

# VISUAL *difference*

Postcolonial Studies  
and Intercultural Cinema

ELIZABETH HEFFELFINGER • LAURA WRIGHT



# FRAMING FILM

## THE HISTORY & ART OF CINEMA

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To date, no text exists that focuses exclusively on the concept of postcolonial film as a framework for identifying films produced within and outside of various formerly colonized nations, nor is there a scholarly text that addresses pedagogical issues about and frameworks for teaching such films. This book borrows from and respects various forms of categorization—intercultural, global, third, and accented—while simultaneously seeking to make manifest an alternate space of signification. What feels like a mainstream approach is pedagogically necessary in terms of access, both financial and physical, to the films discussed herein, given that this text proposes models for teaching these works at the university and secondary levels. The focus of this work is therefore twofold: to provide the methodology to read and teach postcolonial film, and also to provide analyses in which scholars and teachers can explore the ways that the films examined herein work to further and complicate our understanding of “postcolonial” as a fraught and evolving theoretical stance.

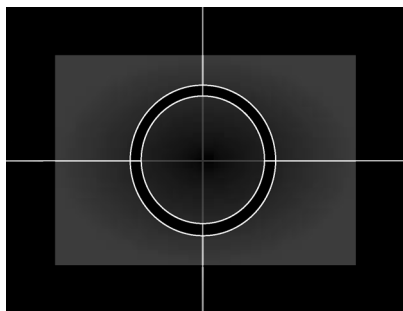
“Intercultural cinema has entered the mainstream, and we can neither celebrate it as resistant nor dismiss it as complicit. If a movie you see at the cineplex is an international co-production, its director is a Western person of color, and part of its proceeds go toward charity, does that make it a ‘good’ movie? Through impressive case studies and close viewings, Heffelfinger and Wright show that intercultural cinema’s power relations take place not only within the films but also in the complex materiality of production, reception, and cultural impact.”

—Laura Marks, *Associate Professor and Dena Wosk University Professor in Art and Culture Studies, School for the Contemporary Arts, Simon Fraser University*

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Frank Beaver, *General Editor*

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\*\*\*

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## *Introduction*

### Situating Intercultural Film

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In positing a postcolonial study of intercultural film, we feel that it is important, first and foremost, to define our terms and to situate our approach within (and outside of) the matrix of extant ways of seeing and discussing film about and from the so-called third world; in this sense, it is important to posit what this study is *not*. Our text seeks to utilize the influence and terminology of extant methodology—particularly the theoretical lenses of postcolonialism, as well as global, accented, and third cinema—but we are not dealing with films that fall neatly into these categories. Instead, we seek to differentiate our approach in terms of the scope of our exploration and the parameters that we consider herein. To begin to explore our particular subject position, it is necessary to state that there is considerable debate over the precise parameters of the scope and the definition of the term “postcolonial.” In her 1999 study of intercultural cinema, *The Skin of the Film* (Duke UP), Laura U. Marks comments on the reasons for her resistance to the term “postcolonial” in her analysis of films produced by artists in the diaspora: “postcolonialism,” she argues, has become a conceptually carnivorous term that swallows distinctions of nation, location, period, and agency,” but she also notes that “an advantage of the term ‘postcolonial’ is that it emphasizes the history of power relations between the entities it designates” (8). Our text seeks to investigate the ways that films, produced in the West and in formerly colonized nations, generate, perpetuate, and subvert postcolonial readings, while simultaneously constructing images of specific postcolonies. In this introduction, we foreground the theoretical readings that follow by focusing on pedagogical strategies for teaching such films—in conjunction with various works of postcolonial and canonical literature and film, as well as with the aid of historical and theoretical grounding.

