Audience, Race, Globalization, and South African Cinemas after 1994

At a panel on the distribution of South African content at the Durban International Film Festival in July 2017, a black scriptwriting student asked a panel of film industry notables whether they cared about showing films that a black kid could be proud of. Motheo Matsau, chief of sales and marketing for Ster-Kinekor, responded, "I only care about South African audiences."[1] As the nation's largest distributor and exhibitor of films, Ster-Kinekor considers South African audiences essential to its bottom line, and growing local audiences by offering engaging content understandably matters to them. Caring about paying audiences, however, is not the same as caring about race and representation.

Just a few decades earlier, soon after it took power, South Africa's first black-majority government determined that film had the potential to fortify the new multiracial democracy by promoting social cohesion, stimulating economic development, and creating jobs. In 1999, it created the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF) and charged the agency with fostering a national cinema, raising hope for the emergence of a vibrant, socially engaged, and self-sufficient film industry with the potential to invigorate filmmaking not just in South Africa but in other parts of Africa. The government and some private entities provided significant support, but South African cinema has so far failed to fulfill the role envisioned for it in 1994.

South African films do not yet accurately reflect the nation's multiplicity of racial identities, tell local stories rich in local nuance, or contribute to social cohesion. They seldom succeed financially, and the racial makeup of the film industry does not yet reflect that of the country.

This book identifies the internal and transnational forces that have affected South African cinema since 1994. It considers how the various legacies of colonialism and apartheid; the cultural and economic effects of globalization and neoliberal policies; specific practices related to production, distribution, and exhibition; and audience and critical reception have affected how South African feature-length narrative fiction films imagine both race and nation. It considers how a focus on job creation and economic growth has affected the social and artistic potential of cinema as the government endeavored to create a national cinema, and it examines how continued poverty and inequality determine who has access to the nation's films and the way those films are accessed.

The brief exchange between the student and Matsau captures some of the tensions in the post-1994 film industry, and thus the very issues this book grapples with. The representation of race has social and political implications for a fledgling nation like South Africa as it seeks to reimagine itself and transcend both a past and a present marked by the exploitation of people and natural resources, by racial and economic inequality, and by state suppression of legitimate protest. These issues are compounded by the nation's small cinema-going audience, as movie theatres are economically and geographically out of reach for most black South Africans. More than half of South Africans live in poverty, and the cheapest movie ticket costs about five percent of the monthly income at the poverty line.[2] That most movie theatres are megaplexes located at shopping malls in formerly "white" suburban areas makes going to the cinema even further out of reach. Then too, South African screens, like screens in many other nations, are inundated with Hollywood films, which have their own issues regarding race and representation. And when local films have made it into local theaters, black characters have largely featured as violent gangsters, victims of the AIDS pandemic, secondary to more complex white characters, or in the case of the nation's most popular local filmmaker, Leon Schuster, comedic fodder for a white actor in blackface.[3]

In a society historically fractured along the lines of race, ethnicity, language, class, and gender, questions around how cinema figures into the nation-building project are complex. Should cinema be used for its artistic potential to help audiences contend with their past and imagine their future? Or, given the high levels

of inequality and unemployment, should the film industry develop its economic potential and contribute to economic development and job creation? Though they sometimes converge, these objectives are in many ways competing. By examining recent feature-length fiction films, I trace how the tension between these goals has resulted in the multiple forms of South African cinema that have emerged since the transition to democracy in 1994, and determine that there is no national cinema.[4]

Questions around the existence of a national cinema link closely with the question of what nation means in South African history. South Africa is in many ways an improvised nation, having only come into being in 1994 after a rapid move towards democratization (Johnston 2014, 2). During this period of transition, South Africans had conflicting ideas of what South Africa should be and how to hold it together. Ultimately, many compromises were made to secure participation from a broad array of political parties and interest groups, international approval, and of course support from South Africa's diverse population. Racial, ethnic, and cultural difference and competing economic interests all fueled this contestation, and so did conflicting political ideologies. Afrikaner nationalism subsided and longstanding debates within the black community between African nationalism and nonracialism persisted. This is hardly surprising considering that both the colonial and apartheid governments used divide-and-rule tactics to accentuate difference and underpin systems of power based on exclusion. The Union of South Africa established in 1910 was built upon segregation and a racially and ethnically fragmented geography. After 1948, the apartheid government expanded this fragmentation by creating the Bantustan system, a group of "black" states led by ethnic governments that generally depended on and acquiesced to the apartheid state. Despite the rhetoric of rainbowism associated with the "new" South Africa, many of these identities have carried over into the new dispensation, where disillusionment with the state of social transformation has exacerbated them. So, the transition to democracy didn't necessarily result in a shared sense of what it means to be South African (Johnston 2014, 6).

Debates about whether post-1994 South African cinema is national take place alongside a shifting understanding of "African cinema," from a political cinema driven by nationalist impulses after colonialism to "post-national" "African cinemas" with an increasing range of aesthetic and generic practices and thematic concerns that are influenced by the effects of transnational circulation. This shift necessitates the study of African films not just as texts but also in relationship to issues of reception, production, and distribution (Mano, Knorpp, and Agina

2017, 2). Considering the history of racial exclusion and censorship in the realm of cinema alongside the post-1994 government's professed commitment to fostering a film industry that reflects the diversity of the nation and broadens access to its products while also using cinema to grow the economy, this approach is especially important in South Africa.[5]

Defining national cinema is complicated because of the globalized nature of cinema production and consumption, and the global dominance of Hollywood. Then too, many subjectivities and experiences shape how individuals and groups within any given nation relate to that nation and access its film industry and the films it produces. What constitutes a national cinema is thus subject to debate. Nations tend to prioritize developing and sustaining a national cinema for two reasons: economic and cultural. However, focusing on cinema's potential contribution to the national economy creates a national film *industry*, not a national *cinema* (Hill 1992, 10). In economic terms, there is a South African film industry, producing films in South Africa and employing South Africans. The second motivation for a national cinema is to create a "cultural articulation of a nation" that is distinct from the cinema of other nations (Hayward 2005, x). As such, a national cinema is significant to the "cultural life of a nation" (Hill 1992, 11). Central to this understanding are the kinds of national identity which a national cinema conveys, the aesthetics and genre in which they are conveyed, and the context in which its films are produced and received by audiences. National cinemas are often nationalist, which has the potential to obscure the way national identities and their creative expression change and evolve over time, are hybrid in nature, are often influenced by outside forces, and are contested and questioned. To be national, a cinema's identity need not be cohesive, nor must it adhere to a particular set of production strategies or aesthetic values. But it should adequately account for the different positionalities and experiences of nation and the resulting tensions, divisions, and communions. It should also be accessible and meaningful to the people of that nation, including audiences for whom the cinema has historically been out of reach. South Africa does not meet this threshold and consequently can't be said to have a single national cinema. In making the case for this declaration, *Projecting Nation* focuses on how South African films variously represent identities and how local audiences and critics respond to these films.

South African Cinema and the Nation

A national cinema has not emerged in South Africa even though the film industry there is among the world's oldest. South Africa's history of colonialism and apartheid, and the racial exclusion that persists some two decades into the new democracy, is part of the reason. Then too, the South African film industry has been transnational since its establishment. That it has always been fueled by and intertwined with global forces has made establishing a clear and stable national identity in the realm of cinema even more elusive.

Colonial Era

South Africa began screening films in 1895 with the arrival of Thomas Edison's Kinetoscope. For the next fifteen years, mobile film units screened primarily American and British films. Interest in cinema rapidly developed, and by 1909 Durban had the country's first permanent movie theater. Competition erupted between several distribution companies as they erected theaters around the nation (Gutsche 1972, 97–110). In 1910, the South African film industry began when I. W. Schlesinger established African Film Productions (AFP) and released South Africa's first narrative film, *The Great Kimberley Diamond Robbery*.

