ProQuest Number: 10290081

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In the Image of the I

International Relations' discourses of Difference reconsidered through the cinematic gaze

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1998

Abstract

What insights may be gained from the unorthodox intercourse between international relations and the cinematic text ? What may film-analysis contribute to a specifically *political* study of identity discourses ?

This thesis hopes to reconsider the Self / Other dialectic upon which so much of i.r.'s ontology and epistemology has been vested from the point of view of 1980-1997 film-making. It will redirect our attention to the underrated notion of 'international responsibility' and the importance of laying the foundations of an *exegesis* in- and for our discipline : a method through which we will *learn how to read* texts, before actually reading them. This thesis hence assumes the contours of a journey that will take us from the shores of the familiar (epistemological assumptions and various representational Orientalisms) to the less trodden lands of the Distant or the marginal : there it is China and its Fifth Generation of filmmakers that will be case-studied, as well as the resistant cinematography of African-America. Having thus travelled back and forth will help re-consider the problematic concept of the 'border' -- both in its theoretical and practical configurations -- and inspire a re-imagining of identity/difference discourses through the gaze of the migrant, the cinematic tales of the exiled and uprooted caught in an elusive quest of 'home'.

Para o F.,
- com muitas saudades...

... After sunset, on the terraces of the palace, Marco Polo expounded to the sovereign the results of his missions. As a rule the Great Khan concluded his day savouring these tales with half-closed eyes until the first yawn was the signal for the suite of pages to light the flames that guided the monarch to the Pavilion of the August Slumber. But this time Kublai seemed unwilling to give in to weariness. "Tell me another city," he insisted.

"... You leave there and ride for three days between the north-east and east-by-north-east winds..." Marco resumed saying, enumerating names and customs and wares of a great number of lands. His repertory could be called inexhaustible, but now he was the one who had to give in. Dawn had broken when he said : "Sire, now I have told you about all the cities I know."

"There is still one of which you never speak."

Marco Polo bowed his head,

"Venice," the Khan said.

Marco smiled. "What else do you believe I have been talking to you about ?"

The emperor did not turn a hair. "And yet I have never heard you mention that name."

And Polo said : "Every time I describe a city I am saying something about Venice."

"When I ask you about other cities, I want to hear about them. And about Venice, when I ask you about Venice."

"To distinguish the other cities' qualities, I must speak of a first city that remains implicit. For me it is Venice."

"You should then begin each tale of your travels from the departure, describing Venice as it is, all of it, not omitting anything you remember of it."

The lake's surface was barely wrinkled; the copper reflection of the ancient palace of the Sung was shattered into sparkling glints like floating leaves.

"Memory's images, once they are fixed in words, are erased," Polo said. "Perhaps I am afraid of losing Venice all at once if I speak of it. Or perhaps, speaking of other cities, I have already lost it, little by little."

-- Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, 1972.

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> Poetry does not need to commit itself politically in order to be political. Quite the opposite is true : when poetry strives to make political statements it ceases simultaneously and at once to be political and poetical -- politically poetical. All great poetry is by *essence* political for all poetry seeks by definition to bring Truth to the City, anchoring its bearings deep within the well of language, the tides of the word, the ebbs of the image.
>
> -- Marc Fumaroli, *Le Poète et le Roi*, 1997.

Yes, this *is* an international relations doctoral thesis. Insolent perhaps, but borne out of faithful respect rather then contemptuous pity. I did not want to abandon what I thought was a discipline full of promise and creative space. I decided to devote three years to the paradoxical and 'unseeming' coupling of cinema and international theory out of deep personal conviction that it could work; that possible offsprings could energise and enrich our views on 'what i.r. is' for better -- not for worse. I had then just wrapped two undergraduate dissertations (I was reading two fields deemed 'incompatible' in the eyes of many : I.R. and Art History). Respectively, these were : *On the path from Identity to Violence : a Basque case study* -- which devoted a generous section to the discursive construction of group-consciousness as rooted in its cultural imagination -- and : *Utopian Architecture : the political underpinnings of the Red Vienna 1919-1934* -- which ceaselessly referred back to the ideological imagination of post-WW1 urban-designers. To write these had forced me to straddle disciplinary borderlands. Yet I returned transformed by these exercises in unlawful trespassing. This was roughly in 1993-1994, when the Uruguay Rounds had been the stage of virulent strife over the will to include cinema in GATT's trading clause and when the 'art of filmmaking' was on the brink of its centenary celebrations. For the first time there had been *open* political contentions around the subject of world cinema : contentions that momentarily illuminated the link between films and the configurations of the international. Encouraged by my previous inter-departmental explorations and inspired by torrents of critical essays dealing with the importance of leaving cinema unscathed by economical schemes I decided to embark upon writing my own view of international relations from a cinematic angle.

Can celluloid ignite revolutions ? Augusto Boal in his *Theatre of the Oppressed* suggests it can. Performing arts, he believes, will never cease to be subversive. As long

as tellers of tales remain committed to invent new ways of reading the world, the staged and the screened will be preludes to transformation. Of course the spectator is *at all times* aware that what s/he sees is not real -- but what could possibly prevent him or her from borrowing thoughts and solutions from the 'realities' these fictional worlds display ? What if a fallen curtain did not in effect signify the *end* of a performance, but rather an *opening up* to the world, disclosing in its sway new possibilities of order -- reinforcing, moulding or eroding our empirical reality ?

The principal actor is never the one gesticulating on stage or screen. The principal actor is always the viewer. S/he is the one to which the story is destined, the receiving end of what the projected tale wishes to say : the monarch of all feasts and defeats. Yet this all-important gazer and listener is also in the process of perpetual making -- artisan of a practice that continually articulates itself with and within the practices of *mise en scène*. It is to this actual and potential spectator that this thesis is primarily dedicated. Because it seemed urgent to remind ourselves that 'contemplation' is an endangered sport -- and certainly one that has been silenced by international theorists. Because it seemed essential to articulate the stakes of an all-too straight-jacketed 'basic human need' in international relations : the need to relate, to communicate -- and the role enacted by the benign industry of the 'spectacle' in the process of these encounters between the fictional, the real and the different. The theme pervading what you are about to read is the deconditioning of the gaze : how to critically engage the spectator, how important it is to learn *how* to watch -- how indeed this watching-process can create new paths of understanding or invite a reflexive consideration of paths formerly trodden.

The primary objective of this thesis is hence to uncover the discursive processes which reproduce or dismantle the scaffoldings of identity. Using the medium of cinema (its production, distribution, content and context) as an analytical tool allows an ontological assessment on the place of popular fiction in the constitutive relationship between nations and groups, Self and Other. Such approach strives on the one hand to illuminate the structural orders implicated in the reproduction of stereotyped assumptions, universalist discourses and all exclusions amenable to conflict. On the other hand, its orientation is profoundly normative -- for it hopes to complement critical understanding with possible tools to devise and construct emancipatory dialogues with the Different.

Writing these pages taught me never to take field-hopping for granted and always to sustain a healthy level of irony throughout my travels. I confess that I had initially perilously underestimated the strength of traditionalists' grip on i.r. theory and

was oblivious to the offence my approach was causing. I had never imagined that so many i.r. scholars could find my points about culture, theatre and film ridiculous and superfluous. Occasionally some reminded me that 'no one' ever went to the cinema to be informed, educated or enriched -- but simply to flee. Yet this was precisely *my* belief. I should have called Brecht to my rescue. What he once wrote about theatre could be perfectly appropriated to illuminate the power of film :

> ...it is a prime characteristic of drama to transmit knowledge and a will to act through pleasure (*jouissance*) : the depth of knowledge and of action corresponds to the depth of the pleasure received.[1]

I often wrote with his words in mind as I wrestled in the cold mud of our field, its disregard for culture, aesthetics, images and fables. I have however not once been persuaded that 'cinema has nothing to do with i.r.' -- or that pleasure could not be powerfully subversive.

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1. B. Brecht, <u>Écrits sur le Theâtre</u>, 2, éditions Gallimard, Paris, 1957, p.345.

