indie | AN AMERICAN FILM CULTURE

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INTRODUCTION

Like so many cultural categories, indie cinema is slippery. The same term refers not only to a diverse body of films spanning more than two decades, from *Stranger Than Paradise* (1984) to *Synecdoche, New York* (2008) and beyond, but also a cultural network that sustains them. This book is about American indie cinema as a film culture that comprises not only movies but also institutions—distributors, exhibitors, festivals, and critical media—within which movies are circulated and experienced, and wherein an indie community shares expectations about their forms and meanings. Its topic is the American independent cinema of the era of the Sundance Film Festival and the Hollywood studio specialty divisions. It is not especially concerned with telling the indie story as an unfolding history, but it is nonetheless historical in at least one sense: indie cinema itself is a mode of film production and a film culture that belong to a specific time. Roughly speaking, this era stretches from the emergence into wide public consciousness of this formation in American movies in the middle-to-late 1980s to the indie industry crisis and the demise of many of the indie film companies and studio divisions at the end of the 2000s.

To capture the period succinctly, we can think of indie as the cinema of the Sundance-Miramax era. Beginnings and endings are hard to mark, but two events giving shape to the history of indie cinema are the 1989 Sundance Film Festival, where *sex, lies, and videotape*

launched itself improbably to commercial and cultural success, and Disney's shuttering of Miramax, which had been so influential over more than two decades in defining and promoting independent cinema, in 2010. While indie cinema has no clear moments of origin or conclusion, these two moments help to set a historical frame. Following many other critics, I am limiting my discussion to the period when the category of indie cinema began to function not just as a scattered minority practice but as a viable system that parallels that of Hollywood and in some sense has been incorporated by it.

Most centrally, indie cinema consists of American feature films of this era that are not mainstream films. Its identity begins with a negative: these films are not of the Hollywood studios and the megaplexes where they screen, and are generally not aimed at or appreciated by the same audience segments. We will soon see that this is an inadequate definition and understanding, but it is necessarily our starting point, and everything to follow in some way elaborates on indie's identity as a form of cinema that is constantly being distinguished from another one which is more popular and commercially significant, but less culturally legitimate.

The importance of its distinction in relation to Hollywood reveals a tension at the heart of indie film culture between two social functions. The value of indie cinema is generally located in difference, resistance, opposition—in the virtue of alternative representations, audiovisual and storytelling styles, and systems of cultural circulation. In many quarters, difference from Hollywood itself can be a mark of significant value. Indie film culture profits from its alterity, which sustains it and has the potential to be politically progressive and even counter-hegemonic. At the same time, this same culture functions to reproduce social class stratification by offering an elite, culturally legitimate alternative to the mass-market Hollywood offerings of the megaplex. The audience for specialty films—a film industry term which covers indie releases—is generally urban, affluent, well-educated, and fairly narrow by comparison with the audience for studio pictures. By positioning itself as artistic and sophisticated in comparison to mainstream cinema, indie culture functions as an emergent formation of high culture—or perhaps more accurately, high-middlebrow culture—inheriting the social functions previously performed by foreign art films.[1] In some cases we might also see indie cinema as a vanguard subculture, offering its youthful community a

sense of insider knowledge and membership through its critical stance toward the dominant culture, which it holds in some measure of contempt. Subcultures, like high and middlebrow cultures, often also reproduce class distinction through their negation of mass or popular culture.[2] The emergence of a high-profile American cinema of theatrical feature films parallel to Hollywood that fulfills these two contradictory missions of resisting and perpetuating the dominant ideology marks indie cinema from earlier iterations of alternative filmmaking and exhibition in the United States.[3]

Economically speaking, *independent* is a relational term describing businesses that are smaller than and separate from bigger competitors. For instance, locally owned record stores are called independent as a way of comparing them favorably to regional, national, or international chains. In this sense, as in any, the term has a positive valence: to be independent is to be free, autonomous, and authentic. Calling a business independent also implies that if it is to succeed it must be more clever and innovative than more powerful competitors, like David facing Goliath, and innovation in any field is taken for an unambiguous good. In business, bold new ideas that change the way people think about an industry and its products often come from outside of more conservative established firms, from upstart independents unafraid of taking risks and trying untested strategies to fill underserved needs.[4] This dynamic of change from the outside challenging conservatism on the inside describes American cinema as well as it does many competitive industries.

The term *independent* has been used in the American film industry since before the establishment of the studio system in the 1910s and 1920s, and has undergone a series of shifts over the decades since then, though it has always referred to production, distribution, and exhibition outside of the Hollywood studios and mainstream theater chains. At different times in film history it has described varied and heterogeneous industrial and textual practices, including filmmaking of high, medium, and low budget and cultural status.[5] In every period of American cinema there have been feature films made, distributed, and exhibited by independent entrepreneurs rather than the majors. In the Sundance-Miramax era, however, independent cinema has taken on rather different meanings from those it had before. It has been transformed from mainly an economic category into one with a broader ambit, which does not necessarily hold up to scrutiny

when applying solely economic criteria. If for no other reason, this is because the specialty divisions, also known as mini-majors, are divisions of Hollywood studios owned by media conglomerates and thus are not independent of Hollywood companies. In the process of shifting meanings, *indie* and *independent* have taken on connotations that are not easily encapsulated, and much of what had previously defined these terms no longer applies. Thus in the Sundance-Miramax era, the idea of independent cinema has achieved a level of cultural circulation far greater than in earlier eras, making independence into a brand, a familiar idea that evokes in consumers a range of emotional and symbolic associations. Although it is a good start, then, a definition of indie cinema centered on an industrial distinction between big and small businesses does not offer us a satisfying understanding of the concept of independence in American cinema of the Sundance-Miramax era. It does not tell us everything we might want to know and prevents us from understanding much of what people consider indie to include. In this era, indie cinema is understood according to a cluster of associations about film texts and contexts that go beyond industrial distinctions to include many facets of the cinematic experience.[6]

The shift from "independent" to "indie" is one marker of the emergence of this new cluster of associations. Although it likely originated in the world of popular music, *indie* gained salience as a more general term for nonmainstream culture in the 1990s, and applies not only to rock or pop music and feature films but also in some instances to video games, news media, zines, literary magazines, television shows, crafts and fashion, and retail businesses from booksellers to supermarkets.[7] To an extent, the diminutive *indie* is simply a synonym for *independent* with an added connotation of fashionable cool. But it also functions as a mystification of the more straightforward category "independent." This mystification diminishes or makes vague the significance of economic distinctions and injects added connotations of a distinguishing style or sensibility and of a social identity. The introduction of "indie" also allows for a separation between a strict and loose sense of the idea to which both "indie" and "independent" make reference, so that something might seem indie without actually being independent by whatever strict definition one adopts, or alternately might be independent by that definition without seeming indie. We must be sensitive to shifting and inconsistent criteria which include both textual and contextual considerations, and grant that, as

a cultural category, indie cinema is the product of indie film culture's collective judgment about what counts—or does not—as indie.

This judgment depends as much on understandings of Hollywood as mainstream cinema as it does on conceptions of indie in relation to it. I consider "mainstream" to be a category that niche cultures or subcultures construct to have something against which to define themselves and generate their cultural or subcultural capital.[8] I do not believe that there is a mainstream that exists independent of this process of classification. Thus mainstream cinema is itself as much a product of expecting certain kinds of experience at the multiplex and making certain kinds of sense of Hollywood movies as it is anchored in textual practices. The mutability of mainstream classifications is confirmed in cases of crossover indie successes such as *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (2002) and *Garden State* (2004) (or in music, alternative rock acts such as R.E.M. whose popularity threatens their authentically independent status). The appeal of a product that originates from the indie sector to a wider public potentially indicates that it belongs in the mainstream rather than the marginal alternative spheres. The "indie blockbuster," so crucial to the development of the mini-majors in the 1990s and 2000s,[9] aims to bargain away some outsider credibility in exchange for commercial reward, calculatingly nudging some indie films toward the mainstream to occupy negotiated terrain, part outside and part inside. But even in such exceptional cases as Nirvana's *Nevermind* (1991) and *Pulp Fiction* (1994), it is often possible to retain the credibility and integrity associated with independence while also appealing to a wider audience. This is evidence that "mainstream" is always a product of collective judgment no less than "indie" is.

The shifting meanings marked by the rise of indie cinema have made an industrial definition of indie (and of mainstream) cinema less descriptive and apposite. First, independent cinema is not used merely as a business term. Like independent music, independent cinema originally made its artistic authenticity contingent on the autonomy of its production from major media companies, and as such was distinctive as a cultural genre defined as much by industrial criteria as textual features.[10] But also like indie music, over time its autonomy from major media companies ceased to be so central to its identity whether because of the mainstream's incorporation of indie style or because of indie culture's greater investment in aesthetics and iden-

tity than economics.[11] Whatever the reasons, at this point indie had become recognizable as a distinct form of cinema and a promotional discourse supporting it (or, more accurately, a cluster of styles, cycles, subgenres, and promotional discourses surrounding them), and this is evident even in the simple fact of the widening currency of "indie" beyond the industry and the cinephile audience.[12] For instance, the Keystone Art Theater in Indianapolis has an Indie Lounge, and a section of DVDs in American Target discount stores beginning in 2006 used an "INDIES" sign to indicate categorization of movies for sale.[13] When media consumption is guided by this kind of categorization, indie film has become a cultural category with its own life outside of the world of people who read *Variety* or indieWire. It refers more to films than to corporate structures and interrelations in the media trade, although the origin of the term in an economic distinction is part of its wider cultural circulation. As it is used in the Sundance-Miramax era, independent cinema describes aesthetic and social distinctions as often as industrial ones. It is a matter of cultures of consumption as much as those of production.

This is not to deny that industrial or economic distinctions are part of the cluster of criteria applied in constructions of indieness. Especially among more cinephile and passionate audiences, economics might factor in quite a bit. For instance, one critic divides up indies industrially into five categories. From smallest to largest: house indies which are fully DIY operations based out of people's homes, micro-indies earning under $3 million annually in theatrical revenue, mid-indies like Magnolia Pictures and IFC, full indies like Summit and Lionsgate, and dependents like Fox Searchlight (see fig. I.1).[14] He tellingly considers all of these categories to be along the spectrum captured by the term *indie*. But economics is always considered in relation to other considerations. Even the use of the term *indiewood*, which can pejoratively mock films of Hollywood mini-majors that aim to position themselves as "indie," recognizes at once cultural and economic factors in categorization.[15]

It follows that economic and aesthetic criteria may converge, but not necessarily. Thus a film produced outside of the Hollywood studios may not be considered indie according to prevailing cultural criteria. For instance, in 1991 the independent producer Carolco made the action blockbuster *Terminator* 2, no one's idea of a 1980s indie. George Lucas financed the production of his *Star Wars* prequels himself; their

FIGURE I.1. Indie Distribution in the Sundance-Miramax Era

DISNEY	20TH C. FOX	UNIVERSAL	SONY	WARNER BROS.	PARAMOUNT
Miramax (founded 1979) 1993–2010 (Dimension to 2005)	Fox Searchlight 1994–	Gramercy (with Polygram) 1992–1999)	Sony Pictures Classics 1991–	New Line Cinema & Fine Line Features (founded 1967) 1995 with acquisition of Turner—2008	Paramount Classics/ Vantage 1998–2008
		October Films (founded 1991) 1997–1999		Picturehouse 2005–2008	
		Focus Features (previously Good Machine founded c. 1991; 1999–2001 combined with USA Films) 2002–		Warner Independent Pictures 2003–2008	

Other contemporary independents of note (in alphabetical order):

Artisan Entertainment 1998–2003, acquired by Lionsgate
IFC Films 1999– (owned by Rainbow Media, a subsidiary of Cablevision)
Lionsgate 1995–
Newmarket Films 1994–
Magnolia Pictures 2001– (owned by 2929 Entertainment, a small conglomerate)
Overture Films 2006– (owned by Liberty Media, a conglomerate)
Roadside Attractions 2004–
Summit Entertainment 2006–
THINKFilm 2001–
The Weinstein Company 2005–
Zeitgeist Films 1998–

production credit goes to Lucasfilm, not 20th Century Fox. And no one considers those films indie either. But Miramax (under its Dimension Films imprint) and Lionsgate have followed strategies of combining the production of "genre" films that are not typically called indie with classier pictures aimed at the festival and art house circuits that are. If indie were being used strictly as an economic category, then Lionsgate's torture porn films like *Saw* (2004) and *Hostel* (2005) and Summit's *Twilight* series would count no less than films by Jim Jarmusch and John Sayles. But as indie is used in the Sundance-Miramax era, it might make no more sense to think of low-budget "genre" films as indie any more than it does high-concept blockbusters, though exceptions such as indie horror blockbusters *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) and *Paranormal Activity* (2007)—marketed as much on the basis of their heroic production legends as of more conventional appeals—certainly test this distinction. In any instance, factors such as style and implicit audience address and exhibition context and promotional discourse matter as much as who the distributor is.[16]

Cultural categories like indie cinema function through repeated use in multiple discursive sites, and are best understood as they are implemented by communities invested in their meanings. A good way of tracing the contours of the category is by looking at the various popular surveys of American indie/independent cinema, books like *The Rough Guide to American Independent Film* and 100 *American Independent Films* and magazine features like *Empire* magazine's "ultimate indie lineup" of fifty "greatest" films.[17] Many of these do include outlier cases. *Empire* has an action blockbuster, *The Terminator* (1984), in its top ten, and most surveys of independent film stretch back to independent cinema from before the Sundance-Miramax era, such as films by John Cassavetes, Andy Warhol, and John Waters. But the most central and recurring instances are likely those around which the category has been fashioned in the popular imagination.