The birth of South African cinema coincided with the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. In the aftermath of the Anglo-Boer War, Afrikaner settlers and British colonists made an uneasy truce in order to ensure South Africa would be a "white man's country" (Giliomee 2003). Afrikaners and British were divided not only by culture but also class. The British were better educated and had access to capital and trade networks that underpinned their economic and political dominance over Afrikaners, most of whom were farmers. Protecting this tenuous agreement among whites meant dealing with the problem of poor whites (Giliomee 2003, 285 and 305). Afrikaner farmers saw integration as a threat since many of them were poorer and less skilled than their African counterparts. Ultimately, the Afrikaners and British enacted segregation and implemented policies that would limit black economic autonomy and ensure a white oligarchy. The Natives Land Act of 1913 allotted about 7 percent of the nation's land to Africans, who constituted about 70 percent of the population, and stipulated that Africans could only live outside of the reserves if they could prove employment. These reserves, expanded to about 13 percent in 1936, became the cornerstone of a segregated South Africa. Nevertheless,

the notion that South Africa was a "white man's country" was "largely an illusion" as blacks flocked to the urban areas marked as "white" because the "native reserves" could not sustain the number of people expected to reside within them (Giliomee 2003, 312). The Union Constitution of 1909, the Natives Land Act of 1913, and the Natives Urban Areas Act of 1923, which required black men in urban areas to carry passes, became the foundation of the state's policy toward blacks throughout the twentieth century.

Cinema advanced some of the economic, cultural, and political dimensions of this massive imperialist project. In 1915, Schlesinger established South Africa's first film studio in the Johannesburg suburb of Killarney (Gutsche 1972, 312). Under the auspices of African Consolidated Films and African Consolidated Theatres respectively, he bought and amalgamated all of South Africa's film distributors and exhibitors. Between 1913 and 1956, AFP produced some forty-three films (Gutsche 1972, 307–342; Tuomi 2006, 90). Although Schlesinger died in 1949, with his son John at the helm, the Schlesinger empire would retain control over virtually all aspects of South Africa's film industry until 1956.

Two of the industry's earliest feature-length films, *De Voortrekkers* (1916) and *Symbol of Sacrifice* (1918), both of which AFP produced, received national and international distribution, effectively marking South Africa as a filmmaking nation. Billed as "South Africa's National Film" upon its release in 1916, *De Voortrekkers* established a powerful precedent for the coding of both race and nation that persists more than a century later, much like D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) did in the United States.[6] Directed by American filmmaker Harold Shaw and written by Afrikaner historian Gustav Preller, *De Voortrekkers* featured high production values and an epic storyline capturing a seminal moment in South African history, the Great Trek. The film documents the struggles of Afrikaner pioneers (or *voortrekkers*) as they fled the Cape Colony in search of a new homeland. However, the film fails to properly contextualize the impetus for Afrikaner migration and overlooks the tension that historically existed between Afrikaner settlers and British colonists. Instead, the film depicts the Zulu people, representative of the black masses, as "the common enemy of Boers and Britons in their claim upon the land of South Africa" (Davis 1996, 129).

Premiering on Dingaan's Day,[7] December 16, 1916, the film was undoubtedly used to evoke Afrikaner nationalism (Tomaselli 1985; Van Zyl 1980). However, *De Voortrekkers* was really about maintaining imperial rule over South Africa. Like several notable films that proceeded it, including *Symbol of Sacrifice, King Solomon's*

Mines (1918), and *They Built a Nation* (1938), *De Voortrekkers* shows indigenous Africans as a violent threat to more civilized whites, thereby rationalizing European colonial expansion and the implementation of racist policies.

While South Africa subsequently produced a number of films that were well financed and received positive reviews, by the mid-1920s physical isolation from global markets, combined with the dominance of American films, left local filmmakers at a disadvantage. Feature film production slowed to two or fewer each year (Tomaselli 1989, 32). In 1931, AFP released *Sarie Marais,* South Africa's first film with sound, and *Moedertjie,* the first sound film with dialogue in Afrikaans. This marked the beginning of an Afrikaans-language cinema that would reaffirm the cultural identity of Afrikaners at a time "when the promotion of the Afrikaner 'nation' was gathering momentum on an unprecedented scale" (Maingard 2007, 44).

Although black South Africans had access to film products since the 1890s, the social, political, and economic realities of the Union effectively prohibited black participation in the filmmaking process. While blacks were not in a position to depict themselves or the issues relevant to their communities through film, government, missionary, and industry leaders recognized cinema's potential to shape racial and class identities as well as prompt sociopolitical action. These leaders thus censored content they perceived as threatening to the existing social order and created films meant to acculturate blacks in ways they deemed appropriate. These practices, which began in the Cape Province in 1910 and continued through the apartheid era, were not just about the so-called civilizing mission used to justify the colonial project but also about maintaining the inequitable class structure that underpinned South African society (Tomaselli 1989, 13). Race was inevitably tied to class as the economic power of whites hinged upon the availability of a controlled, cheap black labor pool. Consequently, a spate of local and national legislation determined what films were acceptable and for which racial audience. In addition to nudity, sexual acts, obscene language, and the intermingling of different racial groups, the government censored cinematic content that had the potential to spur dissent among marginalized groups.[8]

While there were a limited number of venues available for blacks to see films and the content of films was tightly controlled, missionaries and business leaders joined forces in using cinema to "moralize the leisure time" of Africans (Phillips qtd by Maingard 2007, 68). Reverend Ray Phillips, who belonged to the American Board of Missionaries, led much of this effort, "policing the African imagination" by showing films that reinforced notions of white superiority and provided wholesome

entertainment (Masilela 2003, 20). The Union Educational Department screened "educational" films through mobile film units that went to both rural and urban areas. The colonial government intended these productions to "civilize" blacks by addressing issues like financial prudence and diet. Mobile film units also screened films advertising European goods to encourage blacks to acquire an interest in imported merchandise and foodstuffs (Ssali 1996, 99). So, film ultimately became a useful way to bolster capitalism and promote "Western" sensibilities, while at the same time advancing notions of black inferiority and white superiority as a way to validate the need for segregation.

Colonialism overwhelmingly determined images of the nation in early South African cinema, but these images didn't go unchallenged. Solomon T. Plaatje, a founding member of the South African Native National Congress and a leading figure in the New African Movement, played an important role in the development of the local black film culture that developed in the 1920s.[9] Inspired by the New Negro Movement that emerged in the United States following emancipation in 1865 and by black thinkers like Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois, the New African Movement that emerged in the early 1900s sought to uplift Africans through the attainment of knowledge and education. Movement leaders understood the condition of black people around the globe as linked and used African newspapers like *Umteteli wa Bantu* and *Tsala ea Becoana* to articulate their vision for the regeneration of Africa and the construction of South African modernity. After a trip to the United States in the early 1920s, Plaatje created a mobile film project. Plaatje saw cinema as a "pedagogical instrument" that could "impart the social responsibilities entailed in the construction of modernity in South Africa" (Masilela 2003, 19). With this project, known as "Mr Plaatje's Bioscope," he visited communities throughout South Africa with an assortment of films documenting the achievements of African Americans, as well as some lighter fare. While many of the films were not about South Africa, given the history of racism and inequality in the United States made African American experiences familiar to black South Africans, such films offered an alternative vision for the future of the nation.

Apartheid Era

The 1948 election in which the Afrikaner dominated National Party (NP) won a majority of seats in parliament was a seminal moment in the establishment of the apartheid system. By and large, Afrikaners didn't support South Africa's involvement

in World War II on behalf of the allied forces, felt aggrieved by wartime policies and threatened by the growth of a black middle class, and disagreed with the governing United Party's proposed changes in racial policy in the aftermath of the war (Giliomee 2003, 479–480). Although the NP didn't invent segregation, they saw their electoral victory as a mandate to implement apartheid, which expanded and further entrenched this system of racial discrimination and separate development. English-speakers also saw preserving white domination as essential to their survival but preferred an approach that was "less aggressive and blatant" (Giliomee 2003, 481). The NP explicitly promised to "keep South Africa white" and turned to Afrikaner nationalist ideology to mobilize their base and justify their claims.