Chapter One

Introduction :
Mirrors of Adversity
- i.r.'s mythologies reconsidered -

How scarce those who, amongst international relations (i.r.)'s oracles and high-priests, have not preferred to dive into other rugged high seas, leaving the discipline to its trials and anxieties and failure to keep the waters out... Staying on board, scorned and soaked, for the next three hundred pages, appears demented. And yet this thesis -- although looking back in anger over a field's counter-productive theoretical skirmishes -- hopes to demonstrate that these very bouts of self-doubt and tension can lead to a radical reconfiguration of our ways of thinking i.r.'s most imperative function : this of forging bridges of understanding and dialogue between inextricably interdependent beings.

I.r.'s theoretical defects seem indeed to have trespassed grounds well beyond any reasonable threshold of redemption. It withdrew to an artificially restricted object-domain, called it 'the international', and dwelt there -- shut off from wider social relations. In turn, its account of systemic fluctuations consistently neglected the impact of individual and collective agencies in their symbiotic relation to domestic, national and international structures -- favouring the observable, quantifiable data handed in by leaders and elites at the expanse of the less tangible vacillations of the masses, the followers, the silenced. In its relentless pursuit of scientific legitimisation, i.r. developed an elaborate archive of methodological and epistemological principles that further straightjacketed its reasoning. Positivist as it had become, it fell increasingly and irretrievably short of descriptive and prescriptive insight. The unsuspected demise of the 'Evil Empire' in the late 1980s and the turbulence that resulted were an empirical case in point, shedding shadows on i.r.'s one-dimensionality, its inability to address contemporary currents of global change and its failure, as a *discipline*, to emerge unscathed from this spectacular dissolution of order.

What could the Enlightenment project -- upon which our discipline's ethos had been so stubbornly vested -- possibly have to say to the irruptions of "the non-Marxist cultural animations of the Chinese and Iranian revolutions" ? Or to "the forces of the too broadly coined fundamental Islam" ? Could it adequately illuminate "the rise, apparently barely submerged in the post-war process of broadening and integration, of fierce and bloody nationalisms in Europe" ? Could it really shed light upon "the ethnic divisions and conflicts in Africa" ?[1] Events that disrupted the international order, events that could neither be discarded nor ommitted even though they could neither be explained nor understood through the so-called universal terms of 'reason' that schafolded the framework i.r. theory had hitherto devised. Of course remedies were sought to cure i.r.'s inaptitude to bridge theory and practice. The most promising among these underwent the guise of the 'Third Debate'. And yet, how far did its insights reach ?

"[L]inked, historically and intellectually, to the confluence of diverse anti-positivistic philosophical and sociological trends"[2] the Third Debate was rightly lauded for its two central achievements : for having severed i.r. theory from positivist orthodoxy and for having introduced the field to theoretical reflexivity. A broad overview of this debate reveals indeed a considerable effort on the part of its contenders to develop new research programs. These claimed as their principal task to thoroughly scrutinise i.r.'s traditional discourses and methods; to critically probe and evaluate its premises and assumptions; and to fully explore the parameters of historical and epistemological contingency.

> Its main theme [was] precisely that contemporary i.r. theory
> [could not] dispense with a 'self-reflexive' inquiry into both
> theory-as-knowledge/power and the justification of its own
> cognitive foundations.[3]

A sense of lucid urgency permeated its terms : so-called incommensurable paradigms had succeeded and supplanted one another, leaving international theory exhausted and incapacitated by an impoverished notion of what 'relations' where all about. Those left outside the gates of the 'international', of the 'rational' and of the 'quantifiable' could no longer be ignored.

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1. S. Chan, *Cultural and Linguistic Reductionisms and a New Historical Sociology for International Relations* in <u>Millennium,</u> Vol.22, No.3, 1993, p.423. A more substantiated account of this failure will follow in Chapter Three.
2. Y. Lapid, *The Third Debate: on the prospects of International Theory in a Post-Positivist era"* in <u>International Studies Quaterly,</u> Vol.33, No.3, 1989, p. 237.
3. C. Heine and B. Teschke, *Awakening : On the Potential of Dialectic for International Relations,* in <u>Millennium.</u> Vol.25, No.2, 1996, p.402.

Without falling prey to idealist sentimentalism, the Third Debate correctly acknowledged that i.r. dialogues could not be sustained without engaging with its dissident critics -- the 'excluded', 'victimised', 'gendered', 'disempowered'[4] -- nonetheless maintaining that this very negotiation on behalf of inclusion should not deflect attention from the social sources of power and production. Hence, "if we want to open up a 'space for thinking', we should investigate how this space became 'closed' in the first place".[5]

The scope of the challenge was formidable and the dilemmas faced by its partisans raised eyebrows. How indeed forge a methodology that would tackle the question of how agents simultaneously shape and are shaped by their societal structure as it oscillates between analytic-causal and hermeneutic understanding ? These early days proved the break with traditional positivism inconclusive. Yes, the debate did well in assigning a location for struggle and emancipation within the citadel of i.r.'s scholarly culture but it never disentangled itself from the contrived rhetoric of 'truth-as-correspondence' borrowed from preceding contests. More often than not, it lost itself in the throes of perspectivist / paradigmatist / relativist struggles when it should have vested more energy in reformulating i.r. theoretical discussions with questions such as 'why', 'where from', 'whom for' -- in sum : "how should we live ?"[6]

"There is a groaning table of genealogical research that points out the ways we have built a canon that misses or flatly exiles social, economic, and political identities, institutions, and aesthetics that do not fit into the official debate categories of i.r.."[7] Sylvester's disappointed complaint was echoed by a worryingly large number of introspective scholars[8] -- who felt frustrated by the entrapment of their discipline in traditional frameworks. Moving beyond the Third Debate, showing that reflexivity and inter-paradigmatic comparison and conversation is possible, questioning every stone and fissure of the modern *episteme*, led i.r. into the murky labyrinths of post-modernism. This is exactly where the problem of much of international theory rests, this is exactly where it was miscarried -- and ridiculed.

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4. See R. Ashley and R.B.J. Walker, *Speaking the Language of Exile : Dissident Thought in International Studies*, in Special Issue International Studies Quarterly, Vol.34, No.3, 1990, pp.367-416.
5. Heine and Techke, *op.cit.*, p.423.
6. See M. Neufeld, *Reflexivity in International Relations*, in Millennium, Vol. 22, No.1, 1993, p.75.
7. C. Sylvester, Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, p.8.
8. See especially the insights on normative / critical theory afforded, amongst others, by scholars such as C. Brown (International Relations Theory : New Normative Approaches, Columbia University Press, NY, 1993 and in his Millennium article *'Turtles all the way down' : Anti-Foundationalism, Critical Theory and International Relations* (Vol.23, No.2, 1994)); M. Hoffman (*Critical Theory and the Inter-paradigm Debate* in Millennium, Vol.16, No.2, 1987); R. Ashley and R.B.J. Walker's *Special Issue* International Studies Quarterly, Vol 34, No.3, 1990; J. Der Derian and M. Shapiro (International / Intertextual Relations : Postmodern Readings in World Politics. Lexington Books, Lexington, 1989); and the writings of B. Klein; M. Dillon; J. George; W.E. Connolly and / or R. Rorty.

As Neufeld angrily ponders, "What is politics without partisanship ? What is a political perspective which denies having a project ?"[9] It is all well to disclose, as an early Foucault, the problématique inherent to the 'Social Sciences' oxymoron : that 'Man' is both object and subject of enquiry, oscillating in and out of tube tests and laboratories, in and out of the temples of reflexivity and therefore incapable of ever formulating purely *scientific* statements about our socially-produced and symbolically-structured reality.[10] It is all well to consequently assert that the either/or dichotomisation of the modern era must be set aside in favour of 'buts / ands, eithers *and* ors' -- revealing in this gesture the dissonance within official storylines, the complicities preserving hegemonic orders and exclusionary practices. It is all well to proclaim that Archimedian testing points are chimeric, that certainties are non-existent and that the only project worth engaging in is one of ceaseless query and interrogation, "rather than to affirm a new identity, authenticity or disciplinary purity [...], destabilise, open to question all claims to an absolute foundation".[11] Yet beware of overzealous negation. In its nihilistic form, this (mis)appropriated anti-foundationalist / anti-empiricist approach was responsible for much of i.r.'s own demise.