Categories are often maintained by the identification of such prototypes and exemplars, those instances that are especially salient for making judgments about what the category means and what belongs or does not belong in it. Indie cinema has certain central instances, films like *sex, lies, and videotape* and *Pulp Fiction*, that have not only influenced later works but, equally important, have influenced indie film culture's conception of itself. Films find their way into the category through discursive positioning, which is partly a matter of locating a film's similarity to established central instances of indie film—whether by textual or contextual (including industrial) criteria. Thus some films might be stronger or weaker examples of indie cinema; some are more central, and some more peripheral or problematic. There is no formula for inclusion, no fixed set of textual or contextual conditions we can apply. Films like Lionsgate's genre releases might be weaker examples, while those of key indie *auteurs* like Richard Linklater or Hal Hartley might be stronger ones. Textual and economic criteria figure into these judgments, but they will not function as necessary and sufficient conditions for inclusion.

In this way indie cinema shares much with indie music, a similar cultural formation that mixes the economic and aesthetic. Some indie rock artists, like Sonic Youth, have unassailable credibility despite migrating from independent to major labels. Some, like Liz Phair, begin indie in terms both of label and aesthetic, but are eventually rejected from the category not just because of signing to a major label, but because of adopting too much of a pop sound. And other acts like Radiohead may originate on majors but gain credibility among those who identify their tastes as indie and authentic, and eventually turn to DIY distribution, the quintessential indie culture move. Judgments about indie authenticity rely on multiple and sometimes contradictory factors and are best understood within cultural contexts.

Just as independent film distributors like Summit or Lionsgate may release films or recordings that don't count culturally as independent, there are many films that do count culturally that would not be admitted to the category according to a strict economic criterion. As with indie music and major labels, distinction between films made by major studios and films made by independent entrepreneurs does not effectively mark indie cinema off from the rest of American film. This is in large part a function of the rise during the 1990s of the mini-majors, the subsidiaries of the Hollywood studios whose role is to produce and more often finance and distribute what the industry calls its specialty or niche products, lower-budget films aimed at more affluent and urban art house audiences. The cinema under consideration in these pages is to a large extent that of Miramax, New Line and Fine Line, Fox Searchlight, Sony Pictures Classics, Paramount Classics, and Focus Features. These are (or in a number of instances, were) Hollywood companies, boutique labels under the corporate umbrellas of Disney, Time Warner, News Corp., Sony, Viacom, and NBC

Universal, respectively (see fig. I.1). While *T2*, *The Phantom Menace* (1999), *Hostel*, and *Twilight* (Summit, 2008) would be "independent" according to a strict industrial definition, the numerous films released by the mini-majors over the years would not. At the same time, indie cinema also includes releases by many smaller distributors such as Lionsgate, Summit, The Weinstein Company, and IFC, and audiences and filmmakers may not distinguish very critically among mini-major films and those considered more "authentic" when considering industrial criteria. And this is not even to consider the films by artists whose work is understood to have come out of the indie movement, like the Coen brothers and Spike Lee, who have had many films distributed by majors (rather than their subsidiaries) such as 20th Century Fox and Universal. Even mini-major release and markers of "quality" may not be the right conditions for indieness, as many of Miramax's biggest successes in terms of box office revenue and high-profile awards might not seem very centrally indie within late-twentieth and early-twenty-first century American film culture (e.g., *The English Patient*, 1996; *Good Will Hunting*, 1997; *Chicago*, 2002). Determining what indie means requires that we be attentive to its cultural circulation as well as to economics, storytelling, and thematics.

In the era of indie cinema and mini-majors—which is also the era of home video and Netflix, of Hollywood as a resurgent commercial power, of intensified globalization of media, of rapidly proliferating film festivals and festival films, and of a mass culture steadily fragmenting into so many niches—there has been a fairly stable conception of what an independent film is, and this conception is distinct from those that applied at earlier moments in American film history. Broadly speaking, indie cinema is produced in the context of these various developments. Its identity comes into being in comparison to other categories of cinema contemporaneous to it, such as Hollywood blockbusters and prestige pictures, foreign imports, and avant-garde works. Indie cinema is a product of its contexts large and small. It is itself a form of niche media, a reaction against conglomerate gigantism and at the very same time, considering its mini-major producer-distributors, a symptom of it.[18] But independent cinema circulates as a concept principally within its specific institutions; it is most specifically within these institutions that its meanings and values are produced and understood. This knowledge is contextual and contingent, which is to say, it is a product of historically specific conditions.

I argue in these pages that what makes this iteration of independent cinema—the indie iteration—cohere as a cultural category is not only a set of industrial criteria or formal or stylistic conventions. It is most centrally a cluster of interpretive strategies and expectations that are shared among filmmakers; their support personnel, including distributors and publicists; the staffers of independent cinema institutions such as film festivals; critics and other writers; and audiences. All of these different people are audiences who employ these strategies, and it is only because filmmakers are also film spectators that they are able to craft their works to elicit particular responses from the audience. Indie constitutes a film culture: it includes texts, institutions, and audiences.[19] Indie audiences share viewing strategies for thinking about and engaging with the texts—they have in common knowledge and competence—which are products of indie community networks. These viewing strategies will be the subject of the pages to follow.

To think in terms of viewing strategies requires a shift away from the approach that writers, whether scholars or not, often take to analyze cultural categories or genres.[20] It is tempting to try to define a category according to its attributes, identifying essential characteristics and centering a definition on them as conditions of inclusion or exclusion. But by focusing on texts alone we miss much of what makes categories significant to our encounters with media.[21] Categories are ways of organizing experience, guides to finding order in the world. Cultural options always threaten to overwhelm, and it is only by categorizing them that producers and consumers of culture can manage to know where to pay their scarce attention. I locate media categories not only in texts but also in audiences and the institutions through which texts and audiences are brought together.

Sideways (2004) is a comedy about two friends who take a trip to a wine region of California. It stars Thomas Haden Church, Paul Giamatti, Virginia Madsen, and Sandra Oh. It was shot on 35mm color film and runs 126 minutes. The story is by turns funny and sad. It is about love, friendship, loneliness, and passion. It follows conventions of continuity editing and canonical storytelling, with clear exposition and causal narration pushed along by character conflict. Its comic style is generally subtle and character-focused, though in the final act it turns somewhat more farcical and broad. These traits are facts of the film's textuality. But its indieness is not to be found entirely by examining its textual features; indieness is the product of a judgment

that we make about the film, or which comes premade for us as part of the film's promotional discourse and its contexts of consumption. Some viewers experience the film in a condition of total ignorance of the existence of something called indie cinema, and for them nothing is at stake in determining whether it belongs in this category or not, and it is simply irrelevant. Some are aware of indie's existence but refuse to allow *Sideways* entry into the category, perhaps because of textual features, but more likely because it cost more to make than was considered reasonable for a film to be indie in 2004 ($16 million) or because it was financed and released by a mini-major, Fox Searchlight.[22] And many consider it to be a very good example of indie cinema, so much so that the film won six 2004 Independent Spirit Awards, including Best Picture.[23] What made it indie might have been its storytelling and style, or the background of the director Alexander Payne (whose previous films include *Citizen Ruth*, 1996, and *Election*, 1999) in the indie movement, or its release in art houses, or its cultural positioning in trailers, reviews, and other forms of publicity and promotion. The fact that different knowledgeable and competent people can legitimately disagree about whether or not a film counts as indie suggests that this is an oft-contested category, and one that cannot be understood without considering the people who use it and their habits of textual engagement. Texts may be indie or not, but the only way of determining if they are is by looking at whether people think of them this way. Categories like indie cinema arise and maintain their significance through a process (actually a cluster of processes), and so in the pages to follow I will look at indie cinema as process as well as product.

Much of this cultural and cinematic terrain is already the subject of books such as John Pierson's *Spike, Mike, Slackers & Dykes*, Peter Biskind's *Down and Dirty Pictures*, Emmanuel Levy's *Cinema of Outsiders*, E. Deidre Pribram's *Cinema & Culture*, and Geoff King's *American Independent Cinema*, among many other writings.[24] Studies of this large field of cinematic practice have shed considerable light on some of its industrial and cultural features,[25] and Geoff King has considered indie cinema not only as an industrial designation but also as a corpus of texts, establishing general aesthetic tendencies and some contexts to which they respond.[26] King has also written about the films of the mini-majors in particular as "indiewood" rather than independent cinema.[27] E. Deidre Pribram's *Cinema & Culture* is admirable in its combination of the contextual and textual and in the array of cinema it canvases, moving from discussions of distribution to narrative to politics and thematics. Her work overlaps historically with my study, but it begins and ends earlier, covering the 1980–2001 period rather than the Sundance-Miramax era which privileges constructions of independent cinema as indie rather than, as earlier, as a more political and aesthetically adventurous challenge. It also diverges in thinking about independent cinema as multinational (including British examples) and as more intrinsically political and aesthetically confrontational in relation to classical narrative. My effort to unify indie cinema's culture through the rubric of a cluster of interlocking interpretive strategies overlaps in many ways with her analysis, though mine emphasizes indie film culture's role in setting terms through which films are understood.[28]

Jeffrey Sconce's influential essay on "smart cinema" of the 1990s and early 2000s is another work that covers some similar ground as this study, identifying a trend in American specialty filmmaking which relies on irony and nihilism as a way of distinguishing itself against Hollywood film.[29] Sconce argues that a specific "smart" tone or sensibility unifies the aesthetic interventions of many indie filmmakers to be discussed in these pages, including Todd Solondz, Todd Haynes, Wes Anderson, and Richard Linklater. He is careful to distinguish this category from indie cinema, a culture with which smart cinema overlaps. Smart cinema offers its audience a sense of distinction in relation to mainstream cinema, as I have argued of indie cinema more generally, and its ironic address splits the audience into those who get it and those who do not, which allows the ones who do a sense of their distance from the mainstream other.[30] But the smart film is a more specific category than the indie film, one that has little currency outside of academic discourse, and Sconce makes no claim that smart-ness is essential to indieness. My approach is thus more expansive than his both historically and also by considering indie films that might lack the ironic or nihilistic sensibility of a *Ghost World* or *Happiness*, such as many of the films of the strain of indie cinema I will identify in chapter 3 as socially engaged realism. And yet I do rely on some of Sconce's ideas about the Off-Hollywood audience and the functions of certain kinds of textual difference within indie contexts.

