Collaborative Remix Zones: Toward a Critical Cinephilia

Our final chapter revisits the concept of cinephilia after digital media and distributed networks.¹ We seek to identify a place for critical cinephilia that moves toward an opening of meaning from the control of transnational media corporations (TMCs). Romanticized and institutionalized as an expression for an “excessive love of cinema” that emerged in postwar France for a generation of privileged (mostly male, invariably white) audiences, cinephilia has come to be associated with nostalgia for the pleasures of flickering celluloid in a darkened cinemathèque.² We resituate mid-twentieth-century notions of cinephilia within early twenty-first-century frameworks that recognize that universalizing North Atlantic assumptions about cinema are less capable of recognizing the complexities of global articulations of cinephilia today. Film studies scholarship has appropriated the term “cinephilia” for cultural and historical contexts comparable to postwar France, including South Asian diasporic attachment to homeland through consumption of Bollywood films and the “cine-mania” surrounding contemporary South Korean films. With the consolidation of TMCs, cinephilia reproduces itself as technophilia, a consumerist obsession with the technologies and the safe harbor of the home theater against an onslaught of potential threats within public spaces.³ As counterpoint to the TMCs’ free trade zones (FTZs), we offer the theoretical construct of collaborative remix zones—zones where plural pasts, multiple temporalities, multiple artifacts, and polyvocalities join together. Here, they provisionally reclaim public spaces. They operate within neoliberal economics and transnational capital, mobilizing a critical politicized cinephilia, which adopts radical historiographic and reverse engineering strategies.

D. Hudson et al., *Thinking Through Digital Media*  
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Historically, the concept of cinephilia is wedged precariously between academic and popular discourses, articulating both elitist conceptions of individual pleasures (i.e., sacred objects, high art) and communal conceptions of universal pleasures (i.e., popular art, mass entertainment). Dudley Andrew locates North Atlantic cinephilia within four historical moments: the pre-academic moment of ciné-clubs by the avant-gardists during the 1920s; the *Cahiers du cinéma* critics during the 1950s; the academic moment of post-1968 “Screen theory”; and the post-theory moment of the return to history. Cinephilia remains closely associated with auteurs whose work appropriated conventions from classical cinema, transforming filmmaking into film criticism. The “politiques des auteurs” propelled the young critics-cum-filmmakers of the *Cahiers du cinéma* to develop cinephilia-as-criticism to produce the idealized perfect audience. Across the North Atlantic, the international scope of French cinephilia, which fetishized Italian, Japanese, Danish, Hollywood, and French productions, was rerouted into nationally chauvinistic auteur theory. The US film distribution-marketing-criticism circuit of Hollywood and film schools reprocessed this language into consumerist desire, fueling fantasies of access to and success in the entertainment industry. This concept of cinephilia is inseparable from selective reading strategies that prioritize marginal, inconsequential, or frivolous details to locate the rare and rarified. This apolitical, ahistorical, antitheoretical, and anti-intellectual model of cinephilia is based on the production of individuality within consumerist logics. It extends nineteenth-century notions of connoisseurship. It fetishizes markers of singularity, rarity, and quality. Work as object (artwork) overshadows work as process (the work of conceiving/producing art). These conceptualizations extends to transnational forms where selected (assimilable) auteurs are produced, marketed, distributed, and exchanged, whether Ritwik Ghatak, Ozu Yasujiro, and Satjayit Ray in the 1960s or Abbas Kiarostami, Mohsen Makhmalbaf, and Zhang Yimou in the 1990s. “In its most extreme incarnations auteurism can be seen as an anthropomorphic form of ‘love’ for the cinema,” writes Robert Stam. However, it is crucial to recognize that Glauber Rocha, Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, and Julio Garcia Espinosa questioned auteurism’s eurocentrism and colonialism. Dissent has always been present, though it has often been delegitimized, particularly by the industries of Hollywood and international film festivals.

An actual theory of cinephilia also emerged in the North Atlantic from modernist concepts like structuralism, Marxism, psychoanalysis, as well as from historical approaches like post-structuralism and