

INTRODUCTION

*“Shop Windows,” “Cultural Embassies,” and
Hollywood’s Global Exhibition*

“The extent of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer’s overseas holdings is not generally appreciated even by those familiar with the company. While the British studio at Borehamwood near London has received much recent publicity and the two London showcase theatres are well-known, the 48 overseas theatres owned and operated by Metro are something of a secret.”

—*Variety*, January 1970

“I am bitterly opposed to it. They ought to get out.”

—Samuel Goldwyn, on Hollywood’s overseas cinemas, as quoted in the
Austin Statesman, May 1947

The opening night of Twentieth Century-Fox’s Royal Cinema in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia (now Harare, Zimbabwe), on September 7, 1959, was slated to have a picture-perfect Hollywood ending. The country’s top politicians were on hand for the debut of the Fox film *South Pacific* (directed by Joshua Logan, 1958), with all proceeds for the local Red Cross. *South Pacific*’s message of racial tolerance, however, was starkly undermined by Fox’s South African management team, who had strictly forbidden all “non-Europeans” from attending the opening, in direct

—-1
—0
—+1



o.1 MGM International Convention, ca. 1953. (Courtesy of Clement Dassa)

opposition to the Southern Rhodesian government’s stated policy of “multiracial partnership.”

Like many other U.S.-operated cinemas overseas, the Royal became a highly contested venue for Hollywood and the U.S. government, which struggled for years to contain the diplomatic and public relations crisis that erupted before and after the premiere. Twentieth Century-Fox’s troubled history in Africa—from the politically divisive, whites-only cinemas it operated in Kenya, South Africa, and colonial Zimbabwe to its Egyptian cinemas that were sites of political protest and violence during the 1940s and 1950s—reflects the industrial opportunities and geopolitical complications Hollywood encountered around the world, in Africa, Asia, Australasia, the Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East, during its nine decades of global film exhibition.

Hollywood’s Embassies: How Movie Theaters Projected American Power Around the World is the first political, cultural, and industrial history of Hollywood’s foreign ownership and operation of hundreds of cinemas in more than three dozen countries from 1923 to 2013. Over the past three decades, numerous scholars such as Ian Jarvie, Richard Maltby, Kristin Thompson, and John Trumbour have analyzed Hollywood’s distribution of films overseas and the complex structure of “Global Hollywood.” Despite these invaluable

contributions, there has been little research examining how MGM, Paramount, Twentieth Century-Fox, and Warner Bros. operated hundreds of cinemas (movie theaters) outside of North America, from Argentina to Zimbabwe, to secure distribution for their films and attract local moviegoers to American-style cinemas featuring American studio product. The importance of these Hollywood-owned cinemas and cinema chains for local audiences, and the manner in which they secured international markets for American films, is largely absent from most works focused on the relationship between “Hollywood” films and their global circulation.

Philip Turner’s short history of Europe’s rebranded MGM Cinemas circuit (which was formed in England in 1991) is a case in point, as Turner overlooks the scale and size of Hollywood’s earlier cinema exhibition expansion. He writes that “outside of the original MGM-Loew’s production-exhibition arrangement, MGM appears never to have enjoyed the luxury of a worldwide theatre network”—although the company had owned and operated dozens of cinemas throughout the world for half a century, from the 1920s well into the 1970s, from Rio de Janeiro to London to Johannesburg to Mumbai and Manila.¹ Charles Acland’s *Screen Traffic*, a seminal work on multiplexes, globalization, and Hollywood overseas, is one of the very few books to reference this earlier history of cinema globalization. Observing that Paramount, Loew’s, and Fox had a smattering of foreign theaters in “earlier periods,” he concludes that “these precursors pale in comparison to the building and buying of the 1990s.”² However, by the late 1950s Twentieth Century-Fox alone owned and operated hundreds of cinemas throughout the world, stretching from Lima to Amsterdam to Nairobi to Calcutta to Melbourne and back again.

Neither have scholars reckoned with another striking feature of Hollywood’s global machinery: that audiences in major media capitals around the world were as seduced by the hundreds of cinemas owned and operated by MGM, Paramount, Twentieth Century-Fox, Warner Bros., and other U.S. film companies as by the films themselves. As cinema architect S. Charles Lee famously opined, the allure of Hollywood and its exotic “show” began “on the sidewalk,” from the first glittering Paramount bulb on the marquee to Warner Bros.’ sumptuous lobbies to MGM’s deluxe ushers and ballyhoo, to Twentieth Century-Fox’s musical fanfare, newsreels, and its short and feature films.³ As I argue in *American Showman* (Columbia University Press, 2012), a night at the movies was a cohesive and powerfully transporting experience, one that operated as a so-called shop window for American films, industrial practices, and culture and as a “cultural embassy” for Hollywood, selling a very specific American style of entertainment and politics in which American films, stars, and brands were the exotic allure.⁴ Maltby argues that Hollywood’s global influence and “the act of Americanisation took place in the space between the audience and the screen, in the transient act of consumption of the shadow

images of cinema's Great Dark Room."⁵ From 1923 to 2013, Hollywood sold its films, its brand identity, and its ideology to urban moviegoers through these buildings, featuring American technology, management, and cinema policies, some of which actually revealed darker truths, paradoxes, and hypocrisies about the United States that undercut the work of "official" U.S. embassies and consulates operating throughout the world.