Thus as a cultural category and a film culture, indie cinema still is open to further critical analysis as a formation which includes but

is not limited to the releases of the mini-majors (since indie culture does not consider an economic criterion to be necessarily above any others). Although there are many books on independent film, they often catalog rosters of savvy producers, heroic *auteurs*, and distinctive "schools" without unifying them within contexts of cultural production and consumption.[31] Independent cinema needs consideration as a corpus of works with not only underlying aesthetic conventions but also shared audience expectations. King offers a clear and persuasive overview of the industrial and formal terrain, and he also considers some of the sociopolitical dimensions of alternative cinema; I aim to consider indie film from a complementary perspective that is concerned primarily with describing the modes of engagement it solicits and encourages within the context of its institutional discourses. My project is to consider how American indie cinema is invested with significance and given unity and coherence by a cluster of assumptions and expectations about narrative form and the cinematic experience that producers and consumers of independent films share. Independent filmmakers, films, and their critics and audiences function in a circuit of meaning-making. The mode of interaction between audience and text is the product of discourses effected through a collaboration between all of the participants in constructing and maintaining "indie" as a cultural category. In tracing the contours of this category and arguing for its significance, I am most concerned with thinking about how its users make sense of it and how their sense-making is a product of cultural forces, which both enable and constrain potential meanings. Thus my approach to thinking about indie films as a coherent category is a pragmatic one, considering how it functions within the contexts of its use.[32]

This approach seizes on the nexus of film and spectator, text and audience. It is concerned with how films are experienced but not very much with how they are made. Of course, to understand everything we might want to about indie cinema, we would need to look at production practices as well. (Some scholars have done this, though much work remains to be done.)[33] But this is not a book that aims to understand everything. Its ambition is to understand how audiences and films engage one another, and it assumes that pursuing this issue is a good way of understanding how indie cinema functions as a category and concept. Thus its approach has both sociological and psychological dimensions.

In the case of independent cinema, a sociological approach can help us understand the way that the indie audience uses culture for the purpose of distinguishing itself—its taste—against the other of mainstream culture and its audiences. In this sense, indie cinema is a means of accumulating cultural capital, the forms of knowledge and experience that social groups use to assert and reproduce their status.[34] Indie culture is comparatively urbane, sophisticated, and "creative class," and it uses cinema as a means of perpetuating its place in a social and cultural hierarchy.[35] It thus succeeds art cinema in the history of cinematic taste culture in the United States as a mode of filmmaking that those aspiring to certain kinds of status adopt as a common point of reference, a token of community membership. At the same time, a psychological approach can explain how, within the audience formation that has an investment in indie cinema, text and viewer engage one another. In the following pages I will elaborate on a cluster of viewing strategies that the indie audience has in common. These strategies and the textual forms that solicit them are best understood as psychological dimensions of the cinematic experience, which arise alongside conventions of storytelling. They are means of framing the comprehension and interpretation of films. If my discussion of viewing strategies describes the phenomenon of indie cinema well, it will only be because these strategies have both sociological *and* psychological validity. That is, they are descriptive of both the audience as a social phenomenon and of the spectator as an idealization of that audience in an individual whose mind is engaged by cinematic culture and its surrounding discourses.

In this book, I first establish indie film culture as a body of works that call on shared knowledge and expectations within their institutional contexts. I then canvas three viewing strategies, relating to three prominent aspects of independent cinema in this era—character-focused realism, formal play, and oppositionality—and analyze their functioning through discussions of specific examples. The first part of the book discusses these strategies and the institutional contexts within which they are mobilized, in particular film festivals and art house theaters. It argues that in the Sundance-Miramax era, indie film essentially filled the role previously occupied by imported art cinema.

The second part considers four films as examples of how indie films represent character and make it a central aesthetic appeal. Nicole Holofcener's *Walking and Talking* (1996), Sofia Coppola's *Lost*

in Translation (2003), Todd Solondz's *Welcome to the Dollhouse* (1996), and John Sayles's *Passion Fish* (1992) each illustrates some key elements of the prominence of character in independent cinema storytelling. It positions these films within a strain of indie cinema that I identify as socially engaged realism, an approach to storytelling and thematics that distinguishes character-centered indie cinema from mainstream narrative and representation.

The third part considers the viewing strategy of finding in the forms of indie films an invitation to play, of seeing unconventional or prominent formal appeals as game-like. The discussion in this section turns to the Coen brothers' films as examples of pastiche as a playful indie aesthetic, and then to *Pulp Fiction* and the many films which in various ways share some of its unconventional narrative logic, which may be said to play with narrative form itself. The emphasis on the Coens offers one significant example of indie auteurism, an ideology distinguishing alternatives from ordinary film practice, and a key approach to appreciating independent cinema. The Coens are also an excellent example of indie negotiating between the margins and mainstream, as directors whose origins in independent cinema have authorized appropriating their entire oeuvre as the work of outsiders, even as many of their films have been released by major studios to quite wide appreciation. The subsequent chapter, on ludic narrative forms, begins with *Pulp Fiction* but surveys many examples of different kinds of play with narrative conventions and expectations that function as distinction between mainstream and alternative practices.

The final part treats the topic of indie cinema as a form of opposition to the mainstream, but by looking as much at the contexts of film releases, including discourses in the popular and trade press and on cinephile Web sites, as at the film text itself. In considering the release of two films in particular, *Happiness* (1998) and *Juno* (2007), it contrasts a film whose credibility as alternative culture was constructed as practically unassailable with another whose indieness met challenges as it succeeded commercially and "crossed over." This concluding chapter about indie as anti-Hollywood argues that opposition to the mainstream is animated through the discourse of authenticity that affirms some films' indieness while denying that of others.

Although *indie* and *independent* are often terms used to describe more than just American fiction feature films, with certain exceptions I have limited the discussion in the pages that follow to fiction feature

films made by U.S. directors and producers (though financing might come from abroad). Documentaries are different in a number of important ways from fiction films, especially their modes of representation and narrative exposition and their economic positioning within the American film market. Many of my claims apply to them as well, but many would not, and thus including documentaries would excessively complicate matters. The exclusion of films from outside the United States is perhaps a more contentious matter. Aesthetically, many qualities of Canadian, Latin American, European, and Asian films positioned as alternatives in local or international markets are quite similar to the aesthetics I describe in relation to American independent films, and they often call upon the same viewing strategies. American indie distributors, moreover, distribute many imports; some of the most high-profile independent releases in this era, including *The Crying Game* (1992), *Secrets and Lies* (1996), *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), *The Piano* (2002), *Once* (2006), and *The Queen* (2006), have been foreign-made indie releases. However, while I believe many of my claims do apply to films from other countries, I have still limited the discussion to American films. In part this is to make my task manageable, but also because, as chapter 2 will show, indie cinema in the United States has functioned as an alternative American national cinema. The discursive construction of American indie cinema that I have considered is largely a product of national media institutions, not only American film festivals like Sundance but also American blogs like indieWire, magazines like *Filmmaker*, trade publications like *Variety*, and theater chains like Landmark. The mini-majors that control much of the cinema called indie are American companies releasing mainly American films. All of this suggests that indie culture is to some significant extent a national culture, even if it is not essentially concerned with thematizing national identity. This is not to deny that it is also a local, regional, international, or global culture, but only to defend its configuration here as American first of all. (It is also my sense that indie culture in the United States keeps imports at the periphery in its constructions of indieness.)

By describing indie cinema as a film culture, I am insisting that we think of it not just as a collection of cinematic works with similar textual features but also as a set of practices and a body of knowledge with certain privileged meanings. Our ways of thinking of indie cinema are not simply issued by the publicity departments of media

companies, nor are they products merely of critical discourses in the popular, trade, or scholarly press. Indie culture is a category that belongs to all of the people who make up its community of users, which includes filmmakers and tastemakers and ordinary filmgoers. Indie can only function as a coherent term as long as there is some agreement about what it names. Only by locating indie cinema within the integrated web of text, audience, and institutions can we hope to understand this category and the concepts it calls to mind.

part I CONTEXT

chapter 1 INDIE CINEMA

VIEWING STRATEGIES | The key to understanding indies is Hollywood.—EMMANUEL LEVY

Several obstacles stand in the way of a unified aesthetic of indie cinema. Among the Off-Hollywood filmmaking community, evocative concepts like "independent spirit" suffice to characterize a heterogeneous enterprise that might appear to resist more specific generalizations. Filmmakers and critics insist that independent films are more offbeat or personal or character-driven than Hollywood equivalents.[1] These formulations remain rather vague. To the sheer variety of films and the difficulty posed by generalizing about them, add the problem of authenticating the very independence the name designates. Is indie cinema of the Sundance-Miramax era anything more than a marketing strategy? I believe it is, even if "independent" often does not designate what either its champions or its detractors might wish. Like all feature filmmaking, independent cinema is among other things a business. If it is undertaken for profit under the auspices of the global media empires, this complicates its status as alternative media, but it does not de-legitimate the category. On the contrary, it amplifies its salience. Since opposition to the dominant media sells to an elite niche market—which makes up in affluence some of what it lacks in size—a viable commercial logic underwrites the independent spirit. It is precisely because of its lack of true autonomy from the mainstream entertainment industry that indie cinema enjoys such prominence, that

it has become such a compelling, productive *idea* in American film culture functioning in dialogue with the Hollywood mainstream.

Many filmmakers, spectators, and critics agree that independent cinema offers some kind of alternative to Hollywood, but what kind of alternative is it? What animates the "independent spirit"? In answering these questions I consider the ways that films solicit responses from viewers. In short, viewers are encouraged to see independent films as more socially engaged and formally experimental than Hollywood; more generally, they are encouraged to read independent films as alternatives to or critiques of mainstream movies. Taken together, these viewing strategies account for much of what makes the category "independent cinema" cohere.[2] They are the interpretive frame through which audiences make sense of American independent cinema, differing in several important respects from the frame through which audiences experience "mainstream" movies.

The viewer is not radically free to impose any strategy at all on cultural products. Viewing strategies, arising from critical and cultural contexts, are always constrained and closely related to textual practice. Certain kinds of storytelling solicit viewing strategies. For instance, in chapter 3 we will see that a realist mode of narration orients the viewer toward a focus on character as a specific kind of appeal of some indie films. So viewing and storytelling strategies are hardly independent of one another; but to approach indie cinema from the perspective of viewing rather than storytelling strategies one emphasizes the audience and film culture, seizing on the meanings that ultimately are most central to the coherence of a cultural category. Using films as the central site of research, an inquiry into viewing strategies can ask how the evidence of storytelling practice—in relation to a given cultural and critical context—can offer insights into the practices of viewers in making sense of narratives and their meanings. We reverse-engineer from the films, knowing something about their general appropriation by audiences and critics, to determine the patterns of meaning audiences construct through their encounter with the text.

Indie cinema is not specific enough to function as a historically stable, well-recognized genre like science fiction or a group style like Soviet Montage with clearly identifiable visual techniques shared among a movement of like-minded artists. It makes more sense to see it as a cycle or large-scale production trend within the American film industry which brings its own assumptions about cinematic form and function shared by filmmakers and moviegoers, a category in some ways similar to classical or art cinema, both of which have been systematically analyzed not only as institutions but as a cluster of storytelling conventions and a mode of film practice.[3] I am not claiming that cinema functions as a coherent narrational mode like art cinema or classical cinema, a proposition Geoff King has considered and rejected, preferring to see independent cinema as a hybrid of classical and art or avant-garde cinema.[4] I am proposing instead the concept of a film culture, which includes expectations about form which may not cohere as a distinct mode of narration clearly marked off from others, but which does include significant shared meanings within institutional contexts of what indie is and is not.

This chapter broadly outlines how indie films work. Its ambition is to describe how they appeal to their viewers and how their viewers use them. But I am not attempting to define independent films in such a way that will determine exactly which texts qualify or do not qualify for membership in the club. I assume that indie film is defined not by scholars or critics but, pragmatically and within the limits of cultural and historical contexts, by filmmakers and audiences for whom something is at stake in the designation. Indies are those films considered within the institutions of American film culture to be indies, regardless of their budget, producer, distributor, director, and cast, and regardless of their genre, theme, style, and tone. The category exists only as it is useful to the whole cultural circuit of producers and consumers that makes independent cinema what it is.[5] I discuss films that are considered by a broad consensus of filmmakers, critics, and moviegoers to belong in the category of indie cinema, regardless of who produced them or starred in them, regardless of how big or small their budgets or profits. My task, then, is to outline the contours of the category and some strong tendencies in its uses and to probe the features of independent cinema as this cultural circuit configures them.

This approach to categories assumes that they are often understood according to prominent prototypes or exemplars rather than, in the classical view, according to whether they meet a set of necessary and sufficient conditions.[6] The viewing strategies I describe in these pages are mobilized in relation to certain ideals of what indie films are like. Sometimes qualities of indie prototypes overlap, but sometimes they might be quite distinct from one another. Thus two

indie films might not have much in common with one another aside from indieness. I organize these prototypes into viewing strategies, which implies that they are to be found in audiences rather than texts. But the films that call upon these strategies have qualities in common, and these qualities are what makes them prototypical. It is significant, however, that these prototypes come into being and are understood in social and historical contexts, and that indie cinema is only meaningful within these contexts.