One of the reasons why we have chosen “intercultural” as our methodology is because the chapters herein reveal the role of American film and culture in the films we analyze—Hollywood representations of the gangster,

of blackness, of hip-hop and black music culture have been and continue to be an accessible toolbox, touchstone, paradigm, and reference point. Amy Kaplan (“Left Alone”) locates American claims to hegemony within a discourse of imperialism that recognizes the international will to power as “inseparable from the social relations and cultural discourses of race, gender, ethnicity, and class at home” (16),<sup>1</sup> and Laura Marks notes in her rationale for choosing “intercultural” rather than the myriad other terms that might accomplish similar aims, including “multicultural” or “hybrid,” that there is a theoretical bonus for reinvigorating a term rather than inventing a new concept, one that might prematurely foreclose the problems and possibilities signified by the previous one (6). We position our work as “intercultural” because it is a term that is easily parsed, and we focus predominantly on films that foreground personal, social, and political exchanges between cultures. These exchanges are never equivalent or equitable. Instead, relationships of power between dominant and minority cultures are often explicitly constructed by and through the histories, geographies, and experiences of imperialism, and these forces are embedded in many of the films we investigate. Our concern throughout the book is to articulate the multiple discourse communities in which these films circulate; the multiple and contentious communities that produce, publicize, review, and analyze these productions. We are particularly indebted, therefore, to Marks’s explanation of the relationship between production and knowledge that “intercultural” makes manifest: “It accounts for the encounter between different cultural organizations of knowledge, which is one of the sources of intercultural cinema’s synthesis of new forms of expression and new kinds of knowledge” (7).

Furthermore, we recognize that we do not engage with the experimental, noncommercial films made in the decade between 1985 and 1995 by filmmakers at the cultural, financial, and political margins that Marks identifies as an intercultural cinema *movement*. Rather, fifteen years later, we have intervened at a moment that she predicted in which “intercultural cinema” has become an increasingly popular genre of “theatrically released films that deal explicitly with the contemporary mixing of cultures in metropolitan centers, sometimes in formally experimental ways” (3). Hamid Naficy identifies an analogous trajectory in *An Accented Cinema*. In his consistent return throughout his text to Armenian-Canadian filmmaker Atom Egoyan, Naficy plots the trajectory that Egoyan has traveled as an independent filmmaker, one whose multicultural identity and sense of cultural difference informs his film production and style, but a filmmaker who has also garnered mainstream critical acclaim and success (36–37). We do not see this co-optation of independent

voices, styles, or histories by a global audience as *necessarily* regressive; rather, we see this oscillation between the margins and the mainstream as a site to explore the tensions and contentions that characterize culture itself.

Our approach borrows from and respects various groupings—intercultural, global, third, and accented—while simultaneously seeking to make manifest an alternate space of signification; to date, no text exists that focuses exclusively on the concept of postcolonial film as a framework for identifying films produced within and outside of various formerly colonized nations, nor is there a scholarly text that addresses pedagogical issues about and frameworks for teaching such films. What feels like a mainstream approach is pedagogically necessary in terms of access, both financial and physical, to the films discussed herein, given that this text proposes models for teaching these works at the university and secondary levels. The focus of this work is therefore twofold: to provide the methodology to read and teach postcolonial film and to provide analyses in which we, as scholars and teachers, explore the ways that the films examined herein work to further and complicate our understanding of “postcolonial” as a fraught and evolving theoretical stance. The text contains a framework for theorizing both about film and about postcoloniality, as well as a rationale for why, particularly in the current historical moment, it is important to consider these two fields of study in conjunction with one another. In an increasingly global and visually oriented culture, film operates as a prime medium of historical and cultural exchange between nations.

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We situate our study within the context of several recent texts that examine the works of specific filmmakers or works from specific locales from a postcolonial perspective. These include, for example, Reena Dube’s 2005 work *The Chess Players and Postcolonial Film Theory* (Palgrave Macmillan), Roy Armes’s *Postcolonial Images: Studies in North African Film* (Indiana UP 2005), and Jinga Desai’s *Beyond Bollywood: The Cultural Politics of South Asian Film* (Routledge 2003). Other current studies such as Bishnupriya Ghosh and Brinda Bose’s edited 1997 collection *Interventions: Feminist Dialogues on Third World Women’s Literature and Film* (Garland) and Anthony Guneratne and Wimal Dissanayake’s 2003 *Rethinking Third Cinema* (Routledge) theorize and re-examine the 1980’s concept of Third-World (or just Third) Film as an area of scholarly exploration influenced by but distinct from Western cinema. The more broadly defined concept of World Cinema is examined and theorized in such current works as editor John Hill’s *World Cinema:*

*Critical Approaches* (Oxford UP 2000), and Julie Codell's 2006 edited collection *Genre, Gender, Race and World Cinema* (Wiley-Blackwell). Similarly, the essays in *Transnational Cinema: The Film Reader*, edited by Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden (Routledge 2006), examine world cinema within the context of globalization. Finally, Kate Gamm's recent *Teaching World Cinema* (British Film Institute 2008) explores the concepts of national and world cinemas and provides case studies of films from Hong Kong, Scandinavia, and France.