The 1950 Population Registration Act required that the entire population be classified on the basis of race. The Group Areas Act of 1950 limited the residential and trading rights of all blacks, including "coloureds" and Indians.[10] In 1952, pass laws were extended to all blacks over the age of sixteen, who required permission to be in urban areas for more than seventy-two hours. The 1956 Separate Representation of Voters Act removed "coloureds" from the common voter rolls and instead allocated four white representatives in parliament. The 1951 Bantu Authorities and 1959 Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Acts effectively made Africans "foreigners in the land of their birth" (Lipton and Simkins 1993, 23). They were then turned into "citizens" of one of eight tribal homelands or "nations," which was meant to give the illusion of self-governance and political autonomy. The large number of unemployed people in the homelands enabled exploitative job color bar polices in which the "living wage" for black people was set just above the cost of subsistence in the homelands (Saul and Gelb 1981, 17). This was reinforced by a Bantu education system meant to prepare Africans only to be menial workers. Lured by high rates of return effectively ensured by discriminatory policies, nations including the United States, Great Britain, West Germany, and Japan invested in South Africa and fueled this system of "racial capitalism." Under these conditions Afrikaner control over various sectors of the economy grew (Saul and Gelb 1981, 20, 542–543). Foreign investment surged even after widespread condemnation of the Sharpeville Massacre on March 21, 1960, in which the police fired upon a crowd of unarmed demonstrators protesting pass laws and killed sixty-nine people. In 1961, South Africa became a republic after holding a whites-only referendum the previous year and then withdrew from the British Commonwealth after coming under criticism from other members (Giliomee 2003, 494). Though Britain, South Africa's chief partner in trade and foreign investment, was disturbed by apartheid,

in the context of the Cold War, it saw South Africa as a strategic ally, which took precedence (Giliomee 2003, 495). This was also the case for other nations in the West, including the United States.

The apartheid government realized that blacks would not passively accept these repressive conditions and that enforcing them would necessitate suppression and the dismantling of civil rights. Consequently, as organized resistance grew and intensified from various sectors of South African society, the government clamped down in increasingly draconian ways (Giliomee 2003, 486). Organizations like the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan Africanist Congress, and the South African Communist Party were banned, and many of their members found themselves detained as political prisoners, driven underground or forced into exile. By the mid-1960s, there was a lull in organized black resistance. Then the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) emerged in the late 1960s calling for Africans, "coloureds," and Indians, who were all oppressed by apartheid, to see themselves as black and unite to fight against apartheid. The Soweto Uprising in 1976 marked an important turning point, as thousands of school children took to the streets to protest the implementation of an Afrikaans-language policy in education and were subsequently met with police violence. This unleashed a wave of protests that continued throughout the year and resulted in a severe crackdown by the state. Throughout the 1980s, conditions in South Africa became increasingly turbulent as the ANC in exile put out a call to make the nation ungovernable, and the United Democratic Front, a coalition of over six hundred organizations that represented students, workers, women, and other civic groups based on nonracial ideology, brought a new surge of resistance. A growing international sanctions movement and the collapse of the Soviet Union, which effectively marked the end of the communist threat the apartheid government used to justify its policies, also put it under pressure (Lipton and Simkins 1993,13). Though negotiations with key figures in the ANC had been underway for some time, by 1990 the NP unbanned political organizations and began releasing political prisoners, most notably Nelson Mandela, hoping this would give them the upper hand in some sort of power-sharing agreement with the black majority as the nation prepared to transition to democracy.

Throughout the apartheid era, the NP government recognized the propagandistic power of cinema and thus further entrenched and expanded government control over the film industry. A strict censorship board was used to manage the exhibition of films that criticized the government or exposed the sociopolitical conditions facing the majority black population. Under these conditions, cinema

became an instrument used to exert control over the black population, rationalize the system of apartheid to local and international audiences, and maintain racial and economic inequality.

The apartheid era saw several major shifts in the film industry, especially in the areas of exhibition and distribution. Twentieth Century Fox purchased the exhibition and distribution wings of the Schlesinger empire in 1956 and retained control until the 1970s. This gave Hollywood films direct inroads into the South African market. South African Theatre Interests Ltd., the organization that controlled the independent film distributor Ster Films, acquired Fox's interest in the 1970s. Operating under the name Ster-Kinekor, this organization continued to serve as an outlet for Hollywood films and assumed the mantle of the nation's leading film distributor and exhibitor (Tuomi 2006, 89). In the 1980s the Nu Metro Cinema Group, an organization affiliated with CIC-Warner, was formed. Nu Metro also profited from distributing and exhibiting Hollywood films in local theaters and, together with Ster-Kinekor, enjoys a virtual monopoly over theatrical distribution and exhibition of films in South Africa today.[11]

In 1956, the government implemented a system that subsidized "white films" in English and Afrikaans and offered financial incentives for films that performed well at local box offices. With the government's active involvement in funding and regulating movies, the film industry became a mechanism of the state. Under these conditions, the apartheid government's vision for a national cinema was obviously bound up with their particular understanding of nation (Maingard 2007, 10). In accordance with the apartheid philosophy of separate development, different films were made for different racial audiences. Mainstream films were largely made for conservative white audiences (Botha and Van Aswegen 1992, 9–16). Typically, such films had low production standards and propagated the NP's mantra of apartheid. Most imitated Hollywood productions, were escapist in orientation, and affirmed Afrikaner values "characterized by an attachment to the past, to ideals of linguistic and racial purity and to religious and moral norms" (Botha 2006). By and large, mainstream films were not concerned with capturing the racial disparities and discord that afflicted the nation. With few exceptions, this trend continued through the 1960s and 1970s, even as social unrest increased (Botha and Van Aswegen 1992, 10–13). Although black characters were largely absent, when they did appear, "it was often adjunct to whites; in that role, they told us more about whites—how whites saw themselves, how they reinvented and re-enacted mythologies of white supremacy—than they ever revealed about African lives" (Davis 1996, 3).

Throughout the apartheid era, Jamie Uys was South Africa's most successful filmmaker. Uys, who was instrumental in the government's adoption of a film subsidy scheme, insisted his films were apolitical. Nonetheless, his depiction of blacks relies on long-established practices for representing Africans in the Western imagination. Uys is best known for his international blockbuster *The Gods Must Be Crazy* (1980), which grossed more than $100 million (Tomaselli 1992, 216). With such widespread popularity, this film undoubtedly shaped the global, if not the local, perception of South Africa, its people, and the struggle for liberation. The film opens with the San people (described as "bushmen" in the film), who reside in the Kalahari Desert, finding a Coke bottle. Sporting loin cloths and talking in !Kung, the San are represented as primitive people. At first, the Coke bottle is thought to be a gift from their Gods, but soon competition over it intensifies and the community falls into disarray. Xi, the leader of the group, realizes he must return the bottle to the Gods to restore order and naïvely plans to toss it off the end of the Earth. As Xi embarks on this journey, he meets a bumbling Afrikaner zoologist, Andrew Steyn. Meanwhile, in a nearby village, black rebels plotting to overthrow the government kidnap a white schoolteacher and her students. Steyn, with the aid of his new sidekick Xi, manages to save the woman and her students, as well as trounce the black rebels. Unlike Xi, who has no knowledge of civilization and is not menacing but simple and naïve, the black rebels pose a violent threat to whites and their capitalist way of life. Led by Sam Boca, a character who evokes the presence of Cubans in Africa during the height of the Cold War, these blacks are represented as frightening and also incompetent, as they slip on banana peels and foul up all of their plans to seize control. So, in the end, we are left with blacks as naïve and primitive, or violent and threatening, but in any event ill-equipped to lead a nation.

Although far from the norm, the 1960s saw the emergence of what Martin Botha terms "involved films" that offered an "examination of the cracks of apartheid ideology" (2006). The most notable among these are Jans Rautenbach's *Die Kandidaat* (*The Candidate*) (1968), *Katrina* (1968), and *Jannie Totsiens* (1970). *Die Kandidaat* uses the election of a director to an Afrikaner nationalist organization to examine the Afrikaner mindset, revealing the hypocritical actions of the most ardent nationalists. *Katrina,* based on Basil Warner's novel *Try for White,* is about a "coloured" woman who attempts to pass for white to secure a better life for herself and her son under apartheid. When their true racial identity is revealed, their lives are devastated. Finally, with *Jannie Totsiens,* Rautenbach employs a psychiatric hospital as a metaphor for apartheid South Africa. For their critique of South African

society, these films faced censorship and were rejected by Afrikaner audiences (Botha 2006). With few exceptions, South African movie theaters were segregated until 1985, and thus these films were not accessible to most South Africans (Botha 2012, 124–125).

Beginning in the 1970s, directors Manie van Rensburg and Ross Devenish also used cinema to critically examine South African society. In several instances, these directors experienced challenges with censors, distributors, and/or the mostly white audiences.[12] Van Rensburg is best known for his films *Die Square* (*The Square*) (1975), a political satire focusing on the Afrikaner psyche; *The Native Who Caused All of the Trouble* (1989), about an African who attempts to reclaim his land from an Indian family only to come up against a white legal system; and *Taxi to Soweto* (1993), which comments on white fears of black South Africans with a plot about an Afrikaner woman who after a series of mishaps ends up in the black township of Soweto. Devenish, in collaboration with playwright Athol Fugard, directed a series of films. *Boesman and Lena* (1973) considers the impact of apartheid on a "coloured" man and his wife as they are forced to relocate from one squatter camp to another. *The Guest* (1977), based on the life of Eugène Marais, takes up the mindset of the Afrikaner writer and thinker who was addicted to morphine. *Marigolds in August* (1979) looks at the way the apartheid system fosters intraracial tension as discord erupts between two black men competing for work (Botha and Van Aswegen 1992, 21).