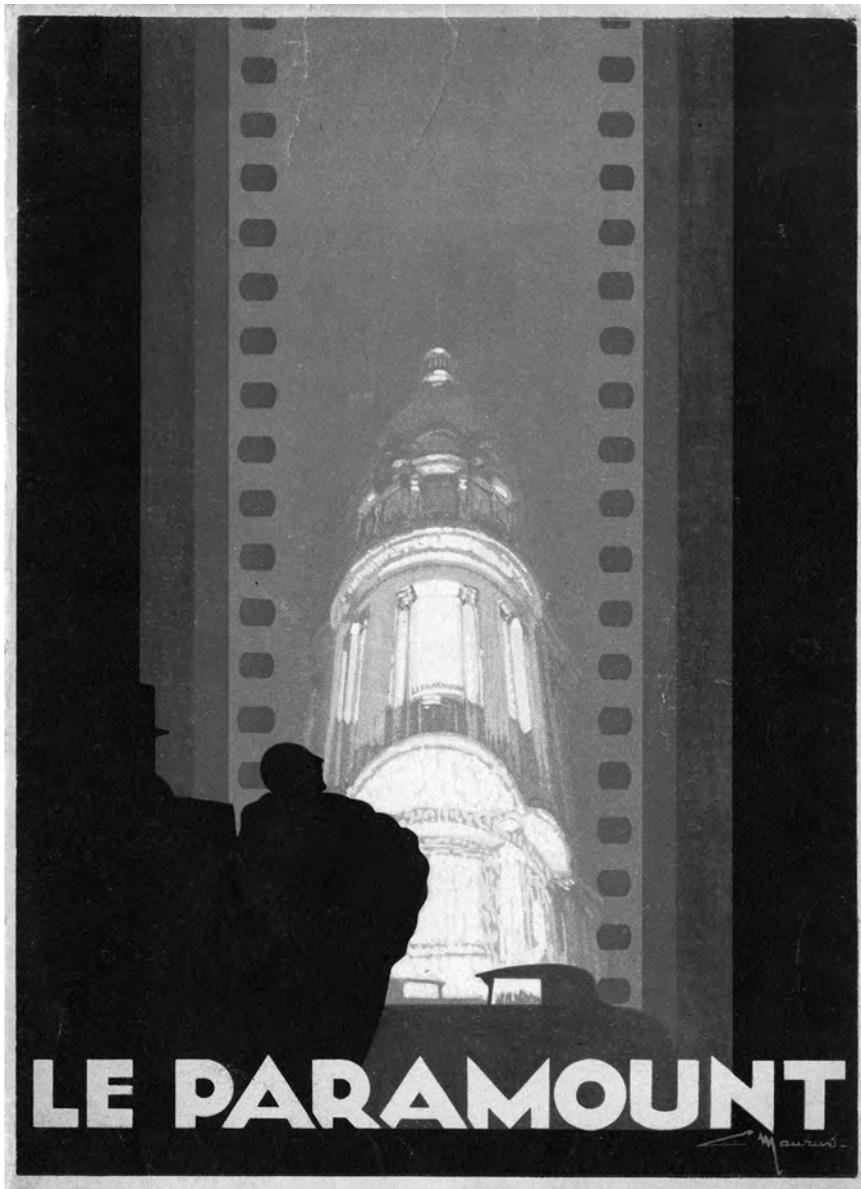
Hollywood's Embassies documents and analyzes a history that has either been largely diminished in scholarly importance or, more to the point, is largely unknown. However, historians who have worked on national film exhibition histories—of England, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, and many other nations—have individually noted the importance of Hollywood exhibitors operating on their home turf. What has remained absent from the previous film historiography, though, is a regional, comparative, and global examination of this transnational phenomenon. As I argue throughout this book, singular analyses of Hollywood's exhibition operations in a particular country (almost) always need to be conducted with larger regional frameworks in mind. Twentieth Century-Fox's exhibition forays in Egypt, for example, directly related to its exhibition operations in Israel and vice versa; Paramount and Loew's/MGM's strategy in France reflected its experience in England; Fox's dominance in Australian and New Zealand exhibition were related to changes in domestic, regional, and global investment banking and, later, by commingled management and executives; Paramount's investment in cinema exhibition in the Caribbean involved multiple countries and interconnected exhibitors, countries, and politics. A regional approach also helps us better understand Hollywood's exhibition interests in West and North Africa, East Asia, South America, and many other regions throughout the world. The more one examines Hollywood's investment in and disruption of local and regional markets, the more evident are the ways in which Hollywood executives, U.S. consular officials, and local political leaders achieved their financial, diplomatic, and political goals. Likewise, Hollywood's hold over local audiences was cemented not only through its on-screen narratives but through the cinemas in which they were shown.

The lacuna in film and media scholarship around this expansive and enormously influential history stems from a variety of factors. First, film (and media) studies, for much of the last half century, has privileged film production and filmmakers over film exhibition and film exhibitors. As Toby Miller, Freya Schiwy, and Marta Hernández Salván note, because "other parts of the cycle—circulating, promoting and showing movies—lack glamour and artistry even as they are extremely profitable," scholars have "tend[ed] to focus on production to the exclusion of distribution and exhibition."⁶ Over the past two decades, however, scholars such as Charles Acland, James Burns, Kathy Fuller-Seeley, Paul Moore, Eric Smoodin, Gregory Waller, and many others

have dramatically changed the importance of studying film exhibition as it intersects with local, national, and global affairs. Elsewhere, national and city- and site-specific film exhibition (micro) histories have expanded widely during this same period, with both film and media scholars and architectural historians adding much-needed context to local cinemas and cinema chains. Each year brings us closer to understanding the contours and contexts of film exhibition throughout the world. Still, that “map” is only partially filled and requires decades of additional “cartographers.”

Industry trade journals, newspapers, magazines, and many other publications have also historically privileged film production over film exhibition and distribution, even during the vertically integrated studio years. Coverage of Hollywood’s distribution overseas since the 1920s has paled compared to the ink local outlets and trade journals devoted to this American film exhibition “invasion” overseas. However, the “trades” *did* cover Hollywood’s global exhibition expansion, whether it was in Argentina or colonial Zimbabwe, providing a bread-crumbs trail that scholars can use to find more in-depth coverage of this phenomenon and the local response to it. In addition, corporate annual reports, newspapers, and many other documents covered this phenomenon for the nine decades of its growth from 1923 to 2013.

If, as *Variety* noted in January 1970, MGM’s 48 global cinemas were “something of a secret,” it wasn’t a very well-kept one.⁷ And if it was a secret to *Variety*—despite its own reporting on this phenomenon for half a century prior—then it was because U.S. trade journals then and now have also focused primarily on the North American market. There was, for example, nothing secret about Twentieth Century-Fox’s ownership of 155 cinemas across Africa during the 1950s and 1960s or its ownership of dominant Australian and New Zealand cinema chains from the 1930s to the 1980s. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer’s global brand was, in fact, even more directly sutured onto its foreign cinemas (Metro Theatres/Cine Metros) than Loews Inc.’s domestic chain (Loew’s Theatres). In the United States, before the consent decree broke up the Loew’s–MGM relationship in 1959, domestic cinemas were named Loew’s for the parent company. Overseas, Loew’s (and later MGM’s) foreign cinemas were named “Metro” after the successful launch of the first Metro Theatre in Johannesburg in 1932. After that, Metro cinemas could be found throughout major cities in South America—three Metros alone dotted Rio de Janeiro—while Paramount’s name was emblazoned on palatial cinemas in countries such as Brazil (Cine Paramount) and France (Le Paramount). Beginning in 1938 with the launch of the eponymous Warner Theatre in London, Warner Bros.’ name could also be found on cinemas in Havana, Cuba, and, later, through a massive global chain (Warner Bros. International Theatres) that stretched from Portugal to China, managed under the watchful eye of veteran exhibitor Salah Hassanein, who had begun his career four decades earlier working for Twentieth Century-Fox



0.2-0.5 Paramount, Warner Bros., MGM, and 20th Century-Fox cinemas around the world. From left, program from *Le Paramount* in Paris (author's collection); photograph of the Warner Theatre in London (courtesy of Cinema Theatre Association); Metro Theatre program from Brisbane, Australia (courtesy of Fryer Library); photograph of 20th Century Theatre in Johannesburg (Twentieth Century-Fox Annual Report, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts)

-1—
0—
+1—



0.2-0.5 (continued)

in Cairo in the 1940s, the location of Fox's own shop window cinema, the Cairo Palace and MGM's Cinema Metro. RKO, Universal, and United Artists also operated a small number of cinemas in foreign markets.

