Editor’s Introduction to Part One,  
“Film Across the Pacific: Projections, Screens, and Mirrors”

Charles W. Hayford  
Northwestern University  
Email: C-Hayford@Northwestern.edu

Keywords  
Cinema, globalization, transnationalism

To tell the truth, when we issued the Call for Papers for our theme issue, we had no idea that we would get such an enthusiastic response. We received so many good articles that we are publishing the issue in two parts, with more articles in the pipeline.¹

We did not issue an agenda or set of theoretical concerns, and the themes and topics of the articles we selected form a scattered mosaic, not balanced coverage. Most of the films are not high art. Nevertheless, taken as a whole, the articles form a useful survey of film in American-East Asian relations and pose questions for further discussion (and you might want to go back to a few of the films with new eyes). Some of these articles might feel too centered on Asia for film journals and others might feel too confined to film for a journal in Asian studies. It seems that our journal has found a niche.

This raises a key question: What is this niche? Why should a journal concerned with American-East Asian relations look at film? Did film play a unique or specific role in these relations? After all, cinema in every part of the world, not just on both sides of the Pacific, has the same basic purposes, in various combinations: pleasure, profit, and persuasion. Because film tells stories through images, not words, from its beginnings the medium has been uniquely global and transnational. But cinema became intertwined in the development

¹ Thanks for kind help and knowledgeable suggestions in producing this issue to Fu Po-shek, Gao Yunxiang, Gregory Lewis, Xiao Zhiwei, and the extraordinary support of Wang Xiaofei.
of the nation-state; each country in Asia claimed a national cinema as part of its entry into the modern world – never mind that we now are not so clear about what “national” or “modern” mean in understanding cinema.²

The niche for our journal is not national or even global cinema since these categories apply to all film. Some of our articles look into the complex institutions which produced films or tried to control them, and these particular institutions function in a cross-Pacific world. Other articles look into the films themselves. The nature of our niche was shown when it turned out that our authors shared the assumption that films make arguments, or at least that filmmakers do, and that the arguments in these films are as much a part of the political and cultural discourse on cross-Pacific relations as those in newspapers and books.

This theme issue illustrates our niche by showing that there are stories to be told and arguments to be made about specific “projections,” “screens,” and “mirrors” going back and forth across the Pacific. The diverse meanings of these terms indicate the range of interests:

(1) **Projections**: Projections onto screens and into our minds. Projections of images going both ways across the Pacific. Projections of what filmmakers and audiences desire, what they fear, and what they think will sell. Film projectors – until recently you could not see a movie without one. Projection of trends into the future. Projections as intrusions or outcroppings. Psychological “splitting and projection” in which we defensively split off bad thoughts and project them onto others. National projects.

(2) **Screens**: Theaters screen films so “screens” mean business: Distributors count success by the number of screens. Films are screened and films screen – filter out – what is inconvenient, objectionable, or will not sell. We are screened from reality.

(3) **Mirrors**: Films hold up a mirror for audiences to see themselves. Maybe it is a funhouse mirror that shows distorted or sentimentalized views. Sometimes a mirror is a looking glass, like Alice in Wonderland’s, through which we pass into a magical and upside down world. Mirrors show reverse images; the left hand is on the right, the right is on the left. Sometimes it’s a one-way mirror, like in the police station or psychology lab, which allows the observer to be unobserved. Breaking a mirror is seven year’s bad luck.

---