In the mid to late 1980s, Darrell Roodt emerged as a voice against the apartheid system. Roodt earned a reputation as a socially engaged filmmaker with his films *Place of Weeping* (1986), in which a black farmworker seeks remediation after her brother is murdered by their white boss; *The Stick* (1987), a supernatural antiwar film set during the South African Border War; *Jobman* (1990), about a black man born deaf and mute who revolts against the system; and, *Sarafina* (1992), a musical set amidst the 1970s Soweto student protests. Often working in collaboration with producer Anant Singh, Roodt created films that were accessible to white audiences by employing mainstream aesthetics. Though some of his films were banned or censored in South Africa, several drew international attention. As explored in chapters 2 and 5, Roodt continues to be a major player in the local industry whose films engage the state of the nation even as he has developed a reputation as a "contradictory figure" (Murphy and Williams 2007, 205). He has made socially concerned films like the AIDS drama *Yesterday* (2004), alongside Hollywood B-grade movies like *Dangerous Ground* (1997) and even a white farm

killing drama sponsored by Monsanto and AfriForum, *Treurgrond* (2015), that can only be described as propaganda.

What the Rautenbach, Van Rensburg, Devenish, and Roodt films have in common is a commitment to looking beyond the façade of apartheid found in mainstream cinema, revealing a volatile nation riddled with discontent. During the height of apartheid, such statements were significant. However, these films offer a white perspective and with that comes certain limitations; they tended to be message movies centered around white characters and/or aimed at white audiences.

Up until the late 1940s and 1950s, the film industry largely overlooked black audiences. Then white directors began releasing a handful of films concerned with black life, the first of them, *African Jim* (also known as *Jim Comes to Jo'burg*), in 1949. British director Donald Swanson created a "rags to riches" story about Jim, a black man from a rural area who comes to Johannesburg to find employment and ends up becoming a star. Though not without its faults, it was the first film to present a more authentic representation of black urban life, and black audiences longing to see black characters they could identify with gave it an enthusiastic response. The film is more liberal than its predecessors, but its representation of blacks is in many instances demeaning and there are no references to the pass laws or harsh economic conditions that were everyday realities for black people. Swanson directed *The Magic Garden* (1951) as a follow-up, and both films' popularity unleashed a string of imitators, such as *Zonk* (1950) and *Song of Africa* (1951). Ntongela Masilela aptly describes these fantasy films, which were influenced by the all black films emanating from Hollywood, as "largely white films with a superficial coating of blackness" (2003, 26).

In 1972 the government introduced the "B-Scheme," a state subsidy for "black films" that targeted African audiences. White producers interested in these financial incentives made most B-Scheme films, which were required to have a primarily African cast, the majority of dialogue in African languages, and be approved for black audiences by censors. Consequently, B-Scheme films tended to be made on limited budgets with low production values, and with few exceptions "conformed not only to apartheid imaginaries of African societies and cultures, but also what was deemed suitable entertainment for Africans" (Paleker 2010, 94–95). With such limited options, it's not surprising that many black South Africans turned to Hollywood gangster films for entertainment and emulated cinematic outlaws as a form of rebellion against an oppressive system (Nixon 1994, 31–34).

Simon Sabela and Gibson Kente were the first, and until the 1990s perhaps only,

blacks to direct feature films in South Africa. Inspired by a Radio Bantu soapie, Sabela's debut film *U-Deliwe* (1975) was funded by Heyns Films, a production company later revealed as a front for the Department of Information (Paleker 2009, 84–85). *U-Deliwe,* a Zulu-language film about an orphaned girl drawn to the big city, can't be described as radical, but with two million viewers, it spoke to the desire black audiences had to see their own image on screen. Based on Kente's stage musical of the same name, *How Long* (1976) is the only feature film critical of apartheid to be financed and directed by a black South African under apartheid (Tomaselli 1989, 57 and 63). *How Long* was filmed during the Soweto Uprising. Kente was arrested during production, and the film was ultimately banned (Davis 1996, 117).

In addition to *How Long,* two notable independent films exposing the conditions facing blacks emerged during the apartheid years. Though directed by whites, Lionel Rogosin's *Come Back, Africa* (1959) and Oliver Schmitz's *Mapantsula* (1988) are considered multiracial collaborations because black South Africans cowrote the scripts. Troubled by the "reawakening of fascism," Rogosin, a Jewish American filmmaker, came to South Africa in the late 1950s to make an antiapartheid film (Davis 1996, 47). He recruited Lewis Nkosi and Bloke Modisane, writers working for *Drum* magazine and associated with the literary and cultural movement known as the Sophiatown Renaissance,[13] to assist him. Masilela describes the Sophiatown Renaissance as "the closing chapter" of the New African Movement. Writers like Modisane longed to engage in film criticism, but they were prohibited from seeing many great works of cinema (Masilela 2003, 25–26). In *Come Back, Africa,* Rogosin fused a documentary style with a fictional narrative about a black man from Zululand compelled by the economic policies of apartheid to leave his rural home to find work in the city. Schmitz, a white South African, teamed up with Thomas Mogotlane, a black South African, to pen *Mapantsula.* This nonlinear film about the transformation of a petty thief into a revolutionary is radical in theme and style. That both *Come Back, Africa* and *Mapantsula* were shot covertly and banned by the government testifies to their militant nature and their perceived threat to the system.

By the end of the apartheid era in the early 1990s, the film sector, like many other aspects of South African society, was fragmented and unevenly developed. Having been denied access to training and resources, black South Africans were significantly disadvantaged when the industry opened the door to their participation. Even with Plaatje's early attempts to foster a South African film culture, limited access to movie houses, as well as a history of censoring and banning films, left a profound need

for audience development. As explored in chapter 1, the structural impact of these historical factors, along with the more recent effects of globalization on national identity and massive changes in the broader context of world cinema—which have altered where funding comes from, how cinema is made, how audiences watch cinema, and what content audiences have access to—have inevitably shaped the development of South African cinema after 1994 and its representation of race and nation.

Reimagining Race and Nation after 1994

With the end of apartheid rule and the transition to a multiracial democracy, 1994 signified a new beginning and hope for a more equitable future. Though democracy has brought some tangible manifestations of freedom, it has also been marked by contradiction since many of the old structures that perpetuated inequality continue to persist with profound effect, especially for those who live at the margins of society. So, the identity of the "new" nation, and various expressions of it, have been subject to ongoing debate and interpretation. One of the ways South Africa has been defined after 1994 is as a "rainbow nation." This label, attributed to Archbishop Desmond Tutu, was embraced by President Nelson Mandela, used by businesses as a marketing gimmick, deployed by nongovernmental agencies and a whole host of other organizations to signal a "new" South Africa, and amplified, often uncritically, by the media (Habib 1997, 15–16). As South Africa began to reimagine and rebuild itself as a nation in the aftermath of apartheid, the idea of a rainbow nation evoked the image of racial unity among the nation's diverse population. The image stands in stark contrast to the exclusionary notion of a nation centered around white identity (Baines 1998) and reflects the values enshrined in the new constitution.

Under the apartheid discourse of separate development, South Africa was conceived as a constellation of states, and it only became a nation in 1994. The rainbow nation has been described as metaphor that "symbolises the 'new' South Africa, the imaginary nation being constructed in the post-apartheid era" (Baines 1998). This description invokes Benedict Anderson's (2006) articulation of a nation as an "imagined political community," and the idea of the rainbow nation certainly shaped the government's approach to nation-building in the early years of democracy. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which Tutu chaired, was integral to this process as the official mechanism for national reconciliation. Intended to document the atrocities of the past as well as to promote healing, it

secured cooperation from the NP and ensured a peaceful transition to a multiracial democracy by eschewing retribution. Those who fully disclosed their participation in gross human rights violations were granted amnesty, with the idea that the TRC process would promote nation-building through forgiveness and reconciliation (Herwitz 2005, 541). Many consider the TRC successful because little retributive violence occurred following the first democratic election and because the commission held those on both sides of the struggle accountable for human rights violations (Gibson 2006, 409–411). It also provided a venue for ordinary people to publicly confront their oppressors by voicing their stories.