The significance of Hollywood's forgotten history of owning and operating cinemas around the world comes into full relief in relation to the common perception that Hollywood "lost" or divested its cinemas after the consent decree. This is only true in the United States. The settlement that Paramount

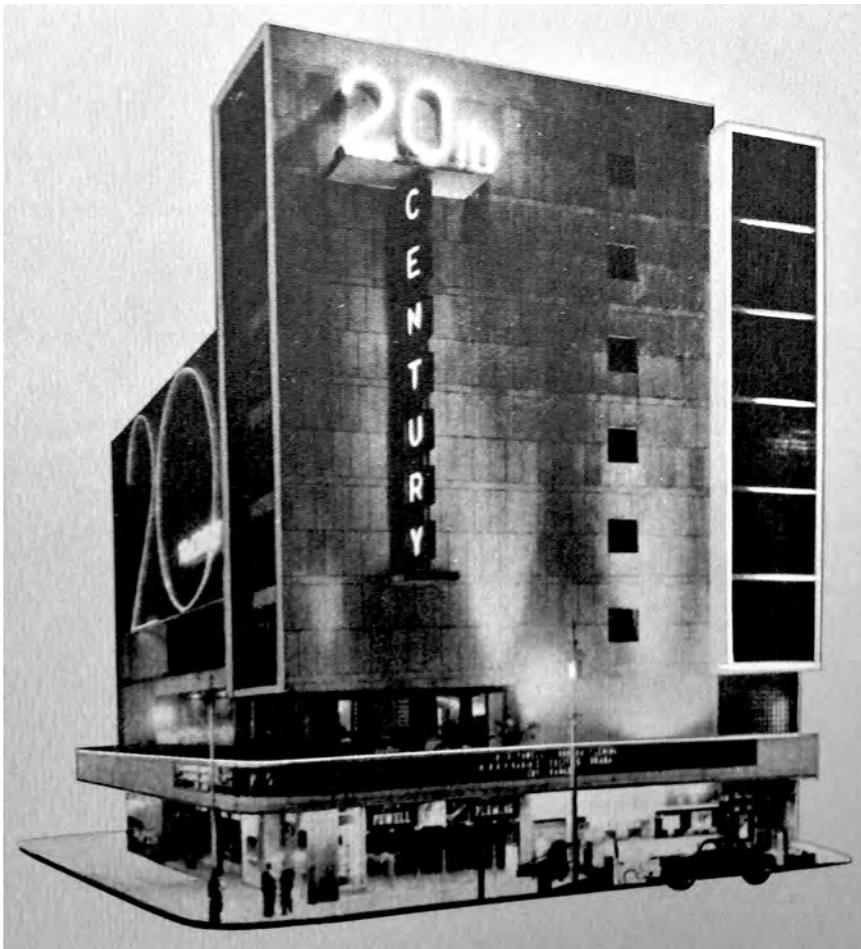
—1
—0
—+1



0.2–0.5 (continued)

struck with the U.S. Department of Justice, for example, required only that the company “divorce its domestic exhibition business from its production and distribution business.”⁸ It does not mention Paramount’s overseas cinemas. For Twentieth Century-Fox and the others, no such edict of theater/cinema divorcement was required internationally. Thinking through the U.S.

-1—
0—
+1—



0.2-0.5 (continued)

government's desire to use Hollywood to spread American culture and ideology around the world, why would they seek a divestiture of Hollywood's international exhibition operations that would have only benefited local and competitive film industries, cinemas, and chains?

For nine decades, stretching from the silent era to contemporary Hollywood, U.S. film exhibitors maintained a frequently fraught, often lucrative, and at times violent and politically adverse relationship with audiences, distributors, exhibitors, and politicians around the world. These American-run cinemas were, after all, not merely outposts for the exhibition of Hollywood films; they were also "cultural embassies" designed to attract local audiences to American films and moviegoing practices. As Paramount-, Metro-, Warner-,

—-1
—0
—+1

and Fox-owned or -operated cinemas opened around the world, Hollywood not only dominated the content on the screen but increasingly owned the screens as well.

Through archival research conducted in nine countries on four continents, *Hollywood's Embassies* examines the role Paramount played in integrating multiclass and multiracial audiences at their Cine Tacna in Lima, Peru, and the way that child-oriented moviegoing clubs at MGM cinemas in India, Egypt, and Australia cultivated an audience for Hollywood cartoons, newsreels, and feature films even amid nationalization and postcolonial independence. These deluxe cinemas, and hundreds of other American-owned movie houses overseas, helped foster a multigenerational relationship between Hollywood and its international audiences, remembered fondly by former club members like Salman Rushdie in *Midnight's Children* and by Egyptian director Mohamed Khan. Honored in France, boycotted in England, burned in Egypt, or protested in colonial Zimbabwe, this global expansion of American film exhibition highlights the complications and opportunities generated by this first wave of physical global expansion decades before the growth of American-owned theme parks, retailers, and restaurant chains overseas. Each venue—from MGM's movie houses in Calcutta, Cairo, and Buenos Aires, to Fox's cinemas in Adelaide, Alexandria, and Tel Aviv, to Warner Bros.'s deluxe theaters in Havana, London, and Lima, to Paramount's cinemas in Tokyo, Paris, and São Paulo—provides an extraordinary glimpse into the exportation of U.S. cinema practices and how film exhibition played a crucial role in globalizing the lure of and adulation for “Hollywood.” Movies distributed by MGM, Paramount, Fox, and Warner Bros. may have introduced global audiences to American culture, but in many international cities these American-run cinemas may have had just as large an impact on the exportation of American cultural and social mythology.

While acknowledging that Hollywood was popular around the world because of the films produced by its U.S. studios, *Hollywood's Embassies* argues these U.S.-owned and -operated movie houses also played a definitive role in that growing affinity (and revulsion) as they acculturated global audiences to American industrial and cultural practices and the overseas marketing of wealth, leisure, consumerism, and “democracy.” Hollywood films and stars attracted foreign audiences, but Hollywood's overseas cinemas also provided a crucial opportunity to “enter” the United States through what were veritable “cultural embassies” managed by American executives and outfitted with American technology and accoutrements that provided a quintessentially “American” service experience of cross-class appeal to local audiences. Brand identity and brand loyalty, with Paramount, “Metro” (MGM), Warner, and “20th Century” (Twentieth Century-Fox) cinemas showing company-produced newsreels, shorts, and feature films, featuring the musical

fanfare of each Hollywood studio, created a visual, aural, and consumerist appeal to generations of foreign moviegoers. Metro Cub Clubs (MGM) and other child-oriented programs also hooked postcolonial youths in places like Egypt and India just as nationally oriented independence movements and film industry protectionism were ascendant.