It was wrong to believe that 'post-modernism' afforded real groundbreaking insight into the social sciences -- a phenomenon in front of which to prostrate and tremble. What we read and experienced in the 1980s was nothing more than a rather watered-down re-iteration of ancient Greek *skepsis* and Cartesian doubt. There is a general consensus amongst i.r. (and other) academics, that ours is a profoundly Western social science. In this respect, the so-called crisis of the eighties replicated little more than earlier patterns of self-doubt in conjuncture to this specifically contemporary moment of order-dissolution. The post-modernist creed befits this framework with disappointing predictability : its defenders emphasise the unique, the particular just as the early natural scientists opposed their laws to the universalisms of the medieval mind; they deconstruct everything just as Descartes made it a point to doubt everything; they understand reality as illusion, echoing Descartes' query into whether there was anything inherent to the essence of reality that would allow us to distinguish it from our dream world. Their doubt, exported to fuel the anxieties of i.r. writ global, eventually turned against itself and against i.r : no limit harnessed their frantic deconstruction. Demands for legitimation called for delegitimation. 'Doubt' became universal in its subversion. And in one emphatic gesture, Man, the maker of order -- but also, let us not forget, the

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9. Neufeld, *op.cit.*, p.73.
10. M. Foucault, Les Mots et les Choses - une archéologie des sciences humaines. Editions Gallimard, Paris, 1966, p.355.
11. P. Rosenau, *Once Again in the Fray : International Relations Confronts the Humanities*, in Millennium. Vol.19, No.1, 1990, p.102.

central subject of social sciences -- was discredited, abandoned, effaced.[1][2] It is ironic and sad that such Death of the Subject coincided with the first successful attempts of subalterns to have their stories included in i.r.'s literature.[1][3]

Viewed in this relativistic light it becomes clear that the fuss surrounding the post-modern was much ado about nothing : its pessimism is part of a dynamics that has characterised western thought since antiquity, and -- despite 'post-modern' thought's claims to embrace the excluded -- it remains western and exclusionarily ethnocentric. This reasoning is a direct outflow of western thought as it has been moulded in the last 6000 years and the more it struggles to get out of this tradition, the more its self-made sinking sands engulf it deeper within.

Descartes of course found at least one pillar of certainty : *cogito ergo sum.* .

It is the belief permeating this thesis that a similar *return* to the Self -- a homecoming to the Subject -- is what can save i.r. from its epistemological stalemate. It is a reconsideration that could help it move on in a way that not only keeps in touch with praxis but also, and more importantly, with the fate of Man -- bearing in mind that the nature of subjectivity is far more complex than i.r.'s Third Debate has allowed.

These last years have indeed revealed the more optimistic and constructive face of post-modern thought, one that we believe apt to pull i.r. theory out from the windless seas in which it drifted. This other face of post-modernity heralds the 'emergence' of a new subject -- or rather acknowledges the *permanence* of this emergency and the critical need to address its positions and needs. Two ways of apprehending this undissolved subject : either by following Foucault or Norton and resurrecting a subject that stands apart from politics, in a self-reflective, self-defining essence that evades scientific generalisations and furthers the need to hold onto anti-positivist tenets; or by adopting the subject posited by Ashley, Walker, Connolly, *et.al.*[1][4] : an eminently political and politicised subject. Though this second set of authors can be reproached as they might easily fall prey to older patterns of 'logocentric political projects' in their enthusiastic assimilation of the individual within larger sub-groups[1][5], it is their view which grants most hope on which a transformed i.r. might

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12. We can think here about the nihilistic writings of F. Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra ; M. Heidegger's The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays as well as M. Foucault's The Order of Things and J. Baudrillard's Selected Writings as having had a significant influence upon i.r. theory as it faced its mid-1980's crisis.
13. see Gaytri Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak ?* in C.Nelson and L. Grossbery (eds.) Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture. University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 1988, pp.228-9.
14. Refer to general Bibliography.
15. See Rosenau, *op.cit,,* p.97.

sail forth : one that remembers that the critique of the objectivisation of the subject is at the centre stage of its vocational creed and one that is more apt, in its revised analytical attitude, to comprehend the radical transformation of i.r. 'as we knew it' and as it faces up to the exigencies of a multi-centric, polyphonic world system. In that we follow Sylvester's predicament :

> ...unless we begin with relations and query their forms, we are very likely to sally forth in this third debate trying, at best, to integrate [marginalised] concerns into the international in order to bring us into the few relations we do study. We will continue to put the cart before the horse by looking, first and foremost, for the international and then for the relations.[16]

It is the questioning and revelations afforded by this particular way of thinking i.r. that will form the framework of our work. Rejecting the egocentric and arbitrary, we will borrow from Critical Theory's useful and necessary analysis of our field, in our attempt to unravel some of the complexities of its *relations* as we devise a new way of thinking the Subject and its Other(s). This effort will therefore be one of straddling the fine line that separates the abstraction of theorems from a genuine insight into the contingency and dynamics of human praxis.

It will be an approach that hopes to re-address some of the ways in which a once-lost human element can be brought back to the forefront of political thought -- especially now that claims to universals have suffered such demise. In the face of a problematic methodological and epistemological alternative to the old nomethetic / idiographic patterns of enquiry, it would be all too easy to turn away from the world, to return to our back-gardens, facing the reassuring shadows dancing on the walls of our cave. Yet we cannot give in to such defeatism if we really still believe that a critically engaged i.r.'s foremost task is to expose the ideological correlation between traditional knowledge and power; to enable emancipation in an uncoerced communicative environment; and to eventually open a space for the ethically transcendent to unfold. A transcendence which marks "our embeddedness in a radically interdependent condition, where we are inescapably responsible to the Other", and out of which emerge...

> ...an important figurations of politics -- the struggle *for* , or *on behalf of*, alterity -- and *not* (as it often is) a struggle to efface, erase, or eradicate alterity. It is a figuration of politics that, because of the centrality of both struggle and alterity, is necessarily democratic in a radical manner.[17]

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16. Sylvester, *op.cit.*, p.219-20. My emphasis.
17. D. Campbell, *Interdependence : a Rejoinder to Daniel Warner*, in Millennium, Vol.25, No.1, 1996, p.138.

Because my responsibility to the Other starts irretrivably with the care of the Self, it is necessary that we learn to speak about ourselves first -- thereby re-discovering notions of identity freed from the imperatives of epistemic hegemony and scientific conformity. This shall be our journey's next stage.

I - Reconsidering identity analysis.

"Questions of inclusion and exclusion are central to international relations, since states and the state system are, in themselves, systems of inclusion and exclusion".[18] Linklater's observation aptly reminds us of the primacy of the concept of *identity* as a cement to our field's ontological foundations. It would be a mistake to assume that the issue has been exhausted in i.r. theory after some eighty years of scrutiny. To those who might instead claim that such interest is merely fashionable in a *fin de siècle* open to all possibilities, we could reply that there has in fact never been a better moment to bring a new contribution to the relational aspect of i.r., as it searches for..

> ...a thinking space within the modern categories of unity, identity and homogeneity; ... for a broader and more complex understanding of society which accounts for that which is left out -- the 'other', the marginalised, the excluded.[19]

We will not attempt an intricate genealogical excavation of the issue 'identity' as it has been conceptualised in the study of i.r.. The literature surrounding the subject is indeed colossal -- spiced and peppered by the input of a vast array of inter-disciplinary views on the notion. Only the i.r. specialities of conflict analysis and peace research -- for whom 'identity' is assumed to be the most prominent link between the individual and mass-mobilisation -- will serve as our basis.

I - 1 - Locating 'identity' and assuming the international : a bird's eye-view over findings past and present.