The theoretical lenses through which scholars historically have approached various categorizations of non-Western film fall into four main categories: global cinema, accented cinema, third cinema, and, most recently, intercultural cinema. We flesh out and define those analytical paradigms below. In terms of the role that the United States has played in the globalization of cinema, Mark Shiel notes that

if cinema may be said to have been one of the first truly globalizing industries in terms of its organization, it may also be said to have long been at the cutting edge of globalization as a process of integration and homogenization. The hugely disproportionate dominance of the United States historically in many areas of culture, economics, and politics has rarely been more tangible and overt than in the dominance of Hollywood cinema, which has for decades now been widely recognized as a threat to discrete national and regional cultures. (10–11)

Furthermore, Hollywood as a conveyor of global culture has always been post-modern because of "its particular combination of both sign and image (culture) and manufactured goods (industry, technology, capital), it may also be recognized as central to, rather than merely reflecting, the process known as globalization" (11). In our analysis of *Blood Diamond*, we explore the role that Hollywood plays in the construction of various imagined postcolonial communities and the way that those images are disseminated across the globe, and we begin our study with an exploration of filmic representations of contemporary white, Western male interpretations of Africa as the "heart of darkness," in this film and in *The Last King of Scotland*. The influence of Hollywood is apparent in the films that we examine from non-Western cultures as well, from the tsotsi (gangster) culture that pervades Soweto in *Tsotsi* to the south-central Los Angeles inspired Auckland imagined and manifested in *Once Were Warriors*. Hollywood, as a cite of cultural dissemination is a prevalent, social, and commercial force in the shaping of many of the films that we examine in this text, and we feel that Hollywood's representations, of both postcolonial and marginalized U.S. populations, deserve careful scrutiny, particularly as Hollywood-generated minority U.S. representations influence and

shape the way that various non-Western Others are rendered in intercultural film. The second framework, *Accented Cinema*, is the cinema of exile and the diaspora, created by filmmakers who have left their homelands to work in the West. Hamid Naficy states that

accented filmmakers came to live and make films in the West in two general groupings. The first group was displaced or lured to the West from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s by Third World decolonization, wars of liberation, the Soviet Union's invasion of Poland and Czechoslovakia, Westernization, and a kind of 'internal decolonization' in the West itself, involving various civil rights, counterculture, and antiwar movements. (10)

He notes that the second wave of accented filmmakers

emerged in the 1980s and 1990s as a result of the failure of nationalism, socialism, and communism; the ruptures caused by the emergence of postindustrial global economies, the rise of militant forces of Islam, the return of religious and ethnic wars, and the fragmentation of nation-states; the changes in the European, Australian, and American immigration policies encouraging non-Western immigration; and the unprecedented technological developments and consolidation in computers and media. (10–11)

The non-resident Indian (NRI) filmmakers that we examine in chapter five, Mira Nair and Deepa Mehta, are most closely aligned with this category; both live in the West but often choose India as the locale and foci of their work, forever seeking to present an "authentic"—a highly contested term—Indian reality. The concern with authenticity arises from an anxiety of exile, and the filmmakers' status as similarly authentic is often challenged from within India.