The idea of independent cinema is hardly new, but since the 1980s it has assumed a place and function in American film culture that it never before had; connotations of "independent" have shifted according to changing conceptions of both alternative and mainstream cinemas. Although strongly influenced by the New American Cinema of the 1960s and 1970s and directors such as Martin Scorsese and Robert Altman, who serve as models for many indie filmmakers, as well as the international art cinema of the 1950s and 1960s that inspired that movement, contemporary American independent films respond to their own unique contexts and demand their own modes of engagement. These are products of a history that stretches from the present day all the way back to the days before the establishment of Hollywood, when independents helped to shape the origins of the American film industry.

Independents in American Film History

The origins of the term *independent* in cinema are old. It was applied to the producer Adolph Zukor in the 1910s when he opposed the monopolistic control of American film distribution by Thomas Edison's Motion Picture Patents Company.[7] Zukor's firm, soon known as Paramount, became the first pillar in the edifice of the American studio system.[8] "Independent" was applied to David O. Selznick, Samuel Goldwyn, and Walter Wanger in the 1930s and 1940s when they produced their own films with talent and facilities rented from the Hollywood majors and distributed through them.[9] These independents were integral to the Hollywood system, assuming risks that the majors preferred to avoid and generating high-quality product such as Goldwyn's *Best Years of Our Lives* (1946) to fill the majors' theatrical programs and earn them high profits. During the

studio era there were also American productions that were genuinely separate from the Hollywood studio system, such as films made by and about African-Americans and films in Yiddish, as well as documentaries and avant-garde films such as those of the New York Film and Photo League.[10] But during the years of Hollywood's stable, vertically integrated oligopoly, genuinely independent films were seen by very few people, and independent cinema was hardly the identifiable category in American culture that it was later to become.

Following the consent decrees of 1948 that caused the breakup of the studio system, the Hollywood mode of production became centered on packages assembled by agents, stars, directors, and producers and financed through advances from the majors based on expectations of distribution revenue. The 1950s and 1960s saw a rapid proliferation of independent films in the United States, when the system of "package-unit" production still in place today was established.[11] We no longer think of this as the typical kind of independent production, but according to the terms of the studio era, it is just that. From the 1960s to the present day, the major studios (Columbia, 20th Century Fox, Disney, Universal, Paramount, and Warner Bros.) have mainly financed and distributed films produced by other companies, just as Loew's/MGM did with *Gone With the Wind* in 1939.

During the studio era and the early post-studio era, "independent" was an industrial distinction and did not designate a specific body of films that audiences would likely recognize as having shared textual features or functions. The products of independent producers like Selznick were classical Hollywood films. But since the 1960s, critics have identified a countercurrent in American cinema of films that are more widely distinguished from the commercial mainstream according to aesthetic criteria, and recognized for having cultural and textual functions and effects that are distinct from those of Hollywood films. That is, beginning in the 1960s, there is a new sense in which films can be termed independent. There are at least three major dimensions to this new entry in cinematic nomenclature: exploitation films, experimental or underground films, and art films. All of these are to some extent precursors to today's indie films.

All of these forms of cinema became increasingly prominent in the post-studio era. This prominence resulted from a steep drop in the output of the Hollywood majors, a need for exhibitors to find a product and an audience to demand it, the demise of the Produc-

tion Code, and a growing interest in film as art.[12] The collapse of the studio system in the 1950s augured a binary popular conception of American cinema as Hollywood/not-Hollywood to replace the monolithic conception of the previous era wherein Hollywood and movies meant the same thing to most people. At first the term *independent* was applied to any alternative to Hollywood, a capacious category including the B movies of Roger Corman, the avant-garde works of Maya Deren, and what David E. James calls the "American art films" of Haskell Wexler, Dennis Hopper, and John Cassavetes.[13] Cassavetes' *Shadows* (1959) is a key example in this history, representing many of the era's most important independent film characteristics: a low-budget, improvisatory aesthetic similar to European art film movements; a story about a taboo subject, interracial romance; and production, distribution, and exhibition outside of the mainstream channels. In the American cinema of outsiders, *Shadows* is the ur-text. Eventually, it was the American art film that came to dominate our conception of independent cinema.[14]

Avant-garde and exploitation films were considered independent because of their distinctness from Hollywood, but each category is also distinct from what we today call indie cinema. "The precise relationship of the avant-garde cinema to American commercial film," in P. Adams Sitney's influential formulation, "is radical otherness. They operate in different realms with next to no significant influence on each other."[15] The significance of this radical otherness is that avant-garde cinema can scarcely be discussed using the same terms and concepts as Hollywood cinema. It has a very different set of determining production practices, viewing strategies, institutional bases, and critical discourses that animate it and give it meaning. The significance of independent (or indie) as it applies to today's cinema, by contrast, is that it defines a more ambiguous, give-and-take relationship between Hollywood and its alternative that supports more comparison and closer, finer distinctions between them, as we shall see. Indie as opposed to independent makes clear that the new conception of independence is in some sense less independent than some alternatives, and that more radically different work may be unsuitable for description as indie.

Over the years, the meaning of independent has become fixed on a more specific kind of film than was the case in the 1960s: the American narrative feature aimed at the alternative theatrical market.

At one point this included exploitation films, and in John Waters we have the clearest case of an indie *auteur* whose aesthetic is in this tradition. But since the 1980s, with American independent films succeeding abroad at festivals like Cannes, with Sundance becoming a high-profile event, and with the growing indie presence in annual American film awards (especially the Oscars), the exploitation component of independent cinema has been strategically, systematically downplayed, even as the companies releasing these prestige pictures, such as Miramax and Lionsgate, distribute both art house and exploitation fare. Prestige and cultural distinction have come to dominate our conception of independent cinema at the same time that this category has become prominent within mainstream American culture. The rise of the mini-major specialty divisions has been both a symptom and cause of this conceptual reconfiguration.[16] A well-known indie-branded film released by the exemplar indie distributor, Miramax, was *Pulp Fiction* (1994) rather than the highly profitable *Scream* franchise (1996, 1997, 2000), brought out by its "genre" label, Dimension Films. During the same period, American independent films came to replace foreign imports as the bread and butter of art house programming, as the next chapter will describe. Essentially, the indie movie, descendent of the American art film and of Cassavetes' maverick personal cinema, took the place once occupied by the foreign film in the imaginations of American moviegoers. It has become the cinema figured as more intellectually satisfying and culturally distinguished, and addressed to a more sophisticated audience, than the mass-market movies made in Hollywood. Art cinema and independent cinema are hardly the same thing, however, and we must distinguish between these modes in order to clarify how independent cinema functions as a cultural category.

Viewing Strategies: Independent Cinema and Art Cinema

Over the years several alternatives to classical cinema have arisen, from the European avant-garde of the 1920s to the American avant-garde of the postwar years. The most germane comparison with independent cinema, however, is international art cinema. Both are commercial modes of feature film production that have succeeded in attracting considerable business away from mainstream fare. Are

independent films any different in their viewing strategies from art films? They are, though these modes also share a number of conventions. Most important, of course, is that both encourage an alternative reading; both are in some regard anti-Hollywood. But they accomplish this opposition in different ways.

Some aspects of independent film are shared with art cinema. There is an emphasis on realism in nonclassical cinema that goes back at least to the 1920s and that is an important aspect of indie film. Likewise, authorship is a key interpretive frame for both, with both being figured as "personal cinema" that demands to be read as the product of an individual's artistic expression. But other aspects are more context-specific. Art cinema was a product of a modern, bourgeois conception of art and society, in which the individual stands as a central figure whose psychological depths can never be fully explored. It is animated by the ideas and artistic currents of the time, such as Freudian psychology, existentialist philosophy, and modernist literature and drama.

One key aspect of art cinema is that it demands interpretation. Characters' goals are vaguely defined, spatiotemporal continuity is absent, and scenes slip—often with only vague signaling—from objective to subjective narration and back. The audience is encouraged to "read for maximum ambiguity."[17] Ambiguity in art cinema is typically ambiguity about an individual, and as in contemporaneous literature and drama it is driven by a modernist conception of the individual. Independent cinema is hardly as ambiguous as art cinema, and in general its style is not nearly as challenging. By comparison, indie cinema often can seem fairly classical in its narrational approach.[18] Characters often have clear goals, and events are represented legibly and are causally connected. Independent films like *Down by Law* (1986) and *Safe* (1995) end without conventional closure, but the radically challenging endings of the likes of 8 1/2 (1963) and *Persona* (1966) are seldom duplicated in recent American independent films, and indie comedies like *Juno* might not try to avoid a Hollywood ending.

Like art cinema, independent cinema is animated by the intellectual context of its era; in place of existential angst and alienation we find the multiplicity and fragmentation associated with multiculturalism and postmodernism. This is not to say that independent directors thematize these "isms" consciously or systematically, only that these ideas are in the air, and that they filter through to inform some of the basic assumptions about storytelling that are widely shared by American filmmakers and spectators of the past two decades. It is these assumptions, I argue, that distinguish independent film from the modes of cinema with which it sometimes might overlap.

Like art cinema, independent film brings with it expectations of objective realism and authorial expressiveness, but (with rare, marginal exceptions) without the more radical forms of subjectivity and ambiguity that characterized 1960s European cinema. Described thus, independent film might be seen as art-cinema-lite, taking the less challenging conventions of art films but leaving behind the really interesting ones. I reject this notion because it suggests that independent film directors seek to emulate Bergman, Godard, and Fellini but fail. Independent cinema has its own conventions, and creates its own expectations. However, independent filmmakers did not invent them out of nothing. Some aspects do come from European art cinema, but through the mediating influence of American directors of the 1960s and 1970s, themselves acolytes of the European art film *auteurs* and the models most independent directors are most eager to follow.[19] Some aspects of indie film conventions are more contextually specific. I summarize indie cinema's expectations as a set of three slogans:

1. Characters are emblems
2. Form is a game
3. When in doubt, read as anti-Hollywood

Each of these signals a distinct conception of Off-Hollywood cinema, though in practice these strategies overlap with each other, often in mutually reinforcing ways. These strategies are what distinguish independent films from classical and art films, and they are the foundation for the audience's engagement.

1. *Characters Are Emblems*

The first viewing strategy assumes a larger degree of social engagement in independent cinema than in Hollywood cinema, and this is the strategy clearly influenced by multiculturalism, a discourse prevalent since the 1990s, especially in education, business, and arts and popular culture, wherein liberal and especially hip, urban,

affluent Americans have identified with values of tolerance and openness to diverse cultural identities.[20] However, it is not merely a matter of pointing out that some independent films thematize issues of identity. It is, rather, an implicit solicitation of audience awareness of the specificity of represented situations, and especially people, in a historical and cultural reality. With this awareness, characters become emblems of their social identities. This is the version of realism, coming from the art cinema tradition, that is of particular significance to independent film, but unlike the individual's unique interior reality in art cinema, independent film offers an engagement with *social* reality, in the sense used by Marxists to refer to relations of power among social groups such as classes. Identity in this conception is based not in a transcendent self but in group memberships and affiliations.

Many efforts to encapsulate American independent cinema come back to character. Filmmakers, critics, and audiences all seem to recognize that indie films place a special interest in character (sometimes figured as the opposite of plot), and as a result have interesting characters. Miguel Arteta, director of *Chuck and Buck* (2000), declares: "When I go see an independent movie, I want to see something totally different. I want to see characters who don't walk that predictable line."[21] According to its detractors, Hollywood cinema is often content to have characters who are one-dimensional types functioning as vehicles for other appeals, such as visual spectacle and the promotion of ancillary consumer products.[22] By contrast, the champions of indie cinema argue that its characters have more depth and complexity, are better developed, are truer to life, and are more vivid and compelling than Hollywood characters.[23] Many things might make for interesting characters, and it would be foolish to accept the naive assertion that indie characters are superior to those of Hollywood, but one aspect of this special emphasis on character is that in indie films, a certain rhetorical weight is placed on the specificity of the representation of characters as social beings.

This strategy fits best with a strain of independent film geared toward political and social commentary and criticism. Independent films as a whole cannot be said to be driven by left-wing politics, yet there is certainly more socially engaged filmmaking in Off-Hollywood than in Hollywood cinema. My point is not that independent films are generally vehicles for particular *ideas* about social reality or that they generally have a rhetorical agenda of encouraging social *change*.