Conflict analysis and peace research have traditionally heavily relied on the insights of Freud, Erickson and Mead in their approach to social formation. Despite obvious nuances, each thinker recognised that the social is fundamentally constructed

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18. A. Linklater, *The Question of the Next Stage in International Relations Theory : A Critical-Theoretical Point of View*, in <u>Millennium</u>, Vol.21, No.1, 1992, p.78.
19. J. George and D. Campbell, *Patterns of Dissent and the Celebration of Difference : Critical Social Theory and International Relations*, in <u>International Studies Quarterly</u>, Special Issue ed. Ashley and Walker, Vol.34, 1990, p.280.

by the Self's irretrievable dependence on the Other for survival, recognition and personal development. This dialectic begins as soon as the infant discovers hunger -- hence, as soon as there is life.[20]

Mary Clark has made the point that "humans evolved with a desire to *belong*, not to *compete*"[21], thereby adding her voice to those who, with John Burton, have considered 'identity' as a basic human need. Such approach involves a notion of belonging that is assumed universally applicable. It never accounts for the manipulative strategies of leaders (in times of both peace and war), their power over the allegiances of their followers or detractors. Nor does it account for the dynamics inherent to such allegiances, i.e. for the capacity by which individuals may fluctuate from one 'group' to another and as well as resist certain forms of mobilisation. A somewhat less static and monolithic view was afforded by those advocating the inseparability of identity and its historico-spacial context. This is a take on 'identity formation' -- and on the *assujétissement* of individuals to collectivities -- that acknowledges the complexity of societies, the idiosyncratic predominance of certain norms and institutions rooted in memory, in the 'collective consciousness' manifest "not merely in the leadership but in the nature of the societies they govern".[22] This takes us to Marx and Engels' observation that...

> ... men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please, they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weights like a nightmare on the brain of the living.[23]

The 'tradition of the dead', common beliefs, carried from one group to the next, in generation-, context-bound patterns, can indeed often determine the strength of a collectivity's cohesion and its behavioural dynamics.

The complementary juxtaposition of the psychological-imperative approach on one hand and that based on social processes derived from historical and spatial contingencies on the other, converges in a direction of particular importance to the premise of our own project, namely the subversive ways through which discriminatory

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20. See more particularly A. Norton, Reflections on Political Identity, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1988, Introduction -- as well as the generalities of V. Jabri in Discourses on Violence, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1996, p.124.
21. M.E. Clark, *Meaningful Social Bonding as a Universal Human Need* in J.W.Burton (ed.) Conflict : Human Needs Theory, MacMillan, London, 1990, pp.39-40.
22. V. Jabri, *op.cit.*, p.123 and E. Durkheim, The Division of Labour in Society, Free Press, New York, 1964, p.196.
23. K.Marx and F. Engels, The German Ideology, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1965, p.3.

/ exclusionary practices of self / other dichotomisations are ritualised, perpetuated and eventually naturalised in every-day utterances and practises to the point of their origins' sheer invisibility.

It is the construction and consequent diffusion of self / other images that illustrate most patently the process through which identities are constituted. The perennial practice of stereotyping, for instance -- the consistency by which it is reproduced, engendered and upheld and the simplicity by which it dehumanises the different -- shows how these ideologico-discursive rites are always embedded in the legitimisation process that may lead to violence. In Jabri's own words :

> The categorisation of self and other is not... a product of cognition and information processing, but derives from discursive and institutional continuities which are reproduced through every stereotyping or categorising act.[24]

The connection between image-making and the behavioural pattern adopted *vis à vis* the different (a response that may fluctuate from peaceful co-existence to overt expressions of hatred -- structural and/or physical) forms the core of this thesis. We will attempt more in-depth analysis of the correlation between the stereotype and the configuration of the international later -- as such investigation will indeed constitute the very base of our next chapter and its resolve to bring to light...

> ... the discursive and institutional continuities which generate and reproduce the categorisation and differentiation processes which reproduce violence in a social continuity.[25]

But our preliminaries should at least help us understand why, for instance, the Nigerian writer Ben Okri, in a poetical address to the Cambridge Union, declared that :

> Great leaders understand the power of the stories they project to their people. They understand that stories can change an age, turn an era around. [They] tell their nation fictions that alter their perceptions (and) even bad leaders know the power of negative stories... Alexander the Great conquered all of the known world. But Alexander himself was gently conquered by Homer -- (for) without fighting, stories have won over more people than all the great wars put together.[26]

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24. Jabri, *op.cit.*, p.127.
25. *Ibid.*
26. B. Okri, extracts of *Joys of Storytelling* as delivered to the Cambridge Union, June 1993.

I - 2 - The discursive aspect of identity : assessing textual relations and dependencies.

The articulation of identity -- in its expression of (in)tolerance or more saliently, in its striving towards dialogue, cooperation and construction -- is hardly coherent when dislocated from the textual elements implicated in the formation of the practical consciousness of situated individuals. To (re?)introduce the importance of the text in the formation of the individual and the group would take us back to Sylvester's plea. Indeed, to re-direct attention on *relations* is to focus on the etymological underpinnings of the word : acts of telling, recounting (to relate) : myths and other stories told to establish connections, to symbolically uphold order. Such an angle of approach highlights identity as embedded in discourse, trapped in meaning inextricably woven within a linguistic apprehension of the real. Identity *is* primarily a *representational* construct. It is imbricated in social contingencies, in networks of interpretation and intimately dependent upon relations of power. It is moulded according to the dialectic articulations of domination, subordination and the infinite possibilities of subversion.

We hence recognise on the one hand that individuals are not -- nor can they ever be -- isolated entities "engaged in meaning-production and value achieving practices that [they] deploy on the order".[27] We are always situated *in contrast to* . To borrow the lyricism of Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry*, "...the self is not contained in any moment or any place, but it is only in the intersection of moment and place that the self might, for a moment, be seen vanishing through a door, which disappears at once". On the other hand, we fully acknowledge that the medium through which such positions are mapped out and / or dissolved, are always problematic. The articulation of identiational discourses can never be dissociated from the restraining 'frame' of language. Language itself, is a medium that can never be torn apart from the institutions that control and contain its expression. An infinite array of power and surveillance mechanisms thus forge the manner whereby positions are adopted and staked out -- and daily encounters rendered meaningful.

...it does make an important kind of sense that there is no prior fully constituted self that then *engages in thinking; rather the self is to a large extent constituted in and through its engagement in the existing discourses.*[28]

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27. Michael Shapiro, Reading the Postmodern Polity, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1992, p.27.
28. T. Tanner, Adultery in the Novel : Contract and Transgression, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1979, p.91.

In that light, the attempt to resolve the agent/structure dialectic seems rather futile : by placing the accent on i.r. as *text*, as *discourse*[29] -- we accept that agent and structure are constitutive of one-another. We also accept that the duality is one of permanent evolution and openness in the continual process of order-configurations : the praxis of the Self being each time and unfailingly "mediated by and to its surrounding social totality as the product of the past".[30] Again, this is where a sole reliance on so-called post-modernist / anti-foundationalist approaches would only thwart and impoverish a full overview of the infrastructures of identity / difference. Of course we must be grateful that Critical Theory fissured the wall of i.r.'s stark rampart against humanities -- but to assume that the insight is new is ludicrous. The arithmetics of i.r. are deeply grounded in History. Yes, an hegemonising "western" History, but History nonetheless. If one is to tend towards a better understanding of configurations of power; of how the Subject of politics confronts or abbeys to- his/her objectified externalisation -- i.e. the perennial attempts to preserve or re-create order through which the self/other binarism is formulated or disturbed -- grounding in tradition can never be circumvented.

We have accepted the inescapable nexus between 'who we are' and pre-existing experiences / selections / associations upon which our notion of 'us' is rooted. It would hence make sense to unravel some of the origins of representational discourses and establish the degree to which these specific modes of (self)knowledge depend on authoritative stranglehold : render visible the manipulative processes behind the generation, gathering and distribution of political imagination.

For doing so, it made a heuristic sense at least to start with Herodotus.

I - 3 - The mirror of Herodotus : early reflections on the different and its relevance to i.r.'s own voyeurism.

