a space of transformations both exhilarating and painful; it is the bearer of intimations to the effect that the space of the cosmopolitan has become more proximate, as well as more elusive and conflictual. The articles in this issue explore some of the ways in which cosmopolitanism makes real demands of us as citizens, as well as scholars, and ambitiously open a range of compelling intellectual avenues, now calling for further exploration and research. By applying their critical intelligence to how the world as a polygamous space looks like through film—as textuality and as an institution—together these articles are also a call for a cosmopolitan cinema.

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