Hollywood's marketing of luxury and consumption through these overseas cinemas was, however, often tone deaf to new and ongoing social, cultural, and political pushback and even anger. The story of Hollywood's global cinemas, therefore, is not a simplistic narrative of unidirectional cultural and industrial indoctrination and colonization. It is instead one of hybridity and negotiation, booms and busts, successes and failures, adoptions and repulsions, which all serve as a harbinger of struggles to come in the construction and operation of Cold War-era Hilton Hotels, Walt Disney theme parks, and the proliferation of American restaurant and retail outlets overseas. For the first time, beginning in the 1920s, American multinational multimedia corporations set out to colonize the streetscapes of the world's most important cities. They found local film industries, exhibitors, politicians, and tastemakers struggling to maintain their independence against the money and power of Hollywood and rising local demand for American films *and* these American-owned cinemas. Hollywood, through its foreign cinemas and cinema chains, hoped to secure both its distribution networks and its dominance. It sought to vertically integrate the mind of the global moviegoer, to watch American films in an American cinema in a distinctly American way and context. This success would benefit the continued, multigenerational, and never-ending circulation of Hollywood films and, for the U.S. State and Commerce Departments, a constant flow of American political and consumerist messaging, selling American ideas, products, and (soft) power, especially during fractious and wartime periods. An American-owned cinema operating overseas in a major media capital such as Buenos Aires or Bombay meant gaining a *physical* and not just a metaphorical foothold in a foreign nation. For a company like Fox or MGM, it meant securing a grandiose first-run cinema (or cinema chain) that allowed each company to control the premiere release of its films and its messaging in a foreign and sometimes hostile environment. Set against the backdrops of the rise of fascism in the 1930s, World War II, the Cold War, and other geopolitical contexts, these cinemas were enormously important for Hollywood and the U.S. government. American-owned cinemas, when operating without a locally prohibitive mandate, could transmit U.S.-produced newsreels, shorts, and feature films to local audiences without government filtration or objection. The power of an American-owned and operated "shop window" overseas therefore often became a red line for those concerned about U.S. cultural and industrial hegemony and the loss of local control and power.

Because of the very physical nature of this American exportation overseas, with an American building inside a major capital or city abroad, it was often film exhibition—not film production or distribution—that most challenged issues of nationalism and foreign investment overseas. Film production was transient, contingent, and often temporary, even with the construction of local studios and incentives. Film distribution, too, remained largely invisible to local audiences and still dependent on domestic exhibitors. It was foreign ownership or operation of local cinemas, therefore, that often fomented dissent and anger, from industry boycotts of American films in England to political violence in Egypt. U.S. film distribution overseas was often a less physically obtrusive and obvious form of American soft power extension. As noted by the U.S. State Department’s need to gauge the reaction of local governments to a proposed purchase of a local cinema or chain, control over local film exhibition felt to many people around the world like ceding physical control over a domestic market to Hollywood. Restricting the flow of money from these venues back to the United States also did little good as many countries learned that blocking Hollywood film companies from repatriating their distribution profits back to the United States only spurred more local (exhibition) investment. Meanwhile, as U.S. film companies bought local chains and then employed their local workforce to work in Hollywood’s overseas cinemas, this only reinforced the sense that the U.S. film industry was “colonizing” the local market and employing its managers to lobby on behalf of Hollywood during times of political, economic, and social protectionism or anti-Americanism.

American cooptation worked in other ways as well, as Hollywood’s local cinemas and exchanges purchased acres of advertising space in foreign trade journals and local newspapers. Multipage spreads often accompanied the opening of new Hollywood “shop windows” in foreign markets with MGM and others spending lavishly on full-page advertisements. Foreign trade journals were also compromised in their antagonism toward this foreign invasion of the local film industry by their cozy relations with Hollywood overseas and their executives—American or otherwise—working in these areas. Advertising, and the threat of its loss, also hemmed in local criticism. As Dale Turnbull, former head of the Fox-owned Hoyts circuit in Australia, observed, local trade papers during his era survived only due to the ad revenue they generated.⁹

There were many reasons for the expansion of American film companies into exhibition overseas. In the early to mid-1920s, in nearly every territory around the world, the major American film companies deemed the revenues generated by domestically owned cinemas overseas and the overall quality of those cinemas in terms of décor, technology, and operation to be deficient. That deficiency, they felt, hurt foreign distribution revenues as local cinema operators charged too little for the exhibition of Hollywood’s films. American exhibitors like Hugo Riesenfeld and Sid Grauman, traveling to Europe during

this era, deemed those cinemas abroad to be severely lacking. Even the opulent cinemas of the era, such as the Gaumont Palace in Paris, did not generate enough by American standards or comparison. As production budgets and corporate overhead grew back in the States, and the U.S. distribution and exhibition market rounded into maturity, Marcus Loew and others recognized that expanding foreign markets was one of the key business development opportunities. The subsequent opening of branch offices around the world spurred MGM and Paramount to seek local showcase cinemas—or “shop window” cinemas—abroad, guaranteeing the premiere exhibition of company films without having to negotiate for playing time or split ticket sales with local exhibitors. The purchase and formation of local cinema chains by Fox, MGM, and Paramount—in Africa, Asia, Australasia, Europe, and Latin America—further enabled American film companies to gain control over their product and additional sources of revenue.

International division heads for the American film companies were convinced these foreign, American-operated cinemas would make these markets more profitable through higher ticket sales and would influence local exhibitors to upgrade their own cinemas through both film trade acclaim and industrial competition. Paramount and MGM’s exploitation methods at its shop window cinemas and other U.S.-operated cinema chains were also intended to influence exhibitors from smaller cities and towns across a given country who traveled to these shop window cinemas to see the premiere presentation of a new American film and market those films similarly in their own lobbies, retail stores, and by other means of (cross-)promotion and advertisement.

Technological developments were another reason for this international growth in exhibition. MGM cinemas, for example, were often the first movie houses in a foreign city to feature air-conditioning, which allowed cinemas to stay open (and busy) during the summer months. In other cases, such as Paramount cinemas of the late 1920s, many were the first to install synchronous sound systems in cities such as Tokyo and São Paulo. In the 1950s Fox-owned cinemas brought widescreen cinema to Australia, New Zealand, and other markets before their competitors. In fact, Fox stated that CinemaScope was one of the driving forces behind its 1950s exhibition expansion abroad. The other reason, of course, was the loss of its domestic theater chain and those revenues.

Forced upgrades of local cinemas through this competition was a motivating factor. In the 1920s Paramount’s showcase cinema in Paris, Le Paramount, and the Gaumont-Loew-Metro agreement that provided Loew’s International with control over Gaumont’s French cinemas were both efforts to secure premium venues for distributing Hollywood films but were also obtained to force French exhibitors to match U.S. presentation standards or risk losing customers who were attracted to American-run cinemas and

—-1
—0
—+1

their marketing, presentation, and management techniques. As Marcus Loew noted, “We have no desire to build or own a theatre in any city which is adequately seated and properly equipped theatrically to present pictures as they reasonably should be exhibited.” But Loew and others found the globe’s most promising territories to be not at all “adequately seated or properly equipped” and instead financially and operationally underwhelming.¹⁰ By directly competing with domestic cinemas, American film companies reasoned that local exhibitors would be forced to upgrade their own presentation standards and, by consequence, their daily ticket prices would lead to greater revenues from foreign cinemas regardless of American ownership or control. Half a century later, Salah Hassenein employed similar logic when he encouraged Warner Bros. to create a new global circuit, Warner Bros. International Theatres (WBIT), in 1987 to expand Hollywood’s market share around the world and thus grow its foreign revenues in expanding post-Cold War markets. WBIT hoped to spur the growth of new, more profitable multiplexes for Hollywood films through direct competition with aging local cinemas.