It is, rather, to insist that independent cinema's characters are identified so strongly with social types that they come to represent them much more significantly than in other modes of cinema. This is as true of many independent films that are not overtly political (e.g., *Clerks*, 1994) as it is of films that clearly are political in the sense of explicitly engaging with structures of social power and advocating for a critical perspective (e.g., *Matewan*, 1987). There are also many examples that fall somewhere in the middle, incisively satirical films whose advocacy is at best indirect, combining an ironic sensibility with a keen sense of social observation (e.g., *Welcome to the Dollhouse*, 1996).

To an extent, there is value placed merely on the existence—independent of narrative content—of representations of socially marginalized identities, especially of racial minorities and gays and lesbians. At a time when few feature films of any kind were released that had African-American, Asian, Latino, or queer main characters, the release of a film that did was considered highly significant. Many of the most highly acclaimed indie films have addressed the construction of social identity as a central theme. *Boys Don't Cry* (1999) is about masculinity and femininity and the burdens of gendered identity on persons who don't fit neatly in binary categories. *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) is about the fear of being true to oneself when social structures prevent honesty and candor, and about the tragedy of prejudice against gay men, not just for them but for everyone who becomes close to them. *Dead Man* (1995) is about the cultural dislocation of both white man and Indian in the mythic Western past. (Jim Jarmusch's films in general can be characterized by their sense of cultural dislocation.) *Monster's Ball* (2001) dramatizes the relations of white and black characters in a racist world.

There is also value placed on representations *produced by* filmmakers of these identities. The 1980s and 1990s saw a series of "firsts," seized upon for publicity purposes, such as the first feature film to gain distribution directed by an African-American woman, *Daughters of the Dust* (1991), and by a Native American, *Smoke Signals* (1998).[24] As one critic of independent film writes, "Many cameras are being turned on American life for the first time, or with a fresh urgency: those in the hands of women, African-American women, African-American men, Hispanics, Asians, openly gay and lesbian filmmakers."[25] This fits tongue-in-groove with the viewing strategy that sees characters as emblems because it sees directors as

emblematizers. For example, *Go Fish* (1994), a film by a young American lesbian about the experience of young American lesbians, was given authority and authenticity by Rose Troche, the film's director.[26]

We tend to think of socially engaged filmmakers as oppositional and identify them with the tradition and mode of documentary cinema (indeed, independent documentary filmmakers like Michael Moore fit this bill). Independent cinema's social engagement is animated by multiculturalism, but while multiculturalism is a self-styled progressive social agenda, in independent fiction films it is often depoliticized to the point that the goal of socially specific representation becomes reflexive rather than critical. The filmmaker is content to describe a social reality, especially its representative types, as a means of capturing a slice of life in its vividness and specificity. If not naturalizing reality, this approach does tend to see it as stable and self-sufficient. One gets the sense that the filmmaker just wants his or her world, or a particular contemporary subculture he or she finds interesting, to be thrown up on the big screen and that the spectator appreciates this representation *per se*. Thus the spectator is invited to recognize this as a socially significant act, especially when this world is rarely represented in the mass media. Yet regardless of whether or not a representation is laden with such a sense of personal-cum-political importance, a similar viewing strategy sustains it. It can be observed in films as diverse as *Clerks*, *Metropolitan* (1990), *Mala Noche* (1985), *Mystery Train* (1989), *Daughters of the Dust*, *Chan Is Missing* (1982), and *Dazed and Confused* (1993). All are social studies, microscopes on a milieu, dissections of the personalities that populate a patch of cultural turf. The subjects could as easily be alienated white kids in the New Jersey suburbs, clever Manhattan debutantes, transient workers in Portland, Oregon, or hipster Japanese tourists in Memphis as they could be Gullah islanders, a Chinese cab driver in San Francisco, or Texas teenagers in the seventies. The indie audience is primed to regard these representations as cultural or subcultural explorations.

Of course there have been Hollywood films with minorities in leading roles, mainstream films that pay attention to marginal social identities, such as *Philadelphia* (1993), and Hollywood films made by women, gays and lesbians, and people of color. Intuitively, it would seem that something differentiates such films from independent cinema that addresses the same topics. The distinction is to be found in

an implicit conception of the individual in relation to his or her social identity. This conception underlies the distinction between audiences' expectations of the Hollywood and Off-Hollywood film. If the multicultural Off-Hollywood individual is recognized as a statement on cultural difference, specificity, distinctness, her Hollywood counterpart is typically defined by liberal humanism, by the transcending of difference in demonstration that we are all, at our core, the same, by the universal value of the autonomous self. This is why the gay Hollywood film promoted as a "first," *Philadelphia*, establishes such strong parallelism between the two main characters, Andrew and Joe, not only by making both high-power lawyers who dress and behave alike but also by framing, staging, and editing them in such as way as to make each one seem like the other's double. In doing so the film asserts their common humanity and makes both Andrew's homosexuality and Joe's blackness seem less significant in understanding each man more fundamentally as an individual.

Art cinema characters may differ from Hollywood's in their depth and complexity, but not in their conception as individuals. As David Bordwell discusses, its central preoccupation was "the human condition"; rather than analyzing structures of power, in art cinema "social forces become significant insofar as they impinge upon the psychologically sensitive individual."[27] To cultural critics, this kind of humanism is a means of eliding difference, of hiding structural imbalances of social and cultural power by asserting that everyone is in the same boat. By contrast with other modes of cinema, the independent film tends to have neither heroes nor antiheroes because these figures are larger than life. Emblems are exactly life-size because they are plucked from the fabric of the everyday, as realism and social engagement demand.

As Thomas Schatz has argued, characters in popular film genres are always figured in some kind of relationship to a community.[28] Mainstream cinema, in creating and sustaining popular "myths," serves to affirm the ideals of a community, which the audience recognizes to be of a piece with its own community. We are satisfied by the way a western affirms the value of maintaining legal order and by the way a studio-era musical comedy affirms the value of heterosexual courtship and marriage. Thus the function of representation of the social realm is to locate the audience's place within it. Independent cinema does something rather different. In place of appealing to us on the basis of a community that we share with that of the repre-

sentation, it demands that our notions of community be redefined, reconfigured, in some cases radically reconceived. Under the sign of multiculturalism, independent cinema's audience recognizes the distinctness of cultures and subcultures within the American community, and insists on communities, plural, rather than community, singular. Rather than finding that the poor and downtrodden, the oppressed racial and ethnic minorities, and other cinematically underrepresented groups are just like "the rest of us," the indie audience sees that their difference is recognized and affirmed. Thus the aptness of the label "cinema of outsiders": if we are all in some respects outsiders, as independent films suggest, then we must question the very notion of an inside, of a universality of experience and perspective. [29] Thus is the community posited by Hollywood revealed as mere myth, or ideology. By emblematizing characters in their full specificity and distinctness, independent cinema asserts the uniqueness of identity positions while the Hollywood emphasis on transcendent human connectedness is called into question, if not demolished.

2. *Form Is a Game*

If the first slogan signals the potential for independent cinema to have a cultural politics, the second signals its potential for aesthetic—especially narrative—experimentation and innovation. There are several ways in which the formal features of independent cinema are figured as elements of play, in which the spectator is encouraged to conceive of the film-viewing experience as game-like. This may sound slightly odd, as the metaphor of play is most often introduced in casual descriptions of how a director or film engages with some aspect of conventional storytelling. Todd Haynes, for example, proposes that his films play with the audience by systematically arousing and betraying their expectations.[30] We say that we like the way the Coen brothers play with genre, or the way *Pulp Fiction* plays with narrative structure. But I propose this figure of speech really means that spectators are prompted to regard specific aspects of films as components of a game and to see themselves as the players.

The kind of game I have in mind is not rigidly rule-bound, like chess or baseball, but looser and more improvisatory, like charades. Furthermore, I am arguing not that film-viewing is literally a game, but that it is conceived as game-like by viewers, i.e., that it has some of the same procedural characteristics as a game such as solving problems, guessing answers, matching attributes, and having fun. This offers a pleasure in film-viewing that is distinct from pleasures offered by mainstream cinema, though this is not to say that independent cinema cannot offer those pleasures too.

Form is foregrounded when film-viewing becomes a game. Bordwell distinguishes between the classical Hollywood spectator asking plot-based questions such as "Who did it?" and the art cinema spectator asking story-based questions such as "Why is this story being told this way?"[31] The independent film spectator asks this latter question too, but has different expectations about the answer. Rather than seeing challenging form as a cue to reading for subjective realism, authorial expressivity, or maximum ambiguity—rather than construing it as an invitation to interpretation—the independent film spectator sees challenging form as a conceptual structure, such as a plot schema or character type, that defies one's convention-bound expectations. This tendency has antecedents in 1960s art films such as *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961) and in avant-garde cinema. It also has many parallels in contemporary festival cinema, and seems especially prominent in American independent films. As with much modern and postmodern visual art, the object of comprehension is not only the representation but also the artifact in its status as representation. The motivation for this divergence is located in play rather than in meanings, in a field of signifiers rather than in an authorial signified, in fun that can be had by mixing and matching conventional narrative and cinematic elements.

The payoff of narrative experimentation in films such as *Go* (1999), *The Limey* (1999), *21 Grams* (2003), and *Memento* (2000) is not in heightened emotions, in maximized conventional suspense about what is coming next or stronger character engagement. If such films were told in a conventional linear fashion, after all, these appeals could be strengthened. It's hard to feel a connection to characters whose stories are obscure or confusing and suspense requires an understanding of causal relations among narrative events. For instance, if the story of *Memento* were told in a more canonical fashion there would be suspense over whether Leonard will kill Terry rather than confusion about his motives. Indeed, often such experimentation affords the opportunity of play only at the price of exploiting

fewer conventional narrative pleasures. The ultimate payoff is in the spectator's appreciation of a formal achievement and in the satisfaction of overcoming confusion or lack of clarity, while the moment-by-moment appeals depend on the game and its parameters.

So what sort of play is involved? What is the object of the game? There are actually several aspects to the game that independent films ask us to play; we might call these separate games or separate processes within the larger game. Their components include conventions such as plot patterns and character types, allusions and references to films and other cultural products, and aspects of narrative design such as temporal ordering and exposition. The fun of playing is a product of engaging with these game elements and is the pleasure taken in resolving incongruities in conventions, recognizing obscure meanings in intertexts, and puzzle-solving in aspects of narrative experimentation. Two aspects of independent cinema in particular engage this viewing strategy: films encourage play by engaging unconventional genre elements and by presenting unconventional narrative structures.

Plot and character conventions are figured into a game structure most clearly in films that work both within and against genre expectations. In the spirit of Robert Altman's films of the 1970s, independent filmmakers have taken genre to be a locus of experimentation and an opportunity for critical, meta-cinematic commentary. Unlike much art cinema, which avoids adopting mass-culture forms, independent cinema is very fond of pop culture's tropes. This is an inheritance from a minority art cinema tradition represented by Godard and Fassbinder, whose love/hate relationships with classical Hollywood cinema produced films such as *Pierrot le fou* (1965) and *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* (1974), and from self-reflexive "American art films" such as *The Last Movie* (1971).[32]

It is a commonplace of postmodernist criticism that high and low culture have collapsed on each other, that the conception of art as divided into these categories is flawed.[33] In the spirit of celebrating this collapse, artists in many media and idioms have embraced the forms and iconographies of popular culture. But in many cases, including indie cinema, this embrace is not played out in terms of practitioners of "high art" entering the mainstream of the culture industry or in terms of demolishing all distinction between mass and elite culture. One common practice is of an elite art form integrating elements of mass culture while still protecting its status. (I am using "mass" and "elite," "high" and "low" as relative terms. Independent cinema is elite/high in relation to Hollywood cinema, but it does not serve exactly the same cultural functions as traditional elite/high art such as classical music, opera, ballet, and literary fiction.)

In independent cinema as in other art forms, there is a tendency against the full adoption of the pop culture form, an effort to comment on it (however explicitly or implicitly), or a contradictory mix of forms. In independent films these forms are conventional popular film genres, and the spectator's strategy is to identify the forms, recognize and possibly resolve their incongruities, and construct a commentary on them. This might sound as though I am calling independent cinema postmodernist, which some critics have done.[34] But I am merely identifying an influence of postmodernism on the strategies audiences bring to understanding independent films.