While many of the films included in this study are postcolonial in the sense that they are by and about postcolonial peoples, none of them constitutes Third Cinema, the reactionary mode of filmmaking that emerged in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s in direct response to capitalism, neocolonialism, and Hollywood. According to Anthony R. Guneratne, "Third-Cinema theory is the only major branch of film theory that did not originate within a specifically Euro-American context. No other theory of cinema is so imbued with historical specificities, none so specific in its ideological orientation, and yet none so universal in the throes of resisting Neocolonialism" (7). Robert Stam asserts that Third Cinema "offered a Fanon-inflected version of Brechtian aesthetics, along with a dash of 'national culture' and 'Third Cinema' represented a valid alternative to the

dominant Hollywood model in an early period” (31). Our work, in that it examines films that are accessible to a broad (and often Western) audience and that are, in some cases, Western interpretations of postcolonial locations—like *Blood Diamond* and *The Last King of Scotland*, for example—is impossible to categorize in terms of this framework. Likewise, the works we examine that originate within postcolonial locations, like *Once Were Warriors*, *Tsotsi*, and *Whale Rider*, for example, are only marginally (if at all) interested in generating narratives of resistance to the auspices of colonization.

As mentioned above, films coming out of the West have historically operated as a kind of colonizing agent, that which not only manufactures Western ideas about postcolonial “Others” for Western consumption but is also initially replicated by colonial and postcolonial filmmakers. For example, in “Towards a Critical Theory of Third-World Films,” Teshome H. Gabriel formulates a postcolonial film theory influenced by Frantz Fanon’s work on decolonization and outlines three phases in postcolonial filmmaking. There is first a period of unqualified assimilation in which third-world filmmakers imitate Hollywood; second, a “remembrance” phase during which there is “indigenization of control of talents, production, exhibition and distribution” (342) and during which films very often feature the return of the exile; and third, the combative phase during which the struggle of third-world peoples is the predominant theme.

The primary section of our book takes this theoretical model as its starting place and then explores how international co-productions, new delivery systems, and other signs of films’ global transformation have complicated many of the traditional frames of analysis, including “national” and “Third” cinemas. Arjun Appadurai’s “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy” suggests that the “complex transnational construction of imaginary landscapes” (327) requires analysis of multiple discourses; we offer a theoretically rich but accessible range of investigation in the case-study section of the text.

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Several overarching themes and issues emerge with regard to the concept of postcolonial intercultural film. First, the influence of the Hollywood film industry is pervasive and responsible for Western interpretations of various non-Western locations while simultaneously shaping the cultures of those locations. We will discuss this idea further in subsequent chapters, particularly as Hollywood has shaped and dictated fashion, consumption, and identity politics in, for example, South Africa and New Zealand via its filmic representations of gangster culture.



Second, the anxiety of authenticity—of “real” representations by cultural insiders—plays a significant role in the discourse that surrounds and shapes our understandings of these works. In our special topics “Postcolonial Film” graduate seminar, a way to get students to begin thinking about the relationships between representation, discourse, power, and pedagogy was to give them a discourse deliberation assignment that called upon them to reflect on our in-class investigations of the ways that various formerly colonized locations are rendered through literature and film and, similarly, how such loci are “packaged” for U.S. consumption. We worked with a class in which many of the students are also secondary education teachers and who are interested in teaching contemporary, non-Western texts to their middle and high school students. As a class, we generated a discourse analysis that examined how our understanding of Africa is shaped by the popular media. For this assignment, our students examined the following texts: *Vanity Fair*’s July 2007 special issue on Africa; Joel Foreman and David R. Shumway’s essay, “Cultural Studies: Reading Visual Texts;” *Blood Diamond*; and *The Last King of Scotland*.

We began with the *Vanity Fair* Africa issue as our object of study; we asked the question, “What understandings of Africa does this magazine encourage and deter, authorize and prevent?” What follows is a brief summary of our students’ discoveries that demonstrates both a methodology and its results. A “media sensation,” this issue was guest-edited by Bono, lead singer of the global rock b(r)and U2, and a human rights activist who (with Bobby Shriver) started “Project Red,” a marketing campaign that encourages corporations to create “red” products, a percentage of the sales proceeds support the global AIDS fund. Our choice of *Vanity Fair* was dictated in part by the magazine’s timely release, Project Red’s familiarity to consumers (like our students), the wealth of visual information provided by the 20 different covers, all photographed by Annie Leibovitz, and the easy availability of the images online. Photographed against a deep red background (given the Project Red/Bono organization of the issue, the color “red” is over-determined as “about Africa”), Leibovitz’s covers visually express the defining theme of the issue: “conversations about Africa.” Her subjects include stars, celebrities and public figures who are easily recognizable (then-President George Bush, Don Cheadle, Muhammad Ali); or, recognized as social investors in Africa (Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Bill and Melinda Gates); or, both (Brad Pitt, Oprah Winfrey).