The controversial "Father of History" as Cicero would have him, is one of the most tragically omitted figures of i.r. theory, supplanted by a 'realist' Thucydides. It is the author's belief that Herodotus' *Histories* , compiled some twenty-five centuries ago, should be re-discovered and re-read as a formidable guideline for whoever wants to decipher and understand the continuity of representational discourses in the West and their dramatic effect on perceptions of the Different in its present, global articulation. Herodotus was indeed the first to map out a mirror of adversity -- a mirror in which we

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29. "... the notion of discourse which... involves not simply a group of signs or symbols but the overall social practices that systematically form social subjects and the objects of which they speak". George and Campbell, *op.cit*, p.285.
30. Heine and Teschke, *op.cit.*, p.415

have never ceased to reflect upon our own identity : who is the historian, the anthropologist, the theoretician of international *relations* , the guardian of memory ? Teller of truth or teller of tales ? Herodotus, in his attempt to understand the wars fought against Persia (an early conflict between western 'freedom' and oriental despotism ?) describes the non-Greek -- the Scythian, the Egyptian, the Lydian, or Amazon, to name but a few of his objects of study -- and gives us an extraordinary insight into the discursive mechanisms which apprehend the Different, tame it, make it comprehensible to the ordered world of the Same.

Histories is as much a work of fiction as it is one of methodical classification and scrupulous delineation. It is particularly revealing in its genuine will to testify, to translate the world encountered outside Greece into the bounds of knowledge understandable to Greeks. In that sense, this work is foundational in its ways of 'making believe' as it elaborates a complex rhetoric of alterity within the bounds of an unquestioned, because unreflexive, epistemological context.

To portray the Other is to establish its unquestionable difference. But such distinction only becomes intriguing and challenging when confronted to the radical alterity of a foreign epistemological system. For, as with the practice of i.r. theory, the greatest difficulty remains in the act of *translation* : as soon as difference is uttered or transcribed, it gains meaning and power since it is enters the systemic infrastructures of language and writing. Herodotus has used a vast array of topological devices to establish a cartography of the Barbarian : nominations, contrasts, comparisons, inversions and assumptions of universal laws to which the Different does not comply -- hence the threat it may pose to the status of the Same if it were to transgress the Border. The objectification inherent to these classifications and nominations is processed through linguistic constructs which -- like the quantitative apparatus venerated by international theory not so long ago -- can frame and measure the unknown and procure a strong (and reassuring) sense of intelligibility : a sense of mastery over it.

In a vein ironically similar to i.r. theory, there is no 'economy of translation' to be found in Herodotus's ethnographies : the Other is only perceived through the language of the Same, i.e. the readers / listeners of Herodotus probably only spoke Greek. The perception and interpretation of Otherness was hence always limited in its unspoken assumption of superiority.

> It was not for them to converse with the natives in native
> languages. [...] There was no tradition of translating foreign
> books into Greek. [...] There was no temptation to yield to

foreign civilizations. In fact, there was no desire to get to
know them intimately by mastering foreign languages.[31]

A monolithic, ethnocentric underpinning thus cements the tradition of explaining
/ understanding : from Herodotus to the Third Debate the consistency of a western
epistemological reliance is strikingly maintained. Where the *Histories* grant us an even
greater insight into contemporary identitiational theories, is by the scientific (hence
legitimising) dimension accorded to the act of *seeing*. "Truth" about the Other is
believed to be unfailingly gained because the traveller "witnessed", "saw". "Seeing" is
meant to mean "Knowing". In other words, and beyond literal transcription -- it is the
'eye' that acts as the most potent operator of belief.

To describe alterity is to convince that one has seen / witnessed its behaviour,
beliefs and general ontological contours. To represent them in discourse is consequently
a hope to make readers 'see' and 'know' the other.

The eye is at the epicentre of the order given to the visible world; the limits
given to the possible; and the authentication process that separates worlds. It is hence
the gaze that has the power to give credence, producing *peíthô* -- persuasion : 'I saw
therefore it is true'. No distance pertains in Herodotus's writings, between seeing and
saying. We are reminded that etymologically *Histôr* meant 'witness'.[32] Sight is
assumed as the quintessential instrument of knowledge -- a tradition that was upheld in
medicine as much as in history by philosophers such as Aristotle -- "we prefer sight to
any other perceptive sense. The reason for this is that sight, of all other sensory fields,
directly grants us knowledge and is the most apt to outline differences"[33]; Heraclites
for whom "eyes are much more reliable witnesses (*akribésteroi mártures*) than the
ears"[34]; and even this other father of history, Thucydides, for whom empirical
knowledge must be grounded on *opsis*. In Book I of the *Histories,* Candaules, king of
Lydia, wants to convince his friend Gyges of his wife's beauty and asserts that "a man
always believes his eyes better than his ears".[35] This equation of "autopsy" with
"truth" pervades, from there onwards, the entirety of this first scholarly attempt to
explain difference in relation to the *logos* of the same.

The ramifications of a principle which equates sight with scientific objectivity --
consequently associating the knowledge afforded by such witnessing with power *over*

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31. A. Momigliano, *The Fault of the Greeks*, in <u>Daedalus.</u> Vol.104, No.2, 1975, p.12 and 15.
32. E. Benveniste, <u>Vocabulaire des Institutions Indo-Européenes.</u> Paris, 1968, t.II, p.173.
33. Aristotle, *Métaphysics*, 980, (a 25).
34. <u>Philosophies Hélléniques.</u> NRF, Paris, 1976, p.122.
35. *Histories,* transl. by Aubrey de Sélincourt, Penguin, London, 1972, Book I, p.7.

the other -- would prove considerable over our own discipline. To this we shall soon return in depth. In the meanwhile, however, it is equally enlightening to read Herodotus with contemporary i.r. in mind as it exemplifies to a perfect extent what Critical Theory claimed to have unmasked -- namely that *identity politics cannot operate outside the boundaries of discourse*. Herodotus' focus is always on language when he attempts to assign meaning to his ethnographic encounters. It is through this medium that possibilities of interpretation, translation, understanding are disclosed : the binary structure deployed (they vs. us) becomes a vital narration tool without which it would be impossible to *talk about ourselves* . Ultimately, to speak about the Other is only an excuse to assess and reinforce self-knowledge : all travels and encounters and exegetic exercises are brought back to the Self.[36] In that respect, the representations of difference are almost instinctively re-located within the confines of knowledge and strategies of appropriation available to 'us' : Herodotus and his public assumed that it was the mediator's task (the ethnologist, drawer of maps, historian, party-leader) to invent and apply a rhetoric (operating as 'art of persuasion') that would enable an uncomplicated, unquestioned *rapport* with out-groups in times both of peace and war. Herodotus, in cementing his discoveries within a framework at once textual *and* quantitative demonstrates that literary pleasure and the attempt to design an 'objective' account of the Other can not only co-exist but also *reinforce* the persuasive injections of one another. Categories of reference are blurred, disciplines and texts cross-fertilised and the distinction between poetry and history elusive. We close the IXth Book with the paradoxical feeling of having been immensely entertained *and* deeply informed.

Hence Herodotus, "Father of History," but ironically *ho muthológos* for Aristotle and *homo fabulator* according to Aulu-Gelle.[37] Could the first so-called scientific attempt to measure and classify and explain the Other have been just a tale ? A pleasurable exaggeration of 'mankind beyond the borders' made all the more subversive as it denies -- or at least never divulges -- its fictional flourishes ? When Herodotus becomes 'conflict analyst' (Books IV, VI, VII and VIII in particular), he elaborates -- in a strikingly modern manner -- a complex analytico-methodological approach to understand variations of power and explain his City's stance on democracy as it contrasted to the tyranny of Persian monarchy. The foundations of his political analysis were at the time left unquestioned, and much suggests that the vision his writings gave of the Orient made an indelible effect on later generations of politicians, conflict-leaders, expansionists. The mastery with which *Histories* persuades, and the ways in which it acts as a structural and epistemic grid, made indeed a considerable impact on the

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36. At least 106 self-references (Greece, the Greeks, we, us etc.) can be counted in the first four Books.
37. Aristote, De la Generation des Animaux. III, 5, 756; Aullu-Gelle, Nuits Antiques. III, 10 quoted in D. Fehling, Die Quellenangaben bei Herodot. Berliner Verlag, 1971, p.108.

collective memory of the Greeks and their consolidation of identity. His portrayal of despotic governance would subsequently pervade the works of Plato, Aristotle and Euripides in the 4th Century BC[3][8] and there is hardly any doubt, on an empirical level, to the influence his 'tales' exerted upon the expeditions of Philippe and the conquests of the city later known as Alexandria.[3][9]

I - 4 - Sailing forth : seas to cross and harbours to explore.