This emphasis on play through recognition of conventional forms signals that one distinction between contemporary American indies and the European art cinema is that a different kind of connoisseurship is cultivated in American audiences, and that it must be applied to catch all the references as they flash by, like jokes in an episode of *The Simpsons*. Noël Carroll described American cinema of the 1970s as the "cinema of allusion," citing numerous instances in which the film-school generation of directors such as Paul Schrader would self-consciously rework the John Ford and Robert Bresson films that made them into cinéastes.[35] In this tradition-crazed tradition, Tarantino makes films that demand a wide sweep of world-cinema-history knowledge, albeit of a certain sort. The audience follows along in connect-the-dots fashion, recognizing the antecedents of the "Mexican standoff" in *Reservoir Dogs* (1992), the briefcase with glowing contents in *Pulp Fiction*, and numerous action, *anime*, and martial arts films in the two *Kill Bill* volumes (2003, 2004) without necessarily applying any interpretive schema to Tarantino's visual quotations.

Many of the Coen brothers' films, including *Miller's Crossing* (1991), *Barton Fink* (1991), *Fargo* (1996), *The Big Lebowski* (1998), and *The Man Who Wasn't There* (2001) are at once *homages* to classic American tough-guy, hard-boiled literature and *film noir* and brilliant exaggerations of the conventions of this genre. They work on several levels: as suspenseful storytelling, as allusive re-creations of classic forms, and as commentary on their appeals and on Hollywood representation. Their stories come wrapped in a tone of ironic clever-

ness, with a wink acknowledging a heightened consciousness of formal convention. There is always a strong dose of dark comedy mixed into their drama.

The game is played by applying an interpretive frame that sees the Coen brothers' films not only as tough-guy stories, but as *meta*-tough-guy stories. This reading is a product not only of textual features that reward reflexive viewing strategies, as I shall discuss, but also of the context of independent cinema spectatorship. In contrast to Hollywood's youth audience or mass audience, the audience for independent cinema is generally mature, urban, college-educated, sophisticated, and familiar with conventions of representation and reception in many various media and forms, high and low.[36] This audience might have learned reflexive readings in school, or encountered them directly in literary, art, or film criticism. Such schemas also have become familiar through dissemination in popular press discourse. When *Entertainment Weekly* routinely describes films as "postmodern," we may expect the indie crowd to be savvy to conceptions of signification and meaning suggested by that term.[37] This might seem commonplace today but it was not always so. Since at least the 1980s, the notion that rather than conveying deep symbols for scholarly exegesis, texts offer what poststructuralist theorists might call a "play of signifiers" has filtered down from academia into circles of elite cultural consumption.

Two textual cues for "meta" readings in films of the Coen brothers (and many others) are exaggeration and incongruity. In *Miller's Crossing*, one device of exaggeration is the motif of the men's hats, the icon of modern masculinity and a staple of gangster and *film noir* costuming. By returning to it so obsessively, by investing it with such importance, the Coens signal a fascination with the iconography of the tough-guy genre, constantly turning it around to appreciate its intricacies. In many of their films, exaggeration manifests itself in other extremes of mise-en-scène, from overly mannered performances to comically dark lighting. The game is played by recognizing that the conventional elements are being quoted and turned comical or grotesque.

In itself this exaggeration is incongruous, but another incongruity arises in cases in which an opposite device is employed: the insertion into a generic framework of something that clearly doesn't belong. In

Altman's early films, a war movie climaxes in a football game instead of a battle (*M*A*S*H*, 1970), a musical builds up to an assassination (*Nashville*, 1976), and a western hero is a cowardly pimp (*McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, 1971). In *Fargo*, as many critics have noted, the landscape and mise-en-scène is the opposite of that of *noir*: it is the expansive white of the Minnesota winter rather than the shadowy black of the Los Angeles night. At some point *The Man Who Wasn't There* decides to become a science fiction film as well as a neo-noir. *Barton Fink* abandons hard-boiled realism for full-blown paranoid fantasy. And *The Big Lebowski*, most audaciously, takes a Chandleresque scenario but replaces the typical private eye with an aging hippie and has the story narrated onscreen by a middle-aged cowboy. We may admire many of the Coen brothers' characters for their eccentricity and quirkiness at the same time that we may recognize their incompatibility with the narratives into which they have been mischievously dropped.

The Coen brothers are the quintessential genre-play directors, but encouragement of this kind of play actually is quite widespread. The semi-ironic tone of the Coens' films, at once respectful of their cinematic predecessors and irreverent toward them, is also found among independent filmmakers ranging from Hal Hartley to Jim Jarmusch to Quentin Tarantino to Wes Anderson to Todd Haynes. All of them, and many others, combine exaggerated conventions with incongruous admixtures to similar results.

The other main way in which independent cinema figures form as a game is through narrative structure. The most common exemplar in this case is *Pulp Fiction*, though it is neither the most original nor the most sophisticated example of a film using temporal disordering. *Daughters of the Dust* and *The Limey* are more challenging in their fluid movement among past, present, and future, while *Memento* and *Primer* (2004) are more thorough in their formal design and more demanding on the spectator. Independent films sometimes take an abstract formal pattern as a global design principle, as in *Mystery Train*. Many include significant temporal rearrangement through flashbacks or other devices. Real-time narratives such as *Before Sunset* (2004) also foreground narrative form. *Timecode* (2000) is experimental in its use of a simultaneous four-image frame. David Lynch's *Lost Highway* (1997), *Mulholland Drive* (2001), and *Inland Empire* (2006) are

formally disjunctive both temporally and spatially and to a significant extent inscrutable. This makes him the independent film figure most amenable to the reading strategies of art cinema.

Of course, Hollywood films also use flashbacks and other forms of temporal reordering. Conventional, mainstream detective films and thrillers make puzzling and problem-solving central to their narrative development. The distinction here is that in independent films form becomes a game when the most important motivation for unconventional narrative structure is play. Mainstream films like *American Beauty* (1999) begin at the end for a clear narrative purpose: to cast the events of the story in a dark, deterministic light. Mainstream films like *Minority Report* (2002) use flashbacks or flash-forwards to explain important details of the narrative, to reveal key information to create a stronger emotional resonance. Temporal reordering in art cinema is also typically motivated as explorations of character, as in *Wild Strawberries* (1957), in which flashbacks dramatize Borg's reminiscences of youth. Occasionally we find an independent film that fits in this tradition. An example is John Sayles's *Lone Star* (1996), which several times integrates past and present in a single shot to show continuities between them, to show the significance of history—both the events of the past, and their figuration in storytelling—to the formation of people's identities.

In many independent films that have challenging narrative structures, there often is a weak character-based or thematic motivation carried by a stronger play-based one. It is true that viewing *Memento* is a bit like being put in Leonard's place in terms of knowledge and memory. But soon after the film is under way, we are able to remember much more than he can. The stronger motivation for *Memento*'s form is that figuring out how the film is telling its story is a fascinating activity in its own right. The means of *Memento*'s convoluted editing is so far in excess of the function of heightening our sense of Leonard's experience that we must look elsewhere for the film's formal motivation.

At first glance, *The Limey* seems to motivate its temporal narrative design as subjective narration, putting us in the head of the protagonist, Wilson. But looking more closely, we find that it is more complex than that. While many images are flashbacks to childhood scenes of Wilson's daughter, and others are flash-forwards to scenes only imagined by Wilson, many images are flash-forwards that clearly

cannot be ascribed to Wilson's imagination (e.g., some proleptic images of Valentine, as during the "King Midas in Reverse" sequence, are from scenes from which Wilson will be absent and of which he will have no knowledge). Other scenes are conversations that inexplicably take place at several locations at once. On the DVD commentary track, the filmmakers suggest that these scenes play out the way people remember conversations, as composites of many encounters. But this isn't at all clear from the narration of the film, which in its flamboyant temporal and spatial shifts invites the spectator to appreciate and admire how a coherent narrative can emerge from such a jangle of images and sounds. Soderbergh encourages a play-based reading by frustrating the coherence of other approaches. It is also motivated as allusion to temporally disjunctive films of the 1960s, such as *Point Blank* (1967) and *Petulia* (1968), which cinema mavens will congratulate themselves for recognizing.

Slacker (1991) does not seem to attempt to motivate its formal principles on the level of character or story. It makes clear in its opening sequence that its design is motivated by an abstract philosophical notion of how choice and chance structure human affairs. As each sequence leads into another, one is conscious that it could have followed a different path. This is play held in balance with a thematic purpose. Similarly, in *Pulp Fiction*, the formal play of the disordered narrative sequence is held in balance with the character motivation underlying its ending with the second half of the diner scene. By ending with an emphasis on Jules's religious transformation, it might seem to amplify a character's development through its temporal manipulation. But this appeal is balanced by the novelty of the structure and the arbitrariness of Vincent's "resurrection," which has no such motivation. Thus play may be balanced with other appeals; however, the dominant reading strategy encouraged by such films is to follow the formal game.

These first two viewing strategies, characters as emblems and form as a game, can play into and feed off one another in various ways. The second strategy is a characterizing strategy too, since characters are an element of form. In many independent films, identity is a puzzle and solving it requires that both of the strategies be applied. In *Lone Star*, the constant back-and-forth between the past and the present demands an appreciation of the game of form but also an engagement with the historical and social differences that separate

characters. In *Far from Heaven* (2002), the difference between Todd Haynes's characters and Douglas Sirk's, by which they are partly inspired, demands a cinema-of-allusion reading, but at the same time, the racial and sexual dimensions of the characters foreground social identities. The formal approach to characters is one way of intensifying their significance, of emphasizing that we should take interest in them. One important way of doing that is by making characters themselves puzzling, by obscuring their motivations or their backstories. These devices create complexity, which is a positive value for both formal and social reading strategies. In *Hard Eight* (1996), delayed exposition makes the old-time Vegas hustler, Sydney, into an enigma. We learn only after a long delay that Sydney is John's father, which explains much of the older man's actions. Much of the pleasure of the narrative is in puzzling over their relationship. In *Safe*, Carol White's interiority is to a large extent inscrutable. She suffers from mysterious ailments that she believes have an environmental cause, but our sympathy with her is forestalled by the distance at which Haynes keeps the audience both literally—many scenes are filmed in long shots—and in terms of allowing us to understand Carol psychologically. We are invited to scrutinize Carol without getting to the bottom of who she really is.[38] By studying such characters so intensively, we gain a greater appreciation of them in their social specificity.

3. *When in Doubt, Read as Anti-Hollywood*

The first two strategies suggest two prototypes of independent film, one realist and the other formalist. But the third strategy is much more general and applies to many different kinds of cinema. The practice of reading as anti-Hollywood might be as old as Hollywood, though only in recent decades has a parallel mode come into existence in the United States to make this strategy relevant to understanding a significant body of American feature filmmaking.

In his study of American avant-garde cinema, James Peterson introduces the "brute avant-garde principle," a reading strategy of last resort that allows spectators to make sense of the most confounding avant-garde films by reasoning that they sometimes reject cinematic conventions as a way "to shock viewers out of their complacency."[39] Independent cinema obviously isn't challenging to the same extent

as the avant-garde, but it does often reject conventions. Rather than shocking viewers, we might say that independent cinema aims to introduce them to different kinds of experiences within the parameters of the feature film, to denaturalize aspects of conventional cinematic practice. The strategy of reading as anti-Hollywood functions as a global assumption about independent film and also as a local heuristic for making sense of specific details and devices. As Levy asserts:

> the key to understanding indies is Hollywood. Commercial cinema is so pervasive in the American movie consciousness that even when filmmakers develop alternative forms Hollywood's dominant cinema is implicit in those alternatives.[40]

Reading as anti-Hollywood also functions as a warrant for the preceding two reading strategies: social engagement and formal play can both be seen as functions of an anti-Hollywood stance, since representations of individuals and formal structures in independent cinema are viewed against mainstream norms.