Though the TRC may have exposed certain truths about the past, its view of reconciliation can lead to the notion that disclosure alone is enough. What is remembered in processes such as the TRC is selective and inevitably connected to power, and the focus on reconciliation diminishes other ways of understanding the same past (Gqola 2001, 97–98). This critique of the TRC is especially poignant given its focus on gross human rights violations, rather than "the entire project of apartheid" (Mamdani 2002, 39). The day-to-day humiliations and injustices that blacks were subjected to were not included in the scope of the TRC. Also, for the most part, politicians, high-level bureaucrats, and business and industry leaders who designed, implemented, and most directly benefitted from apartheid chose not to participate in this voluntary process. This left lower-level officials, like police officers, who perpetrated acts of violence in the name of the state and were concerned with securing amnesty, to bear the brunt of this process. Since whites and blacks on both sides of the struggle were called on to testify to the crimes they committed, the evenhandedness of the proceedings prompted many to ask whether it was appropriate to blame those who were fighting against an oppressive regime. For many, the TRC lacked the crucial component of justice. Individuals who admitted to committing heinous crimes were allowed to escape punishment. And the Commission's Reparations Committee was largely deemed a failure since it was not able to redistribute land or wealth in a society plagued by economic inequality inextricably linked to the policies of apartheid.

The post-1994 government recognized the role mass media could play in the nation-building project. So, radio and television served as "important stages for symbolic representations of the 'rainbow' concept of 'One Nation, Many Cultures,'" a slogan used by the ANC before the 1994 election, and "We are one," a slogan used to promote the national broadcaster, South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) (Barnett 1999, 275). The TRC became a national and international media spectacle.

Recaps of the proceedings were aired regularly on local radio and television stations, as well as international news outlets, and worked to reinforce the nation's commitment to fostering the spirit of "ubuntu"[14] and rainbowism. As explored in chapter 2, a spate of TRC-themed films endorse the possibilities of interpersonal racial reconciliation (and by extension national reconciliation) through the work of the commission, including *In My Country* (2004) and *Red Dust* (2004), and a whole host of Mandela-centric films like *Goodbye Bafana* (2007), *Winnie Mandela* (2011), and *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* (2013) that use Mandela as a symbol of the possibilities of racial reconciliation. A number of other films more broadly engage the possibilities of memory, redemption, and forgiveness, such as *Zulu Love Letter* (2004) and *Tsotsi* (2005). Several interracial comedies like *Mama Jack* (2005), *White Wedding* (2009), and *I Now Pronounce You Black and White* (2010) allude to racial divisions of the past as a source of humor but always conclude that those divisions are manifest in individual differences as opposed to systemic structures and thus can be overcome.

The idea of the rainbow nation, however, has always been more myth than reality, and it sharply contrasts with the image of South Africa as "two nations" then Deputy President Thabo Mbeki powerfully invoked in an oft cited 1998 speech. He described one of these nations as white and relatively prosperous, with access to developed infrastructure, the other as black and poor and living in "grossly underdeveloped" conditions. He then linked the differences between these two nations to the racial, gender, and spatial disparities created by a long history of white minority rule during the colonial and apartheid eras, arguing that as long as these disparities exist the goal of reconciliation, that is becoming a rainbow nation, cannot be realized. Since this speech was delivered, the ranks of the middle and upper classes have grown more diverse, leading to an increase in intraracial inequality, but the other, larger nation—the one that is black and poor—continues to persist. Mbeki's plans for political and economic renewal were linked to his call for an "African Renaissance," that is, a regeneration of the intellectual and cultural life of the African continent. The African Renaissance can be seen as a call for a new beginning in Africa and a resurrection of the New African Movement that had emerged about a century earlier (Masilela 2009).

Despite Mbeki's astute analysis, as deputy president and later president, he promoted positions and policies that exacerbated inequality, including AIDS denialism and the adoption of neoliberalism. The transition to democracy was a result of negotiations that largely left the existing economic structures intact, so

when South Africa reentered the global economy, its "racial capitalist biases were amplified" (Bond 2014, 17). This limited the effects of liberation, especially for the poor black majority, even as the ranks of the elite class have grown more diverse.

If there is any remaining notion of rainbowism, it's certainly fraying as evidenced in the growing number of protests around "service delivery" and demands for the decolonization of education across the country, the rise in xenophobic violence, and widespread condemnation of the state massacre of striking mineworkers at Marikana in 2012.[15] It's also seen in increasing frustration with the ANC, which has struggled to make good on its promises of "a better life for all" and, under the presidency of Jacob Zuma, was plagued with allegations of corruption and "state capture." State capture, which has been described as "akin to a silent coup," refers to a political project that works to "repurpose state institutions to suit a constellation of rent-seeking networks that have been constructed and now span the symbiotic relationship between the constitutional and shadow state" (Bhorat et al 2017, 2). Despite Zuma's "rhetorical commitment to radical economic transformation," under his administration, there was "large-scale looting of state resources and the consolidation of a transnationally managed financial resource base" that became a "source of self-enrichment and funding for the power elite and their patronage network" (Bhorat et al 2017, 3). Neoliberalism in conjunction with state capture have limited the possibilities of widespread social transformation.

This growing disillusionment is evident in cinematic texts and the continued fragmentation of the film industry. One of the first local films (aside from Leon Schuster films) to capture the imagination of local audiences and perform solidly at the box office, *Jerusalema* (2008) subverts the myth of the rainbow nation as its black protagonist turns to a life of crime for lack of legitimate opportunities in the new national dispensation. Independent films by "born free" filmmakers, like *Necktie Youth* (2015) and *Thina Sobabili* (2015), depict how for young people in, respectively, the affluent suburbs and marginalized townships, South Africa is a "democracy 'only in frame'" (Rijsdijk 2018, 78). Despite the right to vote, the rainbow nation and the promise of an African renaissance with South Africa at the helm ring hollow for those born after the end of apartheid, due to the persistence of inequality, uncertainty about the future, and the absence of cultural identity.

In spite of attempts to unify the nation and transcend the racial and ethnic identities that apartheid produced, these identities continue to persist in potent ways. In the realm of cinema, this is perhaps most profoundly seen in the rise of films explicitly made for different racial/ethnic audiences, a practice reminiscent of

the segregated cinema of apartheid. This is seen in the ascension of "the Afrikaans culture industry," which includes the production of Afrikaans-language films almost exclusively aimed towards white Afrikaans-speakers that reaffirm and naturalize "the imagined boundaries of Afrikanerdom" (Steyn 2016b, 481). The reality that movie theaters remain inaccessible to most black South Africans has led to the production of low-cost, locally made movies geared towards black audiences and distributed straight to DVD or aired on local subscription-based and free-to-air television stations. For instance, the Lokshin Bioskop airs on M-Net's Mzansi Magic and "eKasi: Our Stories" on e.tv.[16] These movies, which are populist in orientation, are clearly inspired by the success of Nollywood, Nigeria's homegrown straight-to-video industry.[17]

Of course, race and class are not the only issues impacting representation. During the apartheid era a number of white women worked within what was then (and still is now) the white male-dominated film industry (Ebrahim 2014). Though the ranks of women filmmakers (directors, producers, and writers) are growing, women in general and black women in particular remain significantly underrepresented. Women also report widespread problems with sexism, sexual harassment, and discriminatory labor practices, which has led to the emergence of a new advocacy group, Sisters Working in Film and Television (SWIFT). The marginalization and underrepresentation of women in the film industry has particular implications for the representation of both race and nation given the way these facets of identity intersect and shape our experiences of the world.