This is exactly why and where the project of the present thesis unfolds. Three steps seem essential :

• 1- In the light shed upon 'relations as discourses' -- discourses irretrievably embedded in contingency and networks of power -- we must re-address, as Linklater once urged, "the cultural dimensions of international relations which shape domestic and international order and structure images of the self and other"[40], i.e. the role of memory, beliefs, literature, theatre, myth-telling in and upon the theory and practice of our field.

• 2 - In the light of the finding made in 1) and bearing in mind the nexus Herodotus established between what is seen and what can be known, we must assess the role of image-technology upon i.r's new regimes of truth : how the camera and the imaged text articulate the 'real' and objectify relations in a manner conducive to closures, reproducing hegemonic patterns -- or, on the contrary, enable old assumptions to crumble and resistant voices to be heard.

• 3 - Only then will it make sense to inter-breed 1) and 2) : the eye of culture and its effect upon discourses of identity in i.r.. We will indeed and consequently put forth the hypothesis that *cinema* -- as it fuses the documentary and the fictional, the official and the domestic, the visible and invisible discourses of representation -- may today act as a formidable platform of *relations international* and afford an unparalleled insight into its exclusionary / inclusionary praxis.

It is this latter correlation -- i.e. between a cultural form and a discipline which, in the recent past, so painstakingly refused to learn and borrow from the humanities in general and cinema, as text, in particular -- that will be the Ariadne's thread of our work.

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38. See Plato's Laws (694 a); Aristotle's Politics (1285 a 20), Euripides' Cyclopes "Nomades akouei d'ouden oudeis oudenos" and Buchaneers (verse 912; 1297).

39. O. Murray, *Herodotus and Hellenistic Culture*, in Classical Quarterly, Vol.22, 1972, p.206.

40. See A. Linklater, *The Question of the Next Step in International Relations Theory : A Critical Theoretical Point of View*" in Millennium, Vol.21, No.1, 1992, p.94.

II - Introducing cinema's impact on i.r. : an evolutionary approach.

Its subject will doubtless be the rivalry between the external world and the perception we have of it. The manner in which the world of appearances impinges on us and in which we impose on the external world our interpretation of it, constitutes the drama of our lives.

- André Gide.

II - 1 - Representation and the webs that spin identity.

To reiterate the central point established above, identity is never given but made : i.e. always context-bound, inextricably interwoven within texts, *langue* and other real or imaginary textures of the past. Identity, because it is discursive, is always open to fluctuations, reflexive re-adjustments, sudden vacillations in the perennial balance between sympathy and antipathy. In Chambers' words :

> The 'truth' of the subject emerges only in a fragmentary manner, in an interweaving of appearances, perspectives, practices and narratives. The identity of the subject [...] does not involve a logical identity, but is rather the 'same' that varies, modifies itself, has various faces and phases : a subject, ... that loses its Cartesian certainty and is only able to recognise itself when it is 'in play', in movement [...] exposed to alterity. This subject does not have its foundation within itself, it can only 'believe in itself' through the testimony of its body, memory, language, other subjects and the opacity of its own consciousness.[41]

Extrapolating onto the level of the collective, we understand constructions and consolidations of identity to be inseparable from linguistic, socio-political and historical environments. Looking as far back as Herodotus reinforces the salience of images -- and their action on belief-systems -- in our relation to others as well as our knowledge of ourselves. Herodotus convinced his contemporaries of the value-neutrality of his descriptions, initiating a tradition of trust *vis à vis* representations that branches out well into our daily lives. Within i.r.'s subfield of conflict research, as hinted above, a great number of studies have examined how image-making and distribution relates to political perception, decision-making and behaviour.[42] Without entering the intricacies of such enquiries, all argued that policy makers systematically organise, simplify and

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41. I. Chambers, Migrancy, Culture, Identity, Routledge, London, 1994, p.118
42. O.R Holsti, *Cognitive Dynamics and Images of the Enemy*, in Enemies in Politics, ed. by D.J. Finlay, O.R. Holsti and R.P. Fagen, Rand-McNally Press, Chicago, 1976; R. Jervis, The Logic of Images in International Relations, Princeton University Press, 1970 and his Perceptions and Misperceptions in International Politics, Princeton University Press, 1976; also on idiosyncratic analyses see R.K. White, Nobody Wanted War : Misperception in Vietnam and Other Wars, Doubleday, New York, 1968 or S.L. Blanton, *Images in Conflict : the Case of Ronald Reagan and El Salvador*, in International Studies Quarterly, Vol.40, 1996.

order their political world-views in order to mobilise their constituency. This cannot be done without a relative or absolute power over cognitive techniques devised in the process of information management.[43]

Perceptions and expectations are thus the sites of constant invisible warfares. In that significant commonplace of identification, the nation, discrimination is institutionalised in ways that hope to lend an irrefutable air of legitimacy to exclusionary acts. In the accurate observation of Jabri,

> categories of origin [...] hark back to a distant past in order to mobilise a bounded exclusionary present. This is a process of selection and definition, where a dominant identity emerges from a plethora of other possibilities. It seeks to negate and deny difference, to obliterate dissent, in the name of a mythical unified identity, an effective fighting force. A discourse of origins is at the heart of conflict as constructed discourse.[44]

a) Nation and narration : the inescapable imprint of 'mimetic capital'.

The sociologist Stephen Greenblatt formulated the interrelationships between society and cognitive images of Self and Other as inevitably ideological since the act of representation is enmeshed in a set of belief structures -- i.e. spun in webs of significance as Weber or Geertz would have it[45] -- that neither the representator nor the viewing subject can ever escape. The reality of the Different being always coloured in more or less repugnant ways. Yet this slightly misses the point. Ideology itself is *never* unbreachable or rigid. There is always space for variations, intrusions, distortions, challenges to the norm's authority.

Generally, *representation* -- that which simultaneously speaks for and stands in for something else[46] -- targets the other's eye and this confrontation always limits the representator in his/her possibilities. And since representation was traditionally only made possible by the patronage of the Church or the political *corpus* in general, the 'in' group was always favoured.

> ... the ethical and political motivations behind questions of representation in both its senses will similarly concern the

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43. Blanton, *op.cit.* p.23.
44. Jabri, *op.cit.*, p.134.
45. The exact quote from Geertz's <u>Interpretation of Culture</u>, is "believing with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning." p.5, Chapter I : "Thick Description : Towards an Interpretative Theory of Culture".
46. Chambers, *op.cit.*, p.22.

possible conflict of interests between the mediator and the
mediated. This expressed an obvious political asymmetry
that is considerable because unavoidable.[47]

The Other, even if personally encountered, is consequently and inevitably apprehended through "the reproduction and circulation of mimetic capital".[48] This capital is formed by the stock of imagery, exhibits, objects etc. with which representations could be made and themselves be stocked into the archives of a museum, library, private collection and so forth. This capital changed with time, old representations were replaced by new and the archive was renewed as knowledge and technology progressed. The 'new' was considered as worthwhile only in so far as it presented a rift in the hither definition of the 'significant other' and could enlighten or control the shifting collective memory of a given society.

The history of representation does hence not only mirror social relations but is in itself a reflection of the development of the history of thought, the increasingly 'scientific' perception of nature. Moreover, it is closely tied to the religious and political (dis)order that surrounds research and creation -- as well as it is bound to the very cultural structure in which the act took place. To reiterate a point made here-above, differences in the form of interpretation of symbols (status, hierarchy, biases) are as many cultural lenses that may deform the 'image of reality'. The most blatant phenomenon of the modern image is its ubiquity, the cross-cultural reproduction of the 'mimetic capital' on an international scale. Yet does that mean that knowledge is genuinely democratised, or the act of representation less constrained by 'webs of significance' ? There still remains the insurmountable tension between the fact that neither the individual nor the group can shape independently the ideas and identity they adopt, neither are they completely entrapped by it. As Paul Ricoeur states : "Knowledge is always in the process of tearing itself away from ideology, but ideology always remains the grid code of interpretation".[49] Social stability and change, identity and perception, are thus incontestably embraced within the same framework of representational practices.

b) To see and to know : epistemic variables unveiled.