These photographs seem to say that the conversation that “we” are having—this can also be read as “the conversation that is being had” by a cultural elite—is both global (Queen Rania of Jordan) and local (George Clooney, Chris Rock).

Although it is difficult to distinguish the local from the global in the realm of American popular culture (Madonna and Brad Pitt live abroad and both are global stars), the issue is dominated by Americans (roughly three-quarters of the subjects are American); American political influence (George Bush, Barack Obama, Condoleezza Rice) and its celebrity philanthropists (Brad Pitt, Oprah Winfrey, Bill and Melinda Gates) are the key players in the photographic conversation. Only three of the subjects, Archbishop Tutu, the fashion model Iman, and the actor Djimon Hounsou are identifiable as “authentically” African. The cover’s more-than-equal representation of African-Americans indicates that Africa can be best represented by black American celebrities, including Condoleezza Rice, Oprah Winfrey, and Muhammad Ali.

The metaphor at work in each individual photograph, and in the relationship between them (since they can be viewed sequentially, like a frieze), is that we can touch each other, talk to one another, cross the boundaries that divide us and start conversations in other political, social, and cultural arenas. This conversation is frequently not an easy one, as the photos suggest, and the news is sometimes disturbing, difficult to understand, or requires attentive and serious listening. Condoleezza Rice seems to impart information to George Bush who may not be listening; in the next photograph, Bush and Archbishop Desmond Tutu are posed in deep conversation, Tutu with his hands folded as if in prayer, contemplating his next words. The following photo creates a revealing juxtaposition: a now-smiling Tutu casually clasps the shoulders of Brad Pitt, who sits, arms folded, in the center of the image, looking off-screen. The next photo is equally casual: Brad Pitt and Djimon Hounsou stand together in a medium shot, both facing the camera, Pitt’s arm casually draped across Hounsou’s shoulder.

These informal photos are in contrast to those more classically posed: Hounsou seems to lean in to the next photo to speak to Madonna who effects the pose of Rodin’s “The Thinker,” hand to forehead, gazing into space. Hounsou, an actor from Benin who was nominated for an Oscar for his supporting role as Solomon Vandy in *Blood Diamond* (2006), is not the star that Madonna is, and he approaches her carefully. Equally important to our analysis is the extra-textual information we bring to these photographs, information that can subvert their intended meaning: in 2005, in a widely publicized adoption, Angelina Jolie (Brad Pitt’s partner) adopted Zahara, an Ethiopian orphan who is rumored to have a parent still living (Bevan). In 2009, Madonna’s adoption of a second child required a court order to overturn Malawi residency laws. CNN reports that the child’s alleged father opposes the adoption: “she [the child] is a Malawian,” said James Kambewa, “so [I] need her to grow as a Malawian, as well with our culture”

("Madonna Wins"). The Malawi high court accepted Madonna's considerable charity work as proof enough of her commitment to the country: "in this global village a man can have more than one place at which he resides" ("Madonna Wins"). Celebrity commitment to Africa brings both necessary attention to human rights issues and a heightened circulation of those images—of war, genocide, disease, famine—that most define the continent and require intervention and, in the case of international adoption, removal.