While the shop window cinema model was often used by Paramount, MGM, and Warner Bros. in the early to mid-twentieth century, Fox/Twentieth Century-Fox often sought chain ownership instead. Fox’s foreign-owned circuits secured the distribution of Fox films throughout Australia, Kenya, New Zealand, South Africa, and colonial Zimbabwe and funneled money back into Fox’s coffers in the United States. In fact, as Dale Turnbull, former director of Fox’s Hoyts Theatres and of Twentieth Century-Fox distribution in Australia, notes, he would often be assailed by local Fox staff in Australia for not giving preferable terms to Fox films booked at Hoyts Theatres. Turnbull argued that his job was to make the most money for the benefit of Twentieth Century-Fox in the United States; Fox films in Australia had to negotiate with the Fox-owned Hoyts like all other distributors.¹¹ (The same was true for WBIT in Taiwan, for example, as the local branch of Warner Bros. there had to negotiate terms with WBIT like any other.¹²) While Fox was primarily invested in whole chain operation in the above markets, it is worth noting that the company did have its own shop window cinemas in foreign markets where it did not own chains in cities, such as Amsterdam, Bombay, Lima, and London. As *Hollywood’s Embassies* makes clear, the strategy for each company differed from country to country, city to city, and year to year. The flexibility and malleability of this global enterprise can be categorized not by their holistic similarity but by the vast differences in their global operations.

Hollywood’s Embassies collates the reasons American film companies built, bought, or leased cinemas overseas. In Tel Aviv, for example, Spyros Skouras proudly noted that the company built its 1957 showcase cinema in Israel for personal and political reasons to help boost the fortunes of the new country

through this real estate and entertainment investment and through the cinema's associated office building for doctors and other essential workers. Loew's and Fox, in another example, had very different reasons for investing in Australia. Fox bought Hoyts in 1930, which provided the company with outlets across the country for Fox films as well as substantial exhibition revenues from the many studios they contracted with. MGM, meanwhile, built and bought shop window cinemas in Australia to enable it to secure unfettered access to big city audiences outside of the Hoyts/Greater Union national duopoly.

Hollywood's Embassies argues that each of the four American film companies most involved in foreign exhibition made its own decisions in each market in each country in each decade, often in contrast to one another. Every market was different, which makes this history so fascinating and yet so complex. This variety and complexity are evident in each of the six regions featured in this book in which Hollywood bought, built, leased, or operated cinemas.

Hilton-Managed Hotels and Hollywood-Owned Cinemas

Because there has been comparatively little scholarship on Hollywood's overseas cinemas between 1923 and 2013, because the focus of this work is on *cinemas* rather than on *cinema*, and because this book focuses on Hollywood's collision with local and global politics, culture, and industry, *Hollywood's Embassies* does not have a proper antecedent. The books by Acland, Jarvie, Thompson, Trumpbour, and others provide invaluable context and methodologies, but they do not offer a blueprint for how to conduct this study focused on buildings, not box office.

Instead, I found early inspiration and affinity with some of the through lines and threads of Annabel Wharton's *Building the Cold War: Hilton International Hotels and Modern Architecture*. In her innovative work of architectural and political history, Wharton maps the global expansion of Hilton International Hotels against the United States' postwar, Cold War-era global politics, foreign investments, and diplomacy as she "consider[ed] the inscription of power in the urban landscape."¹³ Wharton cites the American technology that Hilton's international hotels featured abroad as examples of the allure and power of American modernity and the faith and fervor of capitalism—"its ice water tapped to individual guest rooms, its direct-line telephones, its radios, its air-conditioning, and, most fundamentally, the architectural form of the building itself"—and of how these buildings became "a space of modern luxury and technological desire, a space that effected, with pomp and prominence, the new and powerful presence of the United States. The building dramatically marked the city with the difference between its traditional culture and desired American modernity and named that desire Hilton."¹⁴

—1
—0
—+1

There is, however, a key distinction between the Paramount, MGM, Warner Bros., and Fox cinemas erected around the world during the interwar period and after and Hilton's international hotels that dotted the globe after World War II. Wharton writes that "the Modern space of the Hilton International hotel was carefully coded as foreign by its decoration. Like the great hotels of the colonial era in the Middle East, the postcolonial Hiltons embodied the cultural values of home veiled with references to the local. Interior design bore the burden of representing the host site."¹⁵ While Hilton Hotels attracted Americans and other tourists through their "foreign" architectural and aesthetic presentation, Hollywood's Metro Theatres, Cine Paramounts, and other overseas "cultural embassies" derived their local allure from their exotic presentation of America. Hilton sold the local to the foreign; Hollywood sold the foreign to the local. The work of American cinema architects like John Eberson, Thomas Lamb, and others attracted local moviegoers by their very American exteriors. Inside, that exotic appeal was often softened by more familiar, indigenous aesthetics through color, design, stage presentations, and even the optics of a racially segregated audience. In this way Hollywood drew in audiences by playing up its own exotic appeal, a reversal of traditional cultural appropriation. Hollywood appropriated itself—and the look of its U.S. cinemas—and brought those designs to world markets.

Hilton's hotels and Hollywood's movie houses overseas shared one key feature: as Wharton writes, the "political role of architecture was, nevertheless, recognized . . . as advancing American interests abroad." A 1953 *Arts and Architecture* article dubbed "American buildings abroad as the 'architectural calling cards' of the U.S. government."¹⁶ The lockstep advance of U.S.-owned cinemas and hotels abroad even saw the occasional convergence. Egyptian journalist Samir Raafat writes that the world premiere of MGM's *Valley of the Kings* (1955) at the Cinema Metro in Cairo with stars Robert Taylor and Eleanor Parker in attendance "coincided with the festive events that followed the groundbreaking ceremony of the Nile Hilton Hotel on [Cairo's] Tahrir Square. It was on that occasion that Samia Gamal dragged Robert Taylor onto center stage where the American superstar, wearing a tarboush [*sic*] and belted the traditional way, danced with Egypt's foremost belly dancer before an enthralled audience."¹⁷ In this way, American architecture, fashioned to exoticize both the United States (cinemas) and Egypt (hotels), dramatically announced the design and operational flexibility and marketing of American corporations overseas.