Representations are *about* differences and the same, as they mimic the patterns of social discourse, the rifts between production and reproduction, reality and

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47. *Ibid.*
48. Stephen Greenblatt, quoted in Halbeisen's Seminar paper, *Repräsentationen der Anderen*, University of Vienna, February 1995, p.5.
49. Ricoeur, Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, Cambridge University Press, 1984, p.233.

simulation, presentation and re-presentation. Greenblatt rightly contends that though a so called representation of the real always lost reality in the process, it is impossible to assess this loss without referring to the 'practice' of representation. Hence it is not so much the image *per se* that 'makes' the Other -- or indeed helps mirror the Self -- but the relation between the *technology* of representation and the political context in which the image was allowed to come into being. This is strangely reminiscent of Hobsbawm's *Invention of Tradition* briefly mentioned here above :

> The element of invention is particularly clear here, since the history which became part of the fund of knowledge or the ideology of nation, state or movement is not what has actually been preserved in popular memory, but what has actually been selected, written, pictured, popularised and institutionalised by those whose function it is to do so.[50]

Take the stories related to the re-discovery of China by western explorers after centuries of Islamic conquest had severed relations between East and West. One of the greatest difficulties such travellers encountered was *to see*. To travel meant to enter a world encountered hundreds of times before in the fantasia-riddled imagery divulged by sedentary writers or painters. What one knew -- or thought one knew -- of China impeded the sight of it. And when explorers returned from their journies they, who had seen, were not believed -- or were only believed if the images brought home conformed to what had hitherto been 'known' of these distant lands. The marvellous was more credible than the real. In the case of China, for instance, it is Sir Thomas Mandeville's writings which most influenced occidental economic and political relations to this far-Eastern state : the accounts of a man, who, like Virgil or Pliny centuries earlier, had 'invented' exotic tales of difference without ever leaving the armchairs of his office. The same pattern befits the discovery of the 'New World'. It was not a case of understanding *what* the contemporaries of Columbus *knew* about the indigenous populations encountered, but rather what the Europeans imagined them (or indeed wanted them) to be -- in contrast to themselves -- and the definition of their relations viewed from a European context. This view is echoed by the anthropologist Fabian in his study of representation and its 'doubling of reality' in the process of what he coins 'othering'.[51] This specific other is hence proven to be essentially invented through the dynamics of imagination, as its enigma is brought back by the phantasmagoria of Columbus's draughtsmen.[52]

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50. Hobsbawm & Ranger, The Invention of Tradition. Cambridge University Press, 1984, p.13.
51. See J. Fabian, Kultur, sociale Praxis, Text; die Krise der ethnographischen Repräsentation. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, 1993.
52. "The most compelling discovery Columbus made was that of an enigma [...] the enigma of otherness and knowledge of it, of otherness and the constitution of personal identity, of otherness and estrangement from it, of otherness and the consolidation of collective identity, of otherness and dependence on it." See W.E. Connolly, *Identity and Difference in Global Politics*, in International / Intertextual Politics. edited by J. Der Derian and M. Shapiro, Lexington Books, MA, 1989.

As Foucault noted, it does not logically follow that all historians, ethnologists and natural scientists we relied upon were liars. Reports on the 'seen' differ not necessarily because some were better or worse observers than the others, nor because some were more imaginative and less attached to the laws of the observed : but ways of seeing are not compelled by similar systems, *nor by the same epistemological disposition.*[53] Could what / who we are and what we see be inescapably tainted by what we have been trained to 'know' -- and that the world never be accomplice of our knowledge ?[54]

c) The terms of the debate : culture, power and system.

Highlighting the centrality of webs and systems of beliefs as its propels texts and images forces us to re-assess the place of *culture* in the complex make-up of our discipline. Those who opened the Times Literary Supplement from mid-February to mid-April 1993 plunged into one of the most illuminating debates in that direction, even if its opponents were not so to speak 'i.r. scholars'.[55]

The contention that opposed Ernst Gellner to Edward Said centred around the role culture partook in (re-)producing the international system : hence whether or not political power was affected by culture. The former admitted to his faith in the rationality and causal-neutrality of the Western claim to knowledge (upon which our very own social science is undeniably based) whilst the latter countered such assertion -- arguing that the values inherent to the stability and projection of Western thought lay at the basis of colonial expansionism and the exclusion of non-West *epistemes* from political discourses. For the former, culture plays only a minor role within the political configuration of the international : it is minimal, Gellner argued, in contrast to the super-structural impact afforded by economical, technological and military forces. Said, on the contrary, advocated the inseparability of our systems of beliefs and representations and the ways in which power is exercised : the interdependent dynamic between given social behaviours and shared forms of thought (cultural productions of meaning), he claims, is essential in determining other spheres of society such as the economical and political. The deductive empiricism of Gellner, we shall attempt to

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53. Foucault, *op.cit.*, p.55.
54. M. Foucault, *The Order of Discourse*, in M. Shapiro (ed.) Language and Politics, New York University Press, 1984, p.127.
55. See E. Gellner, *The Mightier Pen ? Edward Said and the Double Standards of Inside-Out Colonialism*, in TLS, 19 February 1993, p.4. Said's reply is to be found in his *Letter to the Editor*, TLS, 19 March 1993, p.15, followed by Gellner in his own *Letter to the Editor*, TLS, 9 April 1993, p.15. For a general overview, see the analysis of W. Amaturo, *Literature and International Relations : the Question of Culture in the Production of Power*, in Millennium, Vol.24, No.1, 1995, p.1-25.

prove throughout this thesis, makes the mistake of too readily dismissing cultural production and discursive representations as unambiguous, easily apprehended and marginal to the more 'serious' questions that beset our social world. By thus discarding the artistic, in its painterly, literary or cinematographic form as irrelevant to the upholding of power, the conduct of 'high-politics' and the sustenance of hegemonic *epistemes*, Gellner only reiterates the one-sided -- hence flawed because incomplete -- approach to international relations afforded by its traditional gurus.

In the light of what we have suggested here-above, namely that identity is always in the process of being made, through discourses and relations to knowledge, we cannot but agree with Said's point of view : cultural representations are an exceptionally potent form of persuasion. The seduction of the non-rational, non-accurate, non-logical can be far more effective than any scientific attempt in the same direction. "[L]iterature has the power to convince its reader of what it creates only imaginatively. It can be aided in this by an interactive, mutually-constituting affiliation with institutional power".[56] Textual productions once immersed within wider institutional practices are hence not only materially effective but, if successfully harnessed by the State, can enforce and sustain its authority.

> Culture serves authority, and ultimately the national state, not because it represses and coerces but because it is affirmative, positive and persuasive. Culture is *productive*. ... It is a historical force possessing its own configurations, ones that intertwine with those in the socio-economic sphere and that finally bear on the State as a State.[57]

There is an undeniable correlation between the fictional text, read, seen or simply narrated within the intimacy of the domestic sphere (the locus of identity of the private subject[58]), and the making or un-making of self / other dichotomies. As the power-nexus between text and state, between what is disclosed, diffused or suppressed becomes clear, Armaturo rightly observes that :

> cultural mechanisms of 'social control' can be said to be both less visible and less obviously coercive than, for example, those deployed by international institutions of economic or military suasion.[59]

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56. Amaturo, *op.cit.*, p.9-10.
57. E.Said, The World, the Text and the Critic, Vintage, London, 1991, p.171.
58. See Foucault, *What is an Author*, in D. Lodge (ed.) Modern Criticism and Theory, Longman, New York, 1994.
59. Armaturo, *op.cit*, p.20.