The representatives from Africa included in *Vanity Fair* reveal there are multiple contradictions at play in the issue. Djimon Hounsou serves as a consultant for the issue's portfolio, "Spirit of Africa," which highlights the accomplishments of African leaders, teachers, economists, and artists, yet confines them to the ghetto of a separate section. As case studies of progress, this inclusion and separation draws attention to the central paradox that guides the discourse of the issue: attributing agency to Africans themselves in order to forestall a dynamic that gestures towards the constructs of colonial racism. Hounsou acknowledges the issue's tendency towards white paternalism: "The goal of the African people is to become self-sufficient, [otherwise]...it does feel like the white man's burden" (54). Hounsou makes clear that the relationship between Western philanthropy and African need should not be read as demeaningly charitable: "We are not looking for a handout" (54). Former fashion model Iman Abdulmajid, CEO of Iman cosmetics, a line of beauty products for women of color, and the global ambassador for Keep a Child Alive, a non-profit that provides lifesaving antiretroviral (ARV) drugs to children, points to the role of the media in fostering consistently negative perceptions of Africa: "I get insulted when I see only images of our dying, our wars, our AIDS victims...not our doctors, our nurses, our teachers"; in response, she proposes a feminist solution: "Africa must find its own saviors: the salvation of Africa is in the hands of African women" (56). Iman's reframing of the debate in terms of a separate African agenda is provocatively represented in her cover image: she wears a dress by American designer Donna Karan, yet its navel-grazing draped neckline, the turban she wears, her gaze and pose (56) evoke the iconic image of Darfur rebels, who appear later in the same issue (128)—a co-optation of the magazine's dominant discourse of Africa as a place of chaos. It is relevant to note here that the charity, Keep a Child Alive, is responsible for the "I am African" campaign to raise public awareness of AIDS in Africa; this campaign features celebrities like Richard Gere, Heidi Klum, Gwyneth Paltrow, and Seal, and Lenny Kravitz "tattooed" with colorful faux-tribal designs and ornamentation. The campaign, according to its website, makes a transnational connection based on biology: we can all

trace our DNA to African ancestors, claims Iman, and thus are all part of the “human family” that now needs our help (“About I am African”). Robin Givhan writes that many bloggers, fashion followers, and media informers were skeptical of both (Product) Red and the “I am African” campaign, noting that Gwyneth Paltrow’s “I am African” ad seemed to generate the most ire. A parody quickly appeared: titled “I am Gwyneth Paltrow” and featuring an African woman with two stripes of paint under her eye, the caption reads, in part, “Help us stop the shameless fame whores from using the suffering of those dying from AIDS in Africa to bolster their pathetic careers...” (Mohny).

We read the covers of *Vanity Fair* in the kind of detailed fashion that Foreman and Shumway encourage when they guide readers (and viewers) to note the formal elements of visual texts, such as “typography, corporate logos, icons, discrete images of people and other things...light, clothing, adornments, posture” that combine to give the coherent, unified image (whether advertisement, art, or film) its emotional and ideological authority (253). In Louis Althusser’s terms, the image “hails” the viewer, makes the organization of the social relations in the image appear natural and “true,” and situates the viewer in “a subject-position that represents the cultural and historical contingencies of the moment” (255).

As a way of foregrounding our examination of the way that culture is generated and commodified via film, we want to look briefly at the advertising in this issue of the magazine to expand this analysis into a critique of the values and beliefs that should govern our investment in Africa. Much of the advertising in this issue of *Vanity Fair* places an expectation on the consumer to practice philanthropic capitalism and to act as an agent of social change. (Product) Red is the dominant framework for advertising in the issue. Touted not as a charity but as a business model, (Product) Red encourages first-world consumers to buy the “red” version of manufacturers’ products, easily identified by the (Red) logo; in turn, corporations such as the Gap and Nike contribute part of their profits to fight AIDS. According to “The (Red) Manifesto,” which is reproduced in the center of the issue, this is a new relationship of consumer to capitalism. Much as it seeks to produce the frisson of “The Communist Manifesto,” in its alignment of a radical proposition and Bolshevik “red,” this re-working of the traditional relationship of consumer to producer allows corporate capitalism to practice social responsibility without undermining any social relationships or make any structural changes.