Another notable intersection is how both industries openly embraced their political and ideological function. Conrad Hilton, for example, dubbed his foreign hotels "little Americas" because they "promised an excellent profit as well as world peace through the economic suppression of communism."¹⁸ "That Hilton International hotels were political is not my hypothesis, but

-1—
0—
+1—

Conrad Hilton's claim," Wharton writes. "Hilton explicitly represented his international hotels as ideological, in the popular sense of ideology as propaganda. He repeatedly reported that Hilton International Hotels were constructed not only to produce a profit, but also to make a political impact on host countries." She cites Hilton's own words at length: "If we really believe in what we are all saying about liberty, about Communism, about happiness, that we, as a nation, must exercise our great strength and power for good against evil. If we really believe this, it is up to each of us, our organizations and our industries, to contribute to this objective with all the resources at our command." Hilton added later that "an integral part of my dream was to show the countries most exposed to Communism the other side of the coin—the fruits of the free world."¹⁹

Many of the leading figures in Hollywood felt similarly, especially during the Cold War. Arthur Loew argued in 1949, for example, that through the company's cinemas and films, "We are selling America and American democracy overseas."²⁰ Twentieth Century-Fox president Spyros Skouras was also an ardent anticommunist and saw the expansion of U.S.-operated cinemas abroad as part of a larger struggle against the Soviet Union's geopolitical (out) reach. "From this standpoint," he told *Variety* in 1953,

it is a Twentieth Century-Fox solemn responsibility . . . to increase motion picture outlets throughout the free world because . . . no medium can play a greater part than the motion picture in indoctrinating people into the free way of life and instilling in them a compelling desire for freedom and hope for a brighter future. Therefore, we as an industry can play an infinitely important part in the worldwide ideological struggle for the minds of men and confound the Communist propagandists.²¹

Nor was the U.S. government blind to the political significance of Hollywood's overseas cinemas. Every American cinema bought, built, or leased overseas was tracked and used for social and political engagement by U.S. consular officials. Large-scale purchases, such as Fox's acquisition of the African Consolidated Theatres circuit in Kenya, colonial Zimbabwe, and South Africa, were viewed by the U.S. government as an opportunity to lock down venues for American messaging through news, short, and feature films and to establish political connections and influence. These cinemas, therefore, benefited U.S. tax rolls in their profits and the nation's ideological mission.

Hollywood's Embassies focuses on the industrial structure of Hollywood's overseas exhibition and its effects on, and engagement with, local and global politics and society. Wharton notes that Hilton Hotels in "Istanbul, Cairo, Athens, Berlin, London, Tel Aviv, and Jerusalem altered the cities in which they were built" as "Hilton International produced abroad an icon of

—-1
—0
—+1

American economic authority.”²² Hollywood’s cinemas played a similar role in announcing the economic, political, industrial, and cultural power of the United States. As Ai Lin Chua has argued about the modern cinemas being built in major media capitals,

Around the world, cinemas of this era were important icons of architectural, technological and cultural modernity—in the cityscape. They were designed to reflect the latest trends in sophistication and glamour. Their flamboyance made them instant landmarks whether in the commercial centres of major cities, or in small towns. . . . An aura of modernity, luxury, glamour and romance was deliberately cultivated through imposing architecture, attention to detail in the interior fittings, the use of as-yet uncommon new technologies such as elevators, as well as careful marketing.²³

Hollywood’s Embassies examines the iconography and the industry, the meaning and the machinery of American cinemas overseas, how they transformed film exhibition locally and globally, and how they were alternately embraced and rejected as symbols of Hollywood and American culture.

The “Shop Window” and the “Cultural Embassy” Versus Cultural Ambassador / InSTITUTE

Two terms are featured throughout this book. The first—the “shop window” cinema—was largely British trade industry nomenclature for a deluxe cinema in a media capital that used the highest level of showmanship to “sell” a picture to local audiences and to persuade other exhibitors to book, market, and present a film in a similar style as the “shop window” in which it first appeared. The second term—“cultural embassy”—is a neologism intended to illuminate the political, industrial, cultural, and diplomatic function of these cinematic “little Americas” that drew local moviegoers to “enter” the United States on foreign soil.

The concept of the “shop window”—akin to a department store window display selling Hollywood merchandise marketed in the American style—would come to dominate the strategy for Paramount and Loew’s overseas in the 1920s and would soon become the model for many American-run cinemas around the world. Instead of buying cinemas en masse (a tactic only Fox would later undertake), Paramount and Loew’s built shop window cinemas where exhibitors from across a country could see how to “put over” the company’s films in smaller, local markets. These opulent movie houses also drummed up interest with the rest of the trade by drawing large crowds attracted by the many features American audiences had come to expect at movie palaces



0.6–0.7 *Kinematograph Weekly* (left) and *Bioscope* (right) outline Paramount/Famous-Lasky’s “Shop Window.”

during the silent era: large orchestras, ornate décor, well-drilled ushers, the best in projection and lighting, stage shows, and, above all, a reliable but affordable brand of mass entertainment. These shop windows, Hollywood film companies posited, would teach the American presentation method to local exhibitors who would then exhibit Hollywood films in the Hollywood way and thereby increase profits and prestige for the studio. If American presentation standards were to take hold across Europe, for example, along with a corresponding increase in ticket sales and attendance, the studios reasoned it would have to be done by Americans to influence the operations of local exhibitors. Shop window cinemas also benefited distribution as they generated excitement about a prestigious film the same way a Broadway run in New York might spur excitement for that same film when it finally reached Topeka.

The use of “cultural embassy” appropriates the terminology of an official embassy and employs that model in a privatized manner to sell American culture, ideology, messaging, industrial practices, and movies to local audiences. The National Museum of American Diplomacy defines an official American embassy overseas as “the headquarters for U.S. Government representatives serving in a foreign country” in which U.S. embassy staff “interact with representatives of the host government, local businesses, nongovernmental organizations, the media and educational institutions, as well as private citizens to increase understanding of the United States and its policies and to collaborate on shared interests.” Official U.S. embassy staff are needed to “analyze the political and economic situation in the host country and report back to the Department of State on issues that affect the United States.”²⁴ Similarly, the manager of a Cine Metro or Le Paramount, in concert with the head of the local branch office, was also charged with “analyz[ing] the political and economic situation in the host country” and reporting back to their managers in the United States. They also kept in touch with local U.S. ambassadors and consular officials, especially during times of political, industrial, and economic trouble. They also sought to engage with the “host government, local businesses, nongovernmental organizations, the media and educational institutions, as

—1
—0
—+1

well as private citizens.” This is precisely the work of Hollywood’s exhibition and distribution managers around the world as they sought to engage local political, cultural, and social leaders, market to and with local businesses, and promote American movies and messaging through a multigenerational appeal to local moviegoers.

“While Americans work at embassies and consulates, most of the staff comes from the host country,” the National Museum of American Diplomacy notes, and “these employees are essential to the success of any embassy because they know the local culture, have essential skills, or are well connected to government and civil society leaders.” These hiring practices were mimicked as well by Hollywood’s international cinemas overseas in which managers were sent from the United States to overseas cinemas to lead a team of local workers who helped them translate American practices into local customs and helped pair the exotic nature of an American shop window with workers familiar with local languages, cultures, audiences, and customs. In this way American shop windows abroad sold exoticism on the outside and comfort and familiarity on the inside. Translated to local situations, Hollywood and its cinemas increasingly became entwined in the local context and were patronized as hybridized local but still foreign institutions. These cinemas were therefore unofficial cultural embassies, instrumental to Hollywood and local U.S. consular staffs in selling the promise and allure of America.