South Africa, Globalization, and Changes in World Cinema

At a time when nationalistic preoccupations in African cinema appear to be subsiding, given what Alexie Tcheuyap describes as a "new context of transnational circulation" that has given rise to new narratives where "the idea of nation-building has been somewhat overshadowed by a shift in focus to more quotidian priorities" (2011, 1 and 25), South Africa makes for an interesting case study. The nation, especially under the auspices of the NFVF, has remained a potent force in shaping the South African film industry and its products, but it has also clearly been constrained by powerful transnational forces and the NFVF in particular has been tainted by allegations of a range of improprieties, including financial irregularities and wasteful spending (Blignaut 2017a, 2018; Bambalele 2018). In 1999, following

the creation of the NFVF and the implementation of various measures meant to foster a national cinema, the government began to make substantial investments in the film industry through development, production, post-production and marketing subsidies, tax incentives, and training bursaries. These investments have been crucial (even if inadequate) in diversifying the ranks of filmmakers and have enabled the production of a range of films that explicitly engage the nation from a variety of different viewpoints (including films that problematize or undermine the official rhetoric around nation-building and even explicitly criticize the ANC) and positionalities (including Afrikaans-language films and films by young people and women). South Africa has become a prime shooting location for foreign productions seeking to take advantage of comparatively low-cost skilled technicians, a beautiful and diverse landscape, and government incentives; a state of the art movie studio has been built in Cape Town; more than 250 feature-length narrative films have been released; and, in 2006, director Gavin Hood's film *Tsotsi* won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, shining a global spotlight on South African cinema.

Despite these accomplishments, the nation has experienced several stumbling blocks as it contends with the manifestations of racial inequality in the film industry, the intensification of globalization, and the emergence of new technologies. Moreover, the NFVF hasn't gone far enough in supporting independent filmmakers and working to ensure that South African films are accessible to South African audiences. When the ANC-led government first identified cinema as an important tool in rebuilding and reconciling the nation, it introduced various initiatives to encourage diversity within the industry and films that engage important social issues. However, once the government embraced neoliberal policies, the NFVF worked to facilitate the success of private industry, focusing in large part on film's commercial possibilities. The shift to neoliberal policies for the film sector mirrors the post-1994 government's approach to the development of South African society as a whole (Bond 2014; Treffry-Goatley 2010a). Despite the rhetoric around the potential of the film industry and some of the legislation associated with it, globalization and neoliberal policies have not been able to correct the persistence of racial and economic inequality, especially given the rise of state capture. Consequently, changes in the film industry, the way its films represent race and nation, and efforts to broaden access to those films, have been slow and uneven. While the government has invested in the film industry with some positive results, on-going inequality has stifled black access to the means of production, distribution and exhibition, and at about 5.5 million a year, the cinema-going audience remains small (just about

10 percent of the overall population) as most blacks cannot access the cinema due to the cost and location of movie theaters (NFVF 2013d, 44).

The effects of globalization and neoliberalism are most expressly seen in the development of a service industry, which caters to "runaway" productions. In a nation with an official unemployment rate of 27.7 percent (the figure is 36.4 percent if people who have given up looking for work are included), the film industry is one way to grow jobs, primarily through international investment (Gumede and Mbatha 2017). Over the last few decades, Hollywood has become increasingly decentralized, with states across the United States and nations across the globe competing for its business, offering tax incentives, subsidies, and other goodies with the hope that film productions will give a boost to the local economy. Increasingly, the NFVF has highlighted the economic impact of the film industry and paid notably less attention to the social and cultural effects of developing a local cinema (NFVF 2012b, 2014c, and 2017c). This perhaps explains why the NFVF has designated as much as 37 percent of its budget to "global and local positioning," with much of this supporting attendance at international film festivals to increase the visibility not so much of South African films, but of South Africa as a potential coproduction partner.

This approach reflects both the South African government's turn toward neoliberalism and Hollywood's. Neoliberalism is often associated with the liberalization of markets and limited government intervention in business (lower taxes and fewer regulations and trade barriers), making it easier for businesses to operate, especially across national borders. In fact, as Toby Miller and Richard Maxwell (2011) argue, neoliberalism is highly interventionist as it works to secure markets a return on their investment, often through taxpayer subsidized incentives and aid. While Hollywood prides itself on being a beacon of private enterprise, actually "a blend of corporate capital and state aid animates the industry" as "film studios utilize runaway productions, cheap and docile labor, state subsidies, treaties, government stimuli, and intellectual property to ensure their worldwide success" (Miller and Maxwell 2011, 24). South African Revenue Services has enacted national tax-relief policies aimed at promoting film production and international distribution and offering financial incentives through the Department of Trade and Industry for large-budget productions (Maingard 2017, 265–266). This focus on servicing foreign productions has created jobs (most of them temporary), contributed to the "upskilling" of workers in the film industry, and improved industry infrastructure, all of which can be beneficial to local cinema. It has not, however, substantially increased the accessibility of local films to most South Africans.

The two dominant forces in the distribution and exhibition of film during the apartheid era, Ster-Kinekor and Nu Metro, continue to dominate after 1994 and, with varying success, have expanded their operations beyond South Africa's borders.[18] Though they have made more space for local films in recent years, movie theaters still operate primarily as an outlet for Hollywood. According to the NFVF Box Office Report for 2017, non-South African films accounted for almost 90 percent of local releases and captured 96 percent of box office revenue. Unlike other countries, for example South Korea, France, and Brazil, that try to protect or cultivate their national cinema, no quotas limit the number of screens available to foreign films. Hollywood films are cheap to acquire after their initial release in the United States; they often come with leftover promotional materials, and it's easy to project how they will perform at the box office. So for the corporations that monopolize distribution and exhibition in South Africa, they are a safe bet.

Given the small cinema-going audience within South Africa, and the limited resources available to produce and promote feature-length narrative films, a number of South African filmmakers have turned to global partners as a way of securing funding and reaching more lucrative international audiences. South Africa is not alone in this—more than 85 countries have signed coproduction treaties to contend with the "increasingly monstrous barriers to entry in the screen industries" and "combat Hollywood's dominance of screen culture" (Miller et al 2001, 45 and 83). This has resulted in a new international division of cultural labor that often enables Hollywood rather than challenges it and has led to a universalizing tendency in storyline and style. Coproduction agreements are based on the collaboration of producers from two or more countries and allow them to pool financial resources and creative and technical talent. Since all participating countries designate them as national, producers can take advantage of their home country's public funding and government incentives (NFVF 2011a and 2014c). Coproductions can improve the financial viability and international visibility of local films, as was the case with *Tsotsi* and *District 9* (2009). They also inevitably shape the way the films represent South Africa, as content, casting and style must be accessible to international audiences, sometimes to the detriment of the film's quality or its resonance with local audiences, as was the case with *Drum* (2004) and *In My Country*.

In light of this competitive landscape and the limited options for distribution African filmmakers have within Africa and around the globe, film festivals have become more important as an "alternative distribution circuit" (Dovey 2015, 3).

Compared to many other African nations, South Africa offers more opportunities for filmmakers, but they nevertheless still struggle to earn a living and accumulate enough resources to make their next film. Thus, the prestige that comes with having a film screened at a festival can be essential to their careers. Festival films are thematically and stylistically diverse but rarely include blockbusters and tend to be distinct from mainstream films, which generally feature clear and simple plots, big stars, elaborate special effects and sets, neatly resolved endings, and generally predictable box office returns (Wong 2011, 69). Given their association with "art film," films produced for the festival market will represent the nation in particular ways.

Until recently, cinephiles, film critics and journalists, and filmmakers were the main participants in film festivals, but government entities increasingly understand them as an important way to promote economic development through cultural industries (Bakari 2017, 189). The premiere international film festival in Africa, the Pan-African Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou (FESPACO), was established in 1969 to promote African cinema in the face of neocolonialism. This festival screens a decidedly political cinema that reflects the diverse experiences and desires of Africans across the continent and challenges the stereotypical representations of Africa that abound in the West. Some scholars argue that this kind of African cinema has alienated African audiences with its didactic tendencies and has thus become an outdated mode (Tcheuyap 2011, 16–17). With neoliberalism's pervasiveness and Nollywood's popularity, the context of African film production has changed substantially since FESPACO was established. South Africa's premiere festival, the Durban International Film Festival (DIFF), is trying to navigate this changing landscape. It functions as an important international platform for local and Pan-African filmmakers, and it develops local audiences for both commercial and independent films from South Africa and other African countries (Bakari 2017, 200; Rijsdijk 2018, 80–81).

Despite the ambitions of the South African film industry, the story of recent African cinemas has been less about South Africa and more about the rise of straight-to-video industries, especially Nollywood, which in terms of revenue is the third largest producer of films in the world (Barnard and Tuomi 2010). Though contending with similar challenges from globalization, neoliberalism, and changes in media technology and distribution, the Nigerian and South African film industries employ highly distinctive strategies and practices. In Nigeria, as in many other African nations, the industry faced obstacles including inadequate local funding,

no local production facilities, foreign control of distribution and exhibition, and the dismal state of movie houses. These conditions led to a dependency on funders, production facilities, and markets based in the Global North. The rise of Nollywood and other straight-to-video industries, the emergence of online digital distribution, the spread of satellite television, and the effects of piracy have changed this equation.