Unlike the avant-garde, which is much more distinctly different from Hollywood cinema not only formally but also in the context in which it is made and experienced, independent cinema is regularly contrasted with and related to Hollywood both industrially and aesthetically. The two modes share personnel and many aspects of industrial practice (e.g., script formats, cameras, etc.) and they compete for many of the same awards. But while it is one thing to differ from Hollywood, it is another to oppose it. It is clear that some directors view independent filmmaking as antithetical to Hollywood. James Mangold describes the independent film scene as having "a good, healthy, anti-Hollywood sentiment."[41] Others see independent filmmaking as a Hollywood career-launching step. But spectators' expectations are not ordinarily dependent upon divining a director's career ambitions. If the explanation for some aspect of a film is that it departs from a Hollywood convention, it is logical that the function of that departure might be seen as an implicit critique.[42]

It is by sharing so much in common with Hollywood practice that Off-Hollywood's distinctness is thrown into relief. This is clearest in instances of generic play. In *Passion Fish* (1992), the anti-Hollywood stance is a function of the characters and situations being so typical of conventional female-friendship melodramas, then of defying

our expectations. In *Bound* (1996), the classic *film noir* couple—the hero and the *femme fatale*—is a pair of women, subverting the mainstream's norms of gender roles and sexual orientation while playing out a formulaic plot. *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) presents a horror film almost completely stripped of its stylistic norms of camera placement and movement, lighting, and sound, yet completely within the audience's genre-bound expectations of affective experience.

The indie trend of "quirky" cinema, exemplified by Wes Anderson and his many admirers and imitators and part of a larger style in indie culture more generally of quirky music, fashion, and design, departs in rather minimal ways from mainstream practice.[43] Quirk is a kind of tone or sensibility that depends for its effect on a perception of its unusual, eccentric qualities, and this fits perfectly with the mission of indie cinema to distinguish itself against mainstream tone or sensibility or conventions of representation of characters and settings. Characters in quirky comedies like *Rushmore* (1998), *Ghost World* (2001), and *Little Miss Sunshine* (2006) follow fairly clear narrative trajectories in pursuit of their goals, and narration in indie films like these might seem quite classical. But even though such films might have rather conventional emotional appeals, their offbeat style distinguishes them as fresh alternatives to studio films, and their quirky, oddball characters seem especially significant in this regard.

Reading as anti-Hollywood can function on a level of much greater or lesser specificity. It can explain the pace of *Stranger Than Paradise* (1984), the lo-fi, on-the-cheap aesthetic of *Clerks* and Mumblecore, and the sophisticated dialogue of *Metropolitan*. The obscure or bleak endings of independent films like *sex, lies, and videotape* (1989), *Buffalo 66* (1998), and *The Visitor* (2007) can be understood as undercutting the Hollywood norm of leaving the audience feeling good. *Welcome to the Dollhouse*, *Kids* (1995), and *Thirteen* (2003) can be seen as anti-Hollywood in their approach to troubled adolescents, neither moralizing nor sentimentalizing them, and certainly not showing the way to transform them into well-adjusted young citizens. The identity politics promoted by African-American, queer, and other subaltern cinemas is anti-Hollywood as is the miniaturist approach of Jim Jarmusch, who declares that his films "concern characters who consciously locate themselves outside the zombie mainstream."[44] *Citizen Ruth* (1996) is anti-Hollywood in its unabashed advocacy of a liberal stance on the most controversial sociopolitical issue in the United States, abortion rights. Casting choices reveal a critique of the Hollywood star system, as when character actors such as Richard Jenkins and Melissa McCarthy win leading roles (in *The Visitor* and *The Nines*, 2007, respectively). Many movies considered "small films," typically quirky comedies or chamber dramas, can even be read as anti-Hollywood by virtue of their modesty of scale and their interest in exploring character.

The notion of independent cinema as personal cinema is fundamentally anti-Hollywood, contrasting the independent artist against the soulless studio committee. The authorial reading strategy plays into this directly, as auteurism itself is historically anti-Hollywood insofar as it locates in the studio auteur (Lang, Ford, Hawks, et al.) a figure capable of communicating his vision in spite of the constraints of a studio system that by definition depersonalizes. Translated into the present-day studio versus independent dichotomy, it can even account for directors like Linklater and Soderbergh, who migrate back and forth between the modes, making their personal films as indies while paying their way taking studio projects, and for John Sayles, who supports his independent features with income earned as a Hollywood script doctor.[45] *School of Rock* (2003) and *Ocean's Eleven* (2001) are more likely to be read as commercial entertainments, made for fun and profit, while *Waking Life* (2001) and *Schizopolis* (1997) are understood to express something significant about their directors' experiences and worldviews. Any independent film that can be read as personal can be read as anti-Hollywood, since according to this scheme, Hollywood is assumed to temper personal filmmaking by putting commerce ahead of art.

The extent to which a film is judged to be anti-Hollywood can determine the strength of its candidacy for indieness. Often this takes into account more than textual characteristics, so that a film that is distributed by a major studio or that crosses over from art houses to multiplexes can be understood to be insufficiently indie based on contexts of production and reception. In making judgments about what counts as indie and what does not, the culture of indie cinema asserts the values of autonomy as a marker of indie authenticity and uses this to maintain its distinction in relation to studio filmmaking. Thus it is even possible to read as anti-Hollywood in relation to a film that is not considered authentically indie. (This topic will return in the final chapter in regard to *Juno*.)

This last viewing strategy is the ultimate justification for independent cinema as a category. It defines it against the other of the mainstream, commercial industry to show it off to its best advantage—as more honest, artistic, political, realistic, personal, intelligent, or whatever else its audience wishes it to be. As a strategy of both first and last resort, it always allows for the tradition of independent cinema to be maintained, for the independent film to be understood within the context of film culture. For as long as Hollywood exists, so will the desire to oppose it.

Conclusion

These three slogans make up a system of protocols in the sense that they operate sequentially and in a hierarchy of generality and significance. The first slogan is the most specific and easiest to apply. We look for characters (in situations) to be representative of real-world types in a way that is distinct from our engagement with characters in other modes of cinema. The second slogan is more general and calls on operations that are cognitively more sophisticated because they require a more active kind of problem-solving or puzzling. This step comes into play only in the presence of challenging form, and since some independent films are formally highly conventional, it is not necessarily activated in all cases. The last slogan is the most general and versatile. It is both a blanket assumption that guides global expectations about independent cinema and a precise tool for interpreting devices that cannot otherwise be assimilated under the preceding two slogans.

I have argued that this mode of film practice coheres around a set of conventions, and although I have spoken of films and directors encouraging certain reading strategies, the conventions are best thought of as belonging not to films or directors, but to all of indie culture. The films offer evidence of these conventions and are part of our education in them, along with cinematic institutions and reading strategies imported from other art forms and media. Taken together, these three slogans cover the lion's share of American independent cinema. They should not be taken as a recipe for making an independent film, though, or as a set of necessary and sufficient conditions. These slogans reference ways of understanding certain exemplars of independent cinema. Some films are closer to the exemplars than others, and some films are exemplary of more than one slogan. Some independent films are more peripheral according to this scheme, fitting Hollywood viewing strategies more than may be typical of independent cinema. Others, such as the films of David Lynch, are limit cases that function as anti-Hollywood by being challenging in unusual ways, but which also seem to demand their own means of interpretation. While the periphery of the category may be a fuzzy area, the center is where we find films such as *Blood Simple* (1984), *Do The Right Thing* (1989), *Slacker*, *Passion Fish*, *Lost in Translation* (2003), *Sideways* (2004), *Pulp Fiction*, and *The Limey*, which encourage the modes of engagement that are central conventions of American independent cinema. Such films typically reach their audience through the institutions of the film festival and art house theater, within which these viewing strategies are mobilized, and it is to these indie institutions that we will turn next.

tural category. In particular, I have seized on three ways of thinking about movies that I propose indie culture tends to agree about: that indie films invest great significance in characters who are to be read as emblems of their social identities, that their forms are often to be seen as invitations to play, and that our general assumptions about indie films require that we see them in opposition to Hollywood, at least in some ways. It might seem that locating the definition of indieness in the audience slights other explanations of how independent cinema coheres as a category such as economic or political ones. But the economic distinction between Hollywood and its alternatives figures in significantly to the anti-mainstream viewing strategy as we have seen, and the political distinction is often the force motivating prominent social and formal appeals, and more importantly, oppositional ones.

In every period of American film history there has been peripheral cinema. In many periods, it consisted of films made far from Hollywood and its influence. Although it exploits its opposition—or rather, our sense of its opposition—the American independent cinema of the most recent age increasingly has been the product of the major media industries, the conglomerates like News Corp. whose reputation among the culturally savvy is merely that of predatory capitalists. Those who would deny indie cinema's distinction from mainstream culture on the basis of News Corp.'s participation in its production articulate a noble resistance to the incorporation of alternative visions and values by huge multinational corporations eager to profit from consumer preferences for fresh and challenging perspectives. But as a cultural category, indie cinema belongs to a wide community of participants including not only filmmakers, critics, tastemakers, and scholars but also corporations and ordinary film viewers. Ironically, by becoming so visible and vital and commercially significant, for better or worse indie culture has become Hollywood's most prominent alternative to itself. While remaining critical of the independent sector's incorporation by Hollywood, however, we might still appreciate that in many ways indie film, as an alternative to the mainstream of American cinema, holds significant value for those invested in indie culture.

NOTES

Introduction

1. Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States*, 171–96; Barbara Wilinsky, *Sure Seaters: The Emergence of Art House Cinema*.

2. Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*.

3. I discuss this tension between resistant and hegemonic functions in Michael Z. Newman, "Indie Culture: In Pursuit of the Authentic Autonomous Alternative," *Cinema Journal* 48.3 (Spring 2009): 16–34.

4. Yannis Tzioumakis, *American Independent Cinema:An Introduction*, argues that throughout the history of the American film industry, industrial and aesthetic innovation has come from outside of the major studio oligopoly in the form of the "top-rank" independent production of the studio era, the exploitation cinema of the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, and the more recent movement of indies. For an argument that innovation in the media industries comes from outside of established firms, see also Ted Turner, "My Beef with Big Media," *Washington Monthly* (July/Aug. 2004), available online at www.washingtonmonthly.com/features (accessed Nov. 23, 2008).

5. Tzioumakis, *American Independent Cinema*.

6. Jason Mittell, *Genre and Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture*, discusses television genres as cultural categories in terms of their clusters of associations.

7. Kaya Oakes, *Slanted and Enchanted: The Evolution of Indie Culture*, covers many of these manifestations of indie culture during the era I am discuss-

ing, including music, publishing, and crafting. On independent bookstores see Laura J. Miller, *Reluctant Capitalists: Bookselling and the Culture of Consumption*. On indie video games see Jason Wilson, "Indie Rocks! Mapping Independent Video Game Design," *Media International Australia incorporating Culture and Policy* 115 (May 2005): 109–122. In a rant against the "quirky indie sensibility," Michael Hirschorn, "Quirked Around," *The Atlantic* (Sept. 2007), includes as examples of what he is discussing the public radio series *This American Life*, the literary magazine *McSweeney's*, the HBO comedy *Flight of the Concords*, novels by Jonathan Lethem and Jonathan Safran Foer, memoirs by Augusten Burroughs, as well as films like *Napoleon Dynamite*, *Rushmore*, *Little Miss Sunshine* and work in several media by Miranda July; available online at www.theatlantic.com/doc/200709/quirk (accessed Nov. 24 2008).

8. Thornton, *Club Cultures*, coined the term "subcultural capital" to describe the forms of knowledge and distinction operating in subcultures, and is also a source for my thinking about "mainstream" as a construct of alternative cultures. "Subcultural capital" plays on the idea of "cultural capital" as employed in Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*.

9. Alisa Perren, "Sex, Lies, and Marketing: Miramax and the Development of the Quality Indie Blockbuster," *Film Quarterly* 55.2 (Winter 2001–2002): 30–39.

10. David Hedsmondhalgh, "Indie: The Institutional Politics and Aesthetics of a Popular Music Genre," *Cultural Studies* 13.1 (1999): 34–61.

11. Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, 90–99, uses "incorporation" to refer to the tendency of hegemonic culture to market styles originating in resistant subcultures.

12. Ibid.; Ryan Hibbett, "What Is Indie Rock?" *Popular Music and Society* 28.1 (2005): 55–77.

13. On the Keystone Indie Lounge, *see* www.landmarktheatres.com/market/Indianapolis/KeystoneArtCinema.htm (accessed Nov. 23, 2008). The "INDIES" sign reads, "Favorite independent films chosen for Target by the Independent Film Channel."

14. David Poland, "Defining Indie 2010: Dependents, Full Indies, Mid-Indies, Micro-Indies & House Indies," The Hot Blog, available online at www.mcnblogs.com/thehotblog/archives/2010/02/defining_indie.html (accessed Feb. 10, 2010).