Methodology

Wharton observes that “all historians are tourists in a past where they may visit but where they will never belong.”²⁵ I was also a “historical tourist” for this book, researching and writing about more than three dozen countries in the process. This was a daunting effort that required tenacity, a great deal of humility, and a library of contextual readings. I hope to have done justice to the scholars who made my own interventions possible and to the many nations this book examines. With that in mind, I do want to clarify what I address in this book and what I do not. This is a globally oriented book about Hollywood’s operations of cinemas and cinema chains overseas. South African film history, for example, is a rapidly growing subject of inquiry for renowned scholars such as Keyan Tomaselli, Jacqueline Maingard, Thelma Gutsche, Ntongela Masilela, Martin Botha, Lucia Saks, and many others. *Hollywood’s Embassies* intersects with their research, but this book is not about African film audiences, colonial African films, or African filmmaking or filmmakers and is not an attempt to theorize the reception of Hollywood films in this region (or any other) through ethnographic field work. Those are subjects examined brilliantly by the ongoing work of Didier Gondola, Laura Fair,

James Burns, Charles Ambler, and many others. Therefore, I am not staking a claim to any other subjectivities but instead providing an American perspective on Hollywood's forays throughout the world and analyzing what it tells us, from that perspective, about the need to understand the manifestations of Hollywood's global infrastructure to comprehend the internal and external logics of the American film industry and how that engagement changed how Hollywood conducted its overseas business.

In addition, while I often consulted local-language sources and hired translators and researchers for languages I do not read, this book is, once again, written from a very American, Western-oriented perspective, using many types of English-language and other sources. This is not, therefore, a study of the bottom-up resistance to Hollywood in foreign markets, nor could I possibly hope to reproduce a fully local perspective of Hollywood's incursion and resistance. Instead, *Hollywood's Embassies* is an analysis of the business practices of Hollywood overseas and the resultant political, cultural, and industrial ramifications. Where possible, I attempt to recapture the words, sentiments, exchanges, and protests Hollywood encountered through the voices of those involved. Due to archival and other lacunae, however, this was not always possible. Diplomatic records helped enormously, but they transmit those details and voices in second- and thirdhand fashion, as do the trade journals and newspapers that recount these phenomena.

Over the past decade, though, I have conducted site visits to dozens of libraries and archives around the world in **Australia** (Australia Film Institute Library, Cinema and Theatre Historical Society, National Archives, National Film and Sound Archive, National Library, Sydney and Melbourne Council Archives); **Brazil** (Arquivo Público do Estado de São Paulo, Centimetro, Cinedia, Cinemateca Brasileira, Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro, Prefeitura Municipal de São Paulo); **England** (British Film Institute, British Library, Cinema Theatre Association, Imperial War Museum, and National Archives); **France** (Archives Nationales, Bibliothèque Nationale de France Cinémathèque Française, and Memorial de la Shoah); **Israel** (Municipal Historical Archives of Tel Aviv-Yafo and Tel Aviv Cinematheque); **Italy** (Biblioteca Sormani); **Netherlands** (EYE Institute, Stadsarchief Amsterdam); **New Zealand** (Auckland War Memorial Library, National Archives, National Library, and Nga Taonga Sound & Vision Archive); and the **United States** (Avery Library/Columbia University, Margaret Herrick Library, National Archives and Records Administration, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Stanford University Library, Theatre Historical Society, Wisconsin Historical Society, USC Warner Bros. Archives, and Wolfsonian-FIU). In addition, outside researchers were employed to comb records in and order materials from archives and libraries in South Africa (University of the Witwatersrand Library), Sweden (Svenska Filminstitutet), and many other

locations. Sometimes, unfortunately, repeated requests for access to government records in places such as Kenya and Zimbabwe went unanswered, despite numerous attempts for access and information over several years.

I also scoured digital newspaper repositories from Australia, Brazil, China, England, France, Israel, Jamaica, New Zealand, and many other nations. The Media History Digital Library, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, and other databases also supplied access to trade and newspaper coverage in the United States and in overseas newspapers and trade journals. Municipal and state archives in places like São Paulo, Sydney, and other cities supplied blueprints, licenses, correspondence, applications, and many other kinds of documentation. Personal papers of architects and film executives, specifically those of Spyros Skouras, were also invaluable, documenting a wide range of international activities that are increasingly difficult to access due to the ongoing consolidation in Hollywood and the growing legal and logistical obstacles to legacy studio archives.

Additional research was derived from the Cinema Treasures website and database, cinema programs and other ephemera were purchased abroad and online, and interviews and meetings were conducted with Clement Dassa, son of former MGM Egypt head Maurice Dassa; Salah Hassanein, former WBIT president; Steve Solot, former senior vice president of the Motion Picture Association in Latin America; and many others that helped filled in the gaps. I am grateful as well for the oral histories conducted and transcribed throughout the world that provided key details and context and for the many books written by cinema historians and family members that provided information, memories, and anecdotes. It took many, many villages and villagers to help me compile the mountains of research needed to complete this book.

History and Chapter Breakdowns

Hollywood's Embassies is organized into six parts focusing on six regions. Although this project commenced as a chronological history with a temporally comparative framework, a regional approach was later adopted to highlight the similarities and differences inherent in Hollywood's work in various countries within the same region and to compare and contrast the work of different studios within those geographies.

The first wave of Hollywood's efforts to operate cinemas abroad began in 1923 and created a series of pitched battles in Europe, South America, Asia, and Africa. The most aggressive campaigns by Paramount in England and by United Artists in South Africa failed, however, when local exhibitors instigated boycotts of each company's films until they ceased buying, leasing, and building local cinemas. Instead of large-scale foreign ownership of cinemas

overseas—a tactic only Fox later undertook—what developed over the next nine decades was a series of “shop windows” for the premiere presentation of Hollywood films. Paramount’s and Loew’s/MGM’s shop window cinemas were meant to serve as cinematic showrooms where exhibitors from across a given country could see how to present and advertise the company’s films in the American way. These shop windows were routinely among each city’s most prestigious cinemas and a place where local moviegoers mingled amidst an atmosphere of hybridized American and indigenous social conventions and theater design.

Part I: Europe

“When Expansion Was Paramount (1923–1993): ‘Shop Window’ Cinemas and the European Expansion of U.S. Film Exhibitors” focuses on the earliest wave of this activity in the 1920s, when Paramount constructed new cinemas in Paris and London and leased the Cine Coliseum in Barcelona and the China Theatre in Stockholm. Paramount’s attempted expansion in Birmingham, England, led to a boycott of the company’s films by British exhibitors, however, who feared that Paramount’s takeover would herald the end of the British film industry. The company was forced to abandon its large-scale plans in England amid the pushback from native exhibitors and, instead of dominating foreign markets, Paramount focused its expansion on a network of shop window cinemas in major international cities that promoted studio films, higher ticket prices, and American movie palace architecture, equipment, and management techniques. MGM also built its first shop window cinema in London in the 1920s and signed an agreement with Gaumont to operate their numerous cinemas in France, Egypt, Syria, Algeria, Palestine, and Tunisia. Part I includes the transformation of Le Paramount in Paris during World War II when it became a venue for Nazi-approved films—all while its French staff clandestinely used the cinema as a base for the French Resistance—and concludes by tracing the late-twentieth-century expansion of Warner Bros. throughout Europe.