Where the South African government took a hands-on approach to developing the film industry after 1994, Nollywood emerged organically without government intervention. In fact, it arose because of the failure of the neoliberal policies and the absence of government intervention. Neoliberalism in Nigeria, and in many of other parts of Africa and Latin America, is associated with the Structural Adjustment Programs that international funding agencies like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) required before granting loans or aid. As Moradewun Adejunmobi recounts, key features of neoliberal policies include the liberalization of markets, deregulation of currency, the privatization of public services, reduction in government spending, and the overall retrenchment of the state (2015, 33). In Nigeria, the devastating economic effects of an IMF loan and Structural Adjustment policies in the mid-1980s left the film industry in tatters. This coincided with the rise of a military dictatorship that limited what could be shown on television and prohibited public gatherings in the streets, including the popular tradition of traveling theater (Anikulapo 2010, 251–252). Jahman Anikulapo describes Nollywood as "a reaction by people who had nothing do with film. Just ordinary Nigerians who were fed up with the system and the Nigerian state, which was dying at that time because there was no hope" (2010, 250–251).

Although they have the two largest economies in Africa, South Africa and Nigeria are a study in contrasts. South Africa has a population of 55 million and a per capita GDP of $5,273. Cinema viewing patterns are similar to those in the United States, where films are first released in large theaters, then on DVD, and eventually aired on television (Barnard and Tuomi 2010). Nigeria has a population of 186 million and a per capita GDP of $2,178. Nigerian films are primarily released and consumed on Video Compact Discs (VCDs, which are lower quality than DVDs), usually at home, but sometimes in a small video parlor for a nominal admission fee (Haynes 2011, 313). Nollywood producers are "aware of the trends emanating from the dominant centers in global production"; their films are patently commercial, and they circulate outside Nigeria, elsewhere in Africa, and around the world (Adejunmobi 2007, 2). Nevertheless, they are made almost entirely with Nigerian

capital and are primarily concerned with satiating the needs and desires of local audiences (Adejunmobi 2007, 2). Nollywood mainly refers to "southern Nigerian, English-language films, whose distribution is largely controlled by Igbo marketers, but that are made by people from the full range of southern Nigerian ethnicities" (Haynes 2011, 311). These are straight-to-video films that reflect local cultures, made quickly and inexpensively without bank loans or government support. Many films are centered around the "dream of individual advancement" (Haynes 2011, 318). This is reflected in a wide range of genres, among them romantic melodramas, occult films, action dramas, feminist stories, Christian revelation films, or some combination of the aforementioned. Despite this variation, Manthia Diawara concludes that,

> At a surface and political level, we can say that all Nollywood films are about representation of new social structures in conflict with the lasting effects of old ways; about the collapse of the economy and the way of life of the middle class; narratives of the masses' personal and collective fantasies, and the political content of daily life in Nigeria. Nollywood films provide us with the images and language to represent this new imagined community with the same frustrations and aspirations. (2010, 177)

With minimal resources, but a whole lot of creativity and ingenuity, Nollywood has managed to do something that South Africa with its many more resources has not—access local audiences, even those who are poor, and capture their imaginations with films that speak to their collective experiences and desires.

The success of Nollywood has inspired straight-to-video practices elsewhere in Africa, including Ghana, Tanzania, and South Africa. Many South African industry stakeholders have derided Nollywood films, especially their themes (which they see as promoting stereotypes and as cheap imitations of Hollywood films) and production values (which tend to be poor in quality). But the popularity of straight-to-video films lies not so much with their imitative qualities but rather their ability to localize and give new meaning to globalized forms of popular culture (Garritano 2013, 14; Krings 2015). This is why such films have resonated in some sectors of South African society as aspiring practitioners look for ways to access the film industry without extensive training, professional networks, or capital, and as audiences long to see themselves and their communities on screen. This explains the rise of Vendawood and Twalawood.[19] It also explains why DStv's parent

company, MultiChoice, a multinational corporation based in South Africa but with reach throughout the continent, has developed channels dedicated solely to airing Nigerian video films (Adejunmobi 2011).

The South African film industry relies upon substantial government intervention in terms of both policies and funding, and it looks to the West, in particular Europe and North America, to develop and promote its industry, to cultivate an audience, and for validation that its industry is "world class," which seems to mean on a par with Hollywood. The nine coproduction agreements signed before 2018 were exclusively with countries in the Global North.[20] The NFVF has emphasized attending prestigious international film festivals such as Cannes and Toronto, the curriculum of film schools is oriented toward Hollywood, and many South African films mirror those of Hollywood in their themes and aesthetics. South Africa is positioned at the periphery of "an imperialistic global media industry," and when local features struggle to find space in theaters inundated with Hollywood movies, it's vulnerable to universalizing tendencies in global cultural products (Teer-Tomaselli et al. 2007, 153). But media globalization doesn't only flow in one direction, and post-1994 South Africa has become a regional media power on the African continent. Consequently, changes in South Africa's media landscape are not reinvigorating filmmaking elsewhere in Africa so much as facilitating the expansion of South African–based multinational corporations, such as MultiChoice, specializing in the distribution and exhibition of content beyond South Africa's borders (Teer-Tomaselli et al. 2019). This has implications for African film industries, not least of which is Nollywood and its ability to continue to undermine globalization imposed from above.

Position and Scope

Scholars, critics, and industry stakeholders all struggle to define South African cinema.[21] Given South Africa's particular history, the definition requires acknowledging an industry founded upon racial exclusion, part and parcel of the colonial and apartheid projects. Exclusion from cinema attendance and from the means of production, distribution, and exhibition was so systemically entrenched that, more than two decades into the multiracial democracy, the industry remains deeply fragmented along racial, class, and gender lines. South African cinema must also be understood as transnational, having been engaged with global processes since

its inception, even as those processes take new shape with the increased intensity of globalization.

South Africa has a national film industry, but I argue that it doesn't yet have a true national cinema. If national cinemas are dispersed rather than coherent, as O'Regan (1996) suggests, then the range of production practices and screen identities that exist in South Africa could be considered national. However, given the extent to which black South Africans remain excluded from creating and accessing their own nation's cinema, it's difficult to conceive of it as national. This study seeks to understand the various ways South African film has represented race and nation, especially in light of what Mbye Cham describes as "African experiences of cinema" (1996). That is to say, it's a study of South African *cinemas* after 1994. It acknowledges the multiplicity of practices in the spheres of production, distribution, and exhibition that emerged even as the government attempted to cultivate a national cinema. This approach moves away from the notion of a singular, authentic national cinema. Rather, it creates space for different experiences of cinema that are inevitably informed by different subjectivities.

Though my aim in this book is to understand how South Africans see and experience their nation's cinema, my scholarship is undoubtedly informed by my position as a white American researcher based in the United States. As a study-abroad student at the University of Cape Town in 2000, I had my first exposure to post-1994 South African film at an on-campus screening of Norman Maake's short film *Home Sweet Home* (1999). At that time, it was one of only a handful of films by a black South African, and it inspired me to learn about how South African cinema was changing after the transition to democracy. Since then, I have met dozens of South African filmmakers and others involved in the industry, attended South African film festivals, watched hundreds of South African films, and engaged in primary and secondary research in South Africa. There are inevitably things about South African life that I don't know or can't understand from a firsthand perspective. A central part of my research has been to collect reviews of and responses to South African films published in South African newspapers and other local outlets in order to get a sense of what Litheko Modisane (2013) might call the "public lives" of post-1994 films and how South Africans have made meaning out of their nation's cinema.

Projecting Nation is focused exclusively on feature-length narrative fiction films produced after the transition to a multiracial democracy in 1994. The production, distribution, and exhibition practices associated with documentary and short narrative films often differ from narrative features, and thus they fall outside the

scope of this project. For the purposes of this study, to be considered South African, a film must have a South African theme, South Africans must be included in at least one of the significant aspects of production (directing, producing, writing, or cast), and South African sources must provide at least part of the funding. Ideally, South African cinema, and our understanding of it, should reflect the tremendous diversity of the nation, and therefore, this book considers not only racial diversity but a range of subjectivities, including ethnicity, language, class, gender, sexuality, location, and their various intersections. It also considers the varying contexts of production, distribution, and exhibition and the way these practices shape cinematic texts and their meaning. This definition of South African film requires a tangible connection to the nation but is flexible enough to include South African filmmakers living outside South Africa and immigrants living in South Africa. It also considers the international coproductions that have become increasingly common.