15. As an example of the complexity behind the terms *indie* and *indiewood* as discussed in the popular press, see Lorne Manly, "The Meaning of 'Indie,'" *New York Times*, May 29, 2005, C2.

16. Many writers have remarked on this shift in indie rock. See, for instance, Sasha Frere-Jones, "A Paler Shade of White: How Indie Rock Lost Its Soul," *The New Yorker*, Oct. 22, 2007, 176–81; and Bret Gladstone, "This Is an Essay about Okkervil River. Kinda.," *Village Voice*, Oct. 10, 2007, available online at www.villagevoice.com/blogs/music/archives/2007/10/this_is_an_essa.php (accessed Nov. 23, 2008).

17. Jessica Winter, *The Rough Guide to American Independent Film*; Jason Wood, 100 *American Independent Films*; *Empire*, "The 50 Greatest Independent Films: Empire's Ultimate Indie Lineup" (n.d.), available online at www.empireonline.com/features/50greatestindependent (accessed May 7, 2010).

18. Geoff King, *Indiewood, USA: Where Hollywood Meets Independent Cinema*, considers "indiewood" as a form of niche-marketed cinema.

19. E. Deidre Pribram, *Cinema & Culture: Independent Film in the United States, 1980–2001*, xii, defines independent cinema as a discursive formation, which is similar in concept to a film culture, as both set the job of determining the contours of the category on multiple levels. I stress film culture as the way of understanding indie cinema because it refers to both films as cultural objects, and to communities of filmmakers, critics, and audiences as a cultural formation that constructs films and gives them significance.

20. According to standard usage in film and television studies, indie cinema would not likely be considered a genre. However, if we understand "genre" on a more fundamental level to mean "category of texts," then indie certainly counts. Even if this point seems to strain the term unreasonably, consider that many of the same considerations that go into producing and consuming genres go into producing and consuming independent cinema, whatever kind of category we want to call it.

21. Mittell, *Genre and Television*.

22. Consider this anonymous comment on the indieWire blog: "The notion that 'Sideways,' a $16 million venture, is an independent film is itself a measure of how silly and corrupted this discourse has become" (*see* www.indiewire.com/biz/biz_050228spirit.html; accessed Nov. 23, 2008).

23. The Independent Spirit Awards have been given annually since 1984 by the nonprofit Film Independent organization and have become one of the most visible regular indie film events, in part by being scheduled in Los Angeles during the same weekend as the Academy Awards. *See* www.spiritawards.com (accessed May 13, 2010).

24. John Pierson, *Spike, Mike, Slackers & Dykes: A Guided Tour Across a Decade of American Independent Cinema*; Peter Biskind, *Down and Dirty Pictures: Miramax, Sundance, and the Rise of Independent Film*; Emmanuel Levy, *The Cinema of Outsiders: The Rise of American Independent Film*; Pribram, *Cinema & Culture*; Geoff King, *American Independent Cinema*. Additional single-authored volumes on independent cinema include King, *Indiewood, USA*; Geoff Andrew, *Stranger Than Paradise: Maverick Film-makers in Recent American Cinema*; Sharon Waxman, *Rebels on the Backlot: Six Maverick Directors and How They Conquered the Hollywood Studio System*; James Mottram, *The Sundance Kids: How the Mavericks Took Back Hollywood*; and D. K. Holm,

Independent Cinema; and Donald Lyons, *Independent Visions: A Critical Introduction to Recent American Independent Film.*

25. Chris Holmlund and Justin Wyatt, eds., *American Independent Cinema: From the Margins to the Mainstream*; Chuck Kleinhans, "Independent Features: Hopes and Dreams"; Kim Newman, "Exploitation and the Mainstream"; Wood, 100 *American Independent Films*; Justin Wyatt, "The Formation of the 'Major Independent'"; Tzioumakis, *American Independent Cinema*; and King, *Indiewood, USA.*

26. King, *American Independent Cinema.*

27. King, *Indiewood, USA.*

28. Pribram, *Cinema & Culture.*

29. Jeffrey Sconce, "Irony, Nihilism and the New American 'Smart' Film," *Screen* 43.4 (Winter 2002): 349–69.

30. Ibid., 352.

31. Biskind, *Down and Dirty Pictures*; Levy, *The Cinema of Outsiders*; Lyons, *Independent Visions*; Pierson, *Spike, Mike, Slackers & Dykes*; Waxman, *Rebels on the Backlot*; Mottram, *The Sundance Kids*; Holm, *Independent Cinema.*

32. This is in the same spirit as Rick Altman, *Film/Genre*, 207–215, which calls for a "semantic/syntactic/pragmatic approach to genre." Although independent cinema is not a genre, the same terms would seem to have some purchase in understanding how it functions as a category.

33. Tzioumakis, *American Independent Cinema*, 192–284; Perren, "Sex, Lies, and Marketing"; Wyatt, "The Formation of the 'Major Independent,'" 74–90.

34. Bourdieu, *Distinction.* Geoff King makes a similar point about the taste-culture of niche-oriented indiewood cinema in *Indiewood, USA*, 11–38.

35. "Creative class" is the coinage of Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class and How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, and Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

1. Indie Cinema Viewing Strategies

1. Levy, *Cinema of Outsiders*; Owen Glieberman, "A Terrible Twist Ending," *Entertainment Weekly*, Dec. 3, 2004, 25–26.

2. The notion of "viewing strategies" follows David Bordwell's approach to art cinema and James Peterson's approach to the avant-garde, both of which identify reception practices that are suggested by the films and institutionalized in film culture. David Bordwell, "The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice"; James Peterson, *Dreams of Chaos, Visions of Order: Understanding the American Avant-Garde Cinema.*

3. David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristen Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to* 1960; Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*; Bordwell, "The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice"; Steve Neale, "Art Cinema as Institution"; Murray Smith, "Modernism and the Avant-gardes."

4. King, *American Independent Cinema*, 101–104.

5. The "circuit of culture" is a term offered by Richard Johnson, "What Is Cultural Studies Anyway?" *Social Text* 16 (1986/87), 33–80, to account for the significance of both production and consumption in understanding cultural texts.

6. Edward E. Smith, "Categorization"; Ziva Kunda, *Social Cognition*, 15–52.

7. Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, *Film History: An Introduction*, 39–42.

8. Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies*, 33–47.

9. Tzioumakis, *American Independent Cinema*, 19–62; one case study of an American independent producer is Matthew Bernstein, *Walter Wanger: Hollywood Independent.*

10. Thompson and Bordwell, *Film History*, 218, 304.

11. Ibid., 336–39.

12. On exploitation films aimed at the youth market, see Thomas Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the* 1950s; on the relation of exploitation films to Hollywood, see Kim Newman, "Exploitation and the Mainstream." For a more general discussion of independent production in the 1960s and 1970s, see Thompson and Bordwell, *Film History*, 530–32.

13. David E. James, *Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties*, 280–303.

14. King, *American Independent Cinema*, 6, makes a similar point about Cassavetes and *Shadows.*

15. P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde*, 1948–1978, viii.

16. Tzioumakis, *American Independent Cinema*, 192–284, describes this shift.

17. Bordwell, "The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice," 779.

18. In distinguishing classical and art cinema narration, I am relying on Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film.*

19. Jim Hillier, "Introduction," in Hillier, ed., *American Independent Cinema: A Sight and Sound Reader*, ix–xvii; Steven Soderbergh and Richard Lester, *Getting Away with It; Or, The Further Adventures of the Luckiest Bastard You Ever Saw.* See also Levy, *Cinema of Outsiders*; Lyons, *Independent Visions*; and Pierson, *Spike, Mike, Slackers & Dykes.*

20. For an extensive discussion of these discourses and their significance as a context for understanding media, see Ron Becker, *Gay TV and Straight*

America, esp. ch. 4, "The Affordable, Multicultural Politics of Gay Chic," 108–135.

21. Loren King, "The Troubled Inner Child," *Boston Globe*, July 16, 2000, Arts sec., p. 1.

22. On Hollywood characters as one-dimensional, see Thomas Schatz, "The New Hollywood"; on the ancillary-product-promotion function of American movies, see Robert C. Allen, "Home Alone Together: Hollywood and the 'Family Film.'"

23. For example, Biskind, *Down and Dirty Pictures*, 19, writes: "Hollywood favored spectacle, action, and special effects, while indies worked on a more intimate scale, privileging script and emphasizing character and mise-en-scène." (He uses the past tense to contrast the "purist" past conception of this opposition with a more recent one that sees the rise of Miramax and Sundance as a sign of the independent cinema's demise.)

24. Karen Alexander, "*Daughters of the Dust*," in Hillier, ed., *American Independent Cinema*, 40–43.

25. Lyons, *Independent Visions*, 284.

26. Pierson, *Spike, Mike, Slackers & Dykes*.

27. Bordwell, "The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice," 777.

28. Thomas Schatz, *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking, and the Studio System*, 24–36; and Schatz, *Old Hollywood/New Hollywood: Ritual, Art, and Industry*, 67–167.

29. Levy, *Cinema of Outsiders*.

30. Larry Gross, "Antibodies: Larry Gross Talks to *Safe*'s Todd Haynes," *Filmmaker* 3.4 (1995); available online at www.filmmakermagazine.com/summer1995/antibodies.php; Amy Taubin, "Nowhere to Hide," in Hillier, ed., *American Independent Cinema*, 100–107.

31. Bordwell, "The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice," 779.

32. James, *Allegories of Cinema*, 297–303.

33. Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*.

34. Levy, *Cinema of Outsiders*, 55–57; for more on claims that certain indie directors such as the Coens and Tarantino are postmodernist, see chapters 5 and 6 (this volume).

35. Noël Carroll, "The Future of Allusion: Hollywood in the Seventies (and Beyond)" *October* 20 (1982): 51–81.

36. For similar characterizations of the indie audience see Levy, *Cinema of Outsiders*, 28–29; Perren, "Sex, Lies and Marketing."

37. These conceptions are well summarized in the chapter "Postmodernism in the Arts," Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *The Postmodern Turn* (New York: Guilford Press, 1997), 124–94.

38. Michael Z. Newman, "Characterization in American Independent Cinema" (Ph.d. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2005), 251–72.

39. Peterson, *Dreams of Chaos, Visions of Order*, 28.

40. Levy, *Cinema of Outsiders*, 498.

41. Quoted in ibid., 3.

42. I am not arguing that difference from Hollywood automatically amounts to a critique of Hollywood, only that it is often seen that way. No one would say that foreign-language films are implicitly critical of Hollywood because their dialogue is not in English, which is different from the norm of Hollywood filmmaking. The differences must be seen as relevant to determining the identity of each category for them to amount to an implicit critique.

43. Michael Hirschorn, "Quirked Around," *The Atlantic*, Sept. 2007.

44. Luc Sante, "Mystery Man."

45. Gavin Smith, ed., *Sayles on Sayles*, 44–49.

2. Home Is Where the Art Is: Indie Film Institutions

1. Redford, quoted in John Lombardi, "At the Sundance Institute . . . ," *New York Times Magazine*, Oct. 23, 1983, 48.

2. Vincent Canby, "Rejoice! It's Independents' Day," *New York Times* (hereafter, *NYT*), Oct. 8, 1989.

3. Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, 330–37.

4. Ann Swinton, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *American Sociological Review* 51.2 (Apr. 1986): 237–86.

5. Arthur Danto, "The Artworld," *Journal of Philosophy* 61.19 (1964): 571–84; George Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis*.

6. Danto, "The Artworld," 580.

7. Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds*.

8. Richard Linklater, *Slacker* (New York: St. Martin's, 1992), 118–21.

9. Shyon Baumann, *Hollywood Highbrow: From Entertainment to Art*, 54–59.

10. Bazin, quoted in Robert Sklar, "Beyond Hoopla: The Cannes Film Festival and Cultural Significance," *Cineaste* 22.3 (Dec. 1996): 18–20.

11. Marijke de Valck, *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia*, 24.

12. Thomas Elsaesser, *European Cinema: Face to Face With Hollywood*, 88.

13. De Valck, *Film Festivals*, 38, argues that film festivals "are sites of passage that function as the gateways to cultural legitimation."

14. Ibid., 90.

15. Thompson and Bordwell, *Film History*, 718.

16. Kenneth Turan, *Sundance to Sarajevo: Film Festivals and the World They Made*, 46.