Part II: Australasia

“Banking on Australasia (1930–1982): Global Banks and U.S. Cinema Ownership in Australia and New Zealand” examines Fox’s contrast to Paramount and MGM’s selective “shop window” model in which the company attempted to dominate English-speaking markets outside the United States through large-scale acquisition. After being pushed by its U.S. bankers (Chase) to acquire a 49 percent interest in England’s Gaumont British in 1929, Fox purchased Hoyt’s Theatres, the dominant theater chain in Australia, in 1930 from

—-1
—0
—+1

English, Scottish and Australian Bank, before Chase loaded up even more debt by maneuvering Twentieth Century-Fox to buy a controlling interest in New Zealand's Amalgamated Theatres circuit from the Moodabe family. The Moodabes worked with or for Fox for seven decades and were frequent visitors to the Los Angeles studio, posing for pictures with Shirley Temple and Grace Kelly and conferring with key executives. Their close relationship serves as an important reminder of how American film companies strengthened their bonds with overseas employees, sales offices, and cinemas through global communication and local audience research and by providing foreign subsidiaries and executives with access to stars and studios. Part II explains how U.S. investment banks and financiers facilitated this global expansion.

Part III: Latin America and the Caribbean

“Hollywood in Cinelandia (1927–1973): U.S. Cinemas and Local Politics in Latin America and the Caribbean” analyzes Hollywood’s vast expansion in Latin America in the 1920s and 1930s with MGM’s forty-four-theater circuit debuting in Brazil in 1927; new “Metro” cinemas built throughout the 1930s; and Paramount, Fox, and Warner Bros.’s operating cinemas in Peru, Cuba, Colombia, and other Latin American countries in the 1940s and 1950s. After the establishment of Empresas Reunidas Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Ltda. in Brazil in 1927, MGM expanded its collection of shop window cinemas in the 1930s, specially focusing on Latin America with Cine Metros opening in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Venezuela, Puerto Rico, and Peru. By the end of the 1940s Lima, Peru had become the only city in the world beside London to have shop window cinemas operated by MGM as well as Paramount, Fox, and Warner Bros. Hollywood maintained cinemas throughout the region in an effort to keep its films flowing to company-owned cinemas as politics and the global film industry grew increasingly complex during the 1950s and 1960s. Part III also focuses on the Caribbean and specifically on prerevolutionary Cuba and its troubled Warner and Paramount cinemas; MGM’s foray into a divisive and rebellious Puerto Rico; and MGM and Paramount’s efforts to build cinemas in British colonial Trinidad and Jamaica.

Part IV: Middle East

“Hollywood’s Muddle East (1925–1982): Political Change in Egypt and Israel and the Consequences for Hollywood’s Middle Eastern Cinemas” highlights MGM and Fox’s theatrical expansion into Egypt and how geopolitical turmoil would come to entangle U.S. efforts to build cinemas in the Middle East. Despite the immense popularity of the MGM and Fox cinemas in Cairo and Alexandria—with Fox’s Cairo Palace and MGM’s Metro Theatre patronized

by both King Farouk and later by President Gamal Abdel Nasser—the Metro in Cairo was thrice attacked during anti-Western protests in 1945, 1947, and 1952. These cinemas became indelible symbols of the growing Western influence in Egypt and therefore key targets for anti-British, anti-U.S., and anti-Israel protests and violence. Elsewhere, Fox’s investment in and operation of the Tel Aviv Cinema was part of Spyros Skouras’s efforts to counteract the rise of socialism and communism in the new State of Israel during the Cold War. Part IV examines how Egyptian nationalism actually facilitated Hollywood’s expansion throughout Egypt and the Middle East and how Fox’s Israeli expansion withered on the vine.

Part V: Africa

“An ‘Unhappy Image of the United States Before an African Population’ (1932–1975): Race, Industry, and Rebellion at Hollywood’s African Cinemas” focuses on Fox’s acquisition of the African Consolidated Theatres chain, with 144 cinemas in Kenya, Southern Rhodesia (colonial Zimbabwe), and South Africa in 1956. These cinemas were, not surprisingly, racially segregated and in many cases for whites only—even at the Fox Drive-In in Nairobi. This part highlights the company’s troubled history in apartheid South Africa and Colonial Kenya and Zimbabwe and the repercussions the U.S. State Department faced due to Fox’s segregated cinemas during the long process of racial integration. This history also examines Hollywood’s efforts to expand into West and Northern Africa and how French colonial power in that region maintained its dominance in the region. This part concludes with the withering of Hollywood’s overseas cinema chains as Fox sold its African holdings between 1969 and 1975.

Part VI: Asia

“Eastern Promises (1927–2013): Hollywood’s Cinemas in China, India, Japan, and the Philippines” details Hollywood’s century-long desire to expand its exhibition holdings throughout Asia in Japan, India, China, and the Philippines. Paramount leased the Hogaku-Za in Tokyo in 1927 as its shop window, and within a few short years Paramount’s Japanese circuit merged with local cinema chain Shochiku, providing Paramount with key outlets for its films around the country. In India, MGM opened two of the nation’s most opulent cinemas with Metro Cinemas in Bombay (Mumbai) and Calcutta (Kolkata). Although Bombay’s Metro was feted upon its opening by the *Times of India*, the *Bombay Sentinel* newspaper and industry trade journal *filmindia* lodged severe protests against the cinema’s management, messaging, and movies during the country’s colonial and postcolonial period. In China, MGM leased the

—-1
—0
—+1

Roxy Cinema in Shanghai after World War II and began construction on another cinema just before the Chinese revolution that barred American films (and cinemas) from the country. More than fifty years later, Warner Bros. International Theatres reentered China with a series of joint ventures with local exhibitors including Dalian Wanda. Part VI tracks Warner Bros.'s successes and failures to build cinemas throughout China during the 2000s amid changing foreign investment laws and regulations. With Warner Bros.'s sale of its Chinese cinemas and its Warner-Mycal Cinemas in Japan in 2013, Hollywood exited global exhibition after nine decades of expansion.

* * *

Writing this introduction at the end of my journey—and not at the beginning—my mind drifts back to a singular memory in the spring of 2011 when I had just begun this research. I was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry (CHI) at Emory University and was excited to learn that Salman Rushdie, who had a longstanding appointment at Emory, would be presenting a film one evening. Energized by his vivid recollection of the Metro Cub Club at MGM's Metro Theatre in Bombay/Mumbai in his landmark novel, *Midnight's Children*, I stayed after to talk with him, introduced by my CHI colleague, Emory professor Deepika Bahri. Rushdie was patient and interested in my ongoing research, but his eyes twinkled and his body rocked at the mention of the Metro Cub Club. Talking to him that night, and later visiting Ivo Raposo in Brazil, where he built a two-story replica of MGM's Metro-Tijuca in his backyard using that cinema's original seats, chandeliers, and projectors, I could see then and now what Hollywood's "cultural embassies" had meant to the world and why studying these cinemas helps to fill in a missing piece of our global story: how Hollywood sold itself to an increasingly receptive and increasingly Americanized world. In a now precarious moment for theatrical exhibition, this legacy is a reminder of how important cinemas and foreign cinemas once were for Hollywood and the U.S. government.