Projecting Nation offers systematic structured analysis of cinematic texts informed by the political economic structure of the industry and film culture. It seeks to bring attention to films that reveal a great deal about the nation and developments in the film industry but have been neglected or understudied, and it puts these films in conversation with works that are already recognized as part of the canon. This includes films by Leon Schuster, independent and popular films by black and women directors, the niche sectors of Afrikaans-language films and low-cost movies for black audiences, and new films and practices.

The book is organized around four specific trends that are not fixed or static but nevertheless offer important insight into the state of the industry and the way its films imagine nation. The focus will be on the distinct ways that the films accomplish this, with attention to the various impacts of the legacies of colonialism and apartheid, the cultural and economic effects of globalization and neoliberal policies, specific practices related to production, distribution, and exhibition, as well as audience and critical reception. The four trends include: creating films that target global audiences with local stories, developing new aesthetic and thematic directions in independent cinema, producing popular films geared towards local audiences, and the refragmentation of local cinema with the rise of Afrikaans-language films and the popularity of Nollywood-style local movies. Because of the thematic organization, the films are not presented chronologically.

Chapter Summaries

After 1994, both the state and the private sector undertook efforts to revitalize and transform the South African film industry. The government saw film as a mechanism that could be used to foster social cohesion and, in alignment with the new government's neoliberal agenda, spark economic growth and development in a country plagued by inequality and poverty. The private sector also recognized the economic potential in developing the film industry, especially by expanding markets through new distribution and exhibition channels within South Africa and beyond its borders, and by creating a service industry that caters to international productions. Chapter 1 examines important national and regional developments in the film industry emanating from both the public and private sectors, especially as they relate to attempts to broaden access to the means of production and the films produced by the local industry to historically marginalized groups. It makes the case that, despite efforts to transform the industry during more than two decades of democracy, the industry's formal structures have not substantially changed and thus continue to exclude the majority of South Africans.

Since the transition to a multiracial democracy, a critical number of South African filmmakers have created films that feature local stories but target global audiences and embrace the values and aesthetics associated with Hollywood. The NFVF has reinforced this practice with coproduction agreements and by maintaining a presence at prestigious international film festivals. Chapter 2 argues that this approach privileges the economic rather than the social potential of film and shapes the representation of race and nation in ways that limit their resonance with local audiences. It also reinforces the post-1994 South Africa brand of rainbowism and the "African Renaissance," which are more myth than reality. The effects of this trend can be seen through critical analysis of three types of films: films that redeem the global image of South Africa as part of the nation-building project, including truth and reconciliation films like *In My Country* (2004) and *Red Dust* (2004), Mandela-centric films like *Winnie Mandela* (2011) and *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* (2013), and the historical drama *Drum* (2004); new "Africa films" that reinforce stereotypes about the continent and its people like the AIDS drama *Yesterday* (2004), the gangster film *Tsotsi* (2005), and the sci-fi flick *District 9;* and films that complicate the dominant narrative about Africa but in ways that are familiar to Western audiences like the animated hit *Khumba* (2013), the queer love story *The Wound* (*Inxeba*) (2017), and the feel-good festival favorite *Ayanda* (2015).

The onset of democracy saw the emergence of independent filmmakers driven by a desire to understand the legacy of the past and explore what it means to be South African in the "new" South Africa. Creatively fusing local stories with innovative aesthetics, films by these directors reflect a multitude of identities, perspectives, and experiences. Chapter 3 examines works by Ramadan Suleman, Maganthrie Pillay, Khalo Matabane, Akin Omotoso, Jahmil X. T. Qubeka, and Sibs Shongwe-La Mer, including *Zulu Love Letter* (2004), *34 South* (2005), *Conversations on a Sunday Afternoon* (2005), *Man on Ground* (2011), *Of Good Report* (2013), and *Necktie Youth* (2015). Often relying on financial support from the NFVF and film festivals for distribution and promotion, these films take on controversial issues with national reverberations, such as truth and reconciliation, identity, xenophobia, sexual violence, and disillusionment in the new dispensation, but they do so in innovative ways that prompt reflection and debate, even public outcry over government censorship. However, the hegemonic power of Hollywood, limitations in the existing distribution and exhibition structure, the need for audience development, and the adoption of neoliberal practices within the film sector have hindered audience access to these films and thus threaten the viability of independent cinema.

The hegemonic power of Hollywood and the legacy of racial and economic inequality has hindered most local films. This is largely why more than half of the feature films produced in South Africa fail to recover more than 10 percent of their production costs at local theaters (NFVF n.d.b). However, a small but growing number of commercially successful films hold their own against, and in some cases even outperform, Hollywood movies. These films are not concerned with what many industry stakeholders envisioned as the "new" South African cinema but with attracting local audiences, and in many ways they speak to the mood of the nation. Chief among these popular films are those produced by Leon "Schuks" Schuster, though other filmmakers have also South Africanized the creative values and practices of Hollywood. Such films may allude to social conditions or political issues, but they are not motivated by the sociopolitical possibilities of film—however, they do capture local audiences. Chapter 4 explores popular films that reveal a great deal about the state of the nation and the local film industry, including the cultivation of audiences through the use of genre and the star system, and the challenges of working with local distributors and exhibitors whose practices undermine local films at the box office. Schuster's popular appeal and controversy are examined through two of his most successful films, *Mama Jack* (2005) and *Schuks Tshabalala's Survival Guide to South Africa* (2010), along with other films that

played well with local audiences: Ralph Ziman's crime film *Jerusalema* (2008), Jann Turner's interracial comedy *White Wedding* (2009), romantic comedies and dramas like Akin Omotoso's *Tell Me Sweet Something* (2015), Thabang Moleya's *Happiness Is a Four-Letter Word* (2016), and Jayan Moodley's *Keeping up with the Kandasamys* (2017), and Michael Matthew's Western-inspired *Five Fingers for Marseilles* (2017).

Chapter 5 discusses the post-1994 return of an Afrikaans-language cinema and the emergence of Nollywood-style low-cost films for black audiences, both of which indicate a market-led approach to developing cinema. Apart from Schuster flicks, Afrikaans-language cinema is the only segment of the film industry to consistently attract local audiences at the box office. Two genres within Afrikaans-language cinema promote their own distinct myths of nation that are used to mobilize Afrikaner nationalism in the new dispensation. Teen comedies, like *Bakgat!* (2008) and its sequels *Bakgat! II* (2010) and *Bakgat! 3* (2013), project South Africa as almost exclusively white, idyllic, and removed from the racial diversity or economic inequality that shape the nation. White farm killings dramas, like *Platteland* (2011) and *Treurgrond* (2015), depict white farmers as the moral core of the country and as under threat. In the early 2000s, homegrown straight-to-DVD producers like Chicco Twala began to crop up. His films, *Moruti wa Tsotsi* (2003) and *My Shit Father and My Lotto Ticket* (2008), found traction with local audiences. In 2012, Mzansi Magic launched Lokshin Bioskop, which regularly features low-cost, locally made "bubblegum" films that allow viewers to see "extraordinary tales of typical South Africans" in the "comfort of their own homes" (Media Update 2014). This includes David Kau's township comedy *Taxi Ride* (2012). Both Afrikaans-language films and Nollywood-style movies point to the refragmentation of local cinema along racial and ethnic lines.

The concluding chapter argues that, while the film industry has grown in key ways and contributed to economic development and job creation, access to the various mechanisms of the film industry and its products remains profoundly unequal. Consequently, the film industry has not succeeded in projecting nation in a way that promotes social cohesion or establishes a national cinema. Audience fragmentation along with the adoption of neoliberal policies and their emphasis on the market has led to multiple South African cinemas that represent race and nation in distinctly different ways. Given the persistence of barriers associated with producing, distributing, and exhibiting local films, the conclusion will consider formal and informal developments in digital distribution, including the arrival of Netflix in South Africa and platforms such as YouTube, in terms of their potential

to engage the realities of post-1994 South Africa and to increase both opportunities for black filmmakers and cinema's accessibility to black audiences. The conclusion also considers the expansion of South African–based multinational corporations, such as the subscription-based satellite television provider MultiChoice, which specializes in the distribution of content beyond South Africa's borders and now offers channels dedicated to airing Nollywood movies. This has implications for film industries in other African countries, including Nollywood and its position as a disruptive force in the realm of globalized media.