While companies “partner” with (Product) Red to offer consumers the choice of a Red product, our students were quick to note that this merchandise seems to cost more, indicating that these companies retain their profits by

increasing the price of Red products. Motorola Motorazr, Emporio Armani, and Gap are (Product) Red advertisers in the issue; all promote the idea that the Red product, in the words of the Motorazr ad, is “designed to help eliminate AIDS in Africa” (37). The Gap (Product) Red ads are iconic, and the clothes, emblazoned with words that incorporate the movement’s mission—Inspi(red), Discove(red)—easily identify the philanthropic consumer. In one Gap ad, Natalie Maines, the controversial Dixie Chicks singer who publicly denounced George Bush and set off a firestorm of publicity denouncing her patriotism, is wearing a Gap (Product) Red cashmere sweater. The facing page states, “Every generation has a voice.” In another ad, child actress Abigail Breslin, wearing a Gap T-shirt with “Inspi(red)” across the front, holds her favorite stuffed animal, Curious George. George is wearing a matching Babygap (Product) Red T-shirt. The statement that accompanies this photograph is: “Inspire the next generation to change the world.” Here we note that the close reading of the visual image reveals that the West’s intention to help Africa is imbricated in a complex web of ambiguous meanings around this notion of Africa. Curious George has a long history in Africa: both the children’s book and the 2006 animated feature film adaptation directed by Matthew O’Callaghan privilege an interventionist, exploitative relationship with Africa, as we detail more fully in the first case study.

The extended discourse analysis of *Blood Diamond* and *The Last King of Scotland* is the subject of our first case study—an example of the kind of critical analysis generated by this methodology and that guides the remaining case studies. Foreman and Shumway’s essay, “Cultural Studies: *Reading Visual Texts*,” was developed for precisely the reason we deployed it in our classroom: as a primer for teachers that details both a theoretical paradigm that justifies the role of cultural studies in the classroom and as a methodology for the kind of textual analysis that we do throughout this book. Cultural studies recognizes that culture is a “site of struggle” (244). We are particularly concerned with visual texts that articulate the practices and habits, narratives and texts of everyday life that explicate the strategies and tensions of postcolonialism; as Foreman and Shumway note, it is important that students feel empowered to discuss images they choose, and we will detail the discoveries of our students in a moment. As they note as well, and as we observed in our classroom, students do not need a reminder that the social relations of race, gender, and class exist and that these discriminations mean that culture is a site of dissent (248). Rather, it is more important to discuss hierarchies of power, the relationships between dominant and subordinate groups, economies, and nations. In any analysis of

cultural representations, an acknowledgment that relationships of power are both sustained by representations and interrogated by them, is perhaps the most challenging assumption of cultural studies.

We found it useful at this juncture to introduce the notion of discourse, as a way to recognize that representations operate in competition with one another, sometimes harmoniously, sometimes in stark opposition, that identity groups can share concerns while fashioning distinct spaces, and that representations seek to situate the reader and viewer as a subject. To quote Paul Bove in the chapter on “Discourse” in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, discourses “produce knowledge about humans and their society,” and an analysis of discourse aims to “describe the surface linkages between power, knowledge, institutions, intellectuals, the control of populations, and the modern state” as these intersect in systems of thought, and as represented in texts (55–56). We asked our students—and ourselves—to consider that we come to an understanding of Africa, for example, through visual texts such as *Vanity Fair*, *Blood Diamond*, and *The Last King of Scotland*, and that this understanding of Africa is constructed under specific conditions of production. We wanted our students to be able to discuss how these mass culture products *construct* the political, economic, and cultural conditions for the understanding of “Africa” at this particular moment.

This cultural studies approach proved most productive because it mobilized student participation and recognized progressive and regressive contradictions, tensions and advances. We asked that our students generate a discourse analysis that examines how their understanding of Africa—as a “real” and metaphorical entity—is shaped not only by the literature that we read in this class, but also by the contemporary popular media that they view outside of it, in the form of television, film, advertisements, and various other media. In order to do this, our students needed to find and analyze a magazine advertisement or story or scene from a film that depicts Africa and/or Africans. The idea was to generate an analysis in which our students examine the “image of Africa” that the text generates for a specific audience—exactly what Chinua Achebe does in his famous 1975 lecture “An Image of Africa.” In this lecture, Achebe examines how Joseph Conrad’s depiction of some homogenous concept of “Africa” in *Heart of Darkness* serves to silence various other—and perhaps more authentic—African realities. We have replicated this assignment, in various ways, in other course contexts: for example, both of us currently use an application on our electronic course interface that allows students to post popular media representations of the cultures that we study in class. Not only are the various manifestations of this project important because we hope to reach teachers and the next generations