To deepen our understanding on how cultural representations affect the political identitiational make-up of the international, it would be interesting to juxtapose the correlation made here-above between a) representational discourse and, more generally, culture on the relations of states and the construction of identities and b) the potency of the visual on epistemological configurations. We will wonder why the seen has once again come to exert such a deep influence in our dusking Twentieth Century and assess the importance of visual arts in the expression of political stances, stereotypes and practices of both inclusion and exclusion. Why study the international relations of film in an attempt to unravel mechanisms of identification and the possibilities of cross-cultural dialogue and cooperation ?

Herodotus' *Histories* were indeed peculiar in that all the stress was laid on the act of seeing, of witnessing that the Other was truly and inextricably *different* . Seeing afforded the right to claim truth about the Other. I.r. has had the fortune to be have been conceived and brought up in an age where visual testimony had acquired a quasi-scientific function. Hardly any 'event' disclosed, dissected and digested by i.r. theoreticians escapes the 'voyeurism' of photo-journalism, the technological paroxysm of the Eye.

II - 2 - The Eye of International Relations : Cameras and their impact.

We all understand that eyes are the most vulnerable of our sensory organs, the most vulnerable of our facial accessories, and they are (ick !) soft. Maybe that's the worst...

- Stephen King, *Dance Macabre*.

a) Photography

The capturing of reality by the Daguerreotype in the midst of the Crimean War marked a brutal turning point in the history of political imagery.[60] The fact that cameras were used for the first time in the contest of conflict is of major significance. The artificial eye of the camera 'looked' then like it 'looks' now with the concentration and attention to detail that no human can match. Nonetheless and somewhat paradoxically perhaps, the camera presents a perfect double for the modern subject to the extent that it

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60. Stéphane Beauroy, *Photography and Portraits of War, the Emptiness of Experience*, unpublished paper presesented at the 'Subject' Conference, University of Kent at Canterbury, March, 18th 1995.

produces and reproduces the seen in a way that no image, lest the mirror, has hitherto achieved. It is hence ironic, that while the camera may be seen as an apt metaphor for the Self, it is also the absence of the human hand in the productions of the camera which gives it its starring role in the drama of anomie in modernity.

The photograph as purveyor of so-called 'truthful' representation must primarily be seen against the background of its swerve from properly artistic significance.

> The photograph is a catachresis, or metaphor of production
> without secure foundation, an intermediate zone caught
> between the absence of the artist's hand, and its turn away
> from and transformation of reality.[61]

To an uncomfortable degree, the photograph, in an 'age of mechanical reproduction' puts the very concept of the subject's control into question -- the camera may 'see' differently than the eye that gazes out behind its lens. Some cartoonists have equated the photographer to the tactician -- a general at war with a reality which flees before him/her, that threatens to conquer him/her by disappearing, or by refusing to submit to his/her weapon, the camera. "The photograph traces the alienating face of the given on the reality confronted by the subject".[62] Yet one dares remember that reality, in the epoch-making terms set out by Hegel at the brink of the nineteenth century[63], is no longer construed as immediate, but as necessarily arising from the delay of reflection and thus always in the process of being unveiled, captured and constructed.

b) Television

Photography is truth. The minute the image moves, you've got truth 24 times per second.

-- Jean-Luc Godard.

Truths ? Illusions whose illusionary nature has been forgotten.

-- Friedrich Nietzsche.

The political discourse of representing the Self or the Other -- Greenblatt's "regimes of representational discourse"[64] -- is, to reiterate, intimately imbedded in the

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61. *Ibid.*
62. *Ibid..*
63. Hegel outlines a first form of historical analysis which he coins 'original history' organised around what the enunciator has seen. What is invisible to the general public is thus rendered 'visible' by reading the accounts of a direct witness. By contrast, the second historical type (positivistic) is only concerned with archives, causes and consequences. See Hegel's *Reason in History* in Leçons sur la Philosophie de l'Histoire. Today, the *seen* 'event' is back and changes historical analysis yet again : we have all the possibility to witness historical change and the task is no longer to relate change but to disclose the intricacies of its evolution.
64. Greenblatt in Halbeisen, *op.cit.*, p.7.

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flow of mimetic capital, with "technological rhetoric fermenting social energy"[65] as it passes from one stage of knowing Self and Other to the next. Heidegger contended in 1977 that technology was the web that embedded us. Technology is

> where we meet with all the ambiguities of being en-framed by its language and techniques, and where the truth of our condition is revealed in the simultaneous presence of its danger and saving power.[66]

Today is an age of visualised and totalised knowledge -- yet a knowledge that is as unequally distributed as is technology. Returning to the technology of the camera's eye we are reminded of Der Derian's writings on *cyberwar, videogames and Gulf war* as he broad-brushes a portrait of the appropriation of image-technology for the waging of the first most sophisticated televisual war in history. (Vietnam and the L.A. riots induced by the beating of Rodney King captured *live* by the manipulative eye of the camera being a good foretaste of the coming *genre*).

Paul Virilio's predication that the video image would turn into a weapon that could take over consciousness[67] was revealed in practice on the journalistic terrain of Baghdad. The techniques of perception management were refined to the extreme on both sides : there were the staged reports of new born babies snapped from incubators in Kuwaiti maternity wards and the images of a smiling Saddam paternally patting the head of an English boy. CNN or ABC's *Prime Time Live* showed Scuds that all seemed to be neatly intercepted by Patriot missiles. And yet it seems that the Scud/Patriot duel was not what the war was about. Mere military side-shows -- but central to the media war -- they concealed the real war that was fought brutally between soldiers far away from the prying lens. As Der Derian points out :

> [F]rom the beginning moving images took out fixed words, and photocentrism triumphed over logocentrism. The combination of surgical video strikes and information carpet bombing worked.[...] It quickly became a commonplace that truth was the first casualty of war. But this was a slogan in need of a theory, of how truth is *produced* in the continuation of war by other, simulated means.[68]

Der Derian's text then plunges in very much the same rhetoric used here above, that the image -- be it in the sands of Iraq, the squares of Beijing, the streets of Mogadishu or the death camps of Rwanda and Zaire -- has become a prime player in the dynamics of

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65. *Ibid.*
66. Heidegger quoted in Chambers, *op.cit.*, p.96.
67. Virilio quoted in Denzin, Images of Postmodern Society, Sage, N.Y., 1991, p.45.
68. J. Der Derian, Anti-Diplomacy : Spies, Terror, Speed and War, Blackwell, Cambridge, 1992., pp.181-189

international politics. Where no images are shown, very little action is taken. Where there are images, the citizen's eye may alter government policies. This is the power of representational technology at its finest : "soft war" -- the hostile use of global [tele]vision to shape another nation's will by changing its view of 'reality'[69] -- demonstrates the potency of Sun Tsu's prophecy : *to win a hundred victories in a hundred battlefields is not the acme of skill, but to subdue the enemy without fighting is.* Thus, in an age of cyberborgs, representational technology -- constantly used by the selected (selective) few to disseminate to the many the image of their other -- demonstrates that the modern subject has much groping to do before it frees its self from the shadowy reflections of a platonic cave s/he still mistakes for the real. In the concluding words of Shapiro,

> Having moved fully into the video age, official discourse must now operate within an altered representational economy that it cannot wholly control. It must be a participant in a contentious series of encounters over the interpretation of visual images as well as verbal scenarios. Accordingly, the modern textuality of official discourse, the modes through which it represents events, must exist in an environment in which the media moves the public increasingly to a critical juridical space.[70]

The might of this 'official' visual representation, however biased and contrived and subjective, is undisputed upon i.r. and its subfields (we might think of the practice of war and the activity of terrorism : how influential media operates upon its actors and victims). Yet a more challenging way of reconsidering the architecture and dynamics of self and other in our field, would be to look at the radically fictional representational discourse of film and assess its pervasive and subversive impact on public political processes.

c) Transition into fiction : The cathartic function of Theatre

One of the oldest quasi-visual genres, the play, may help us understand the reasons for linking cinema -- of all arts and of all 'technologies' -- to the identity discourses within i.r.. Jameson may point us into the right direction, as he talks about the separation between "the brutal visual facts, the moment of pure happening" and the "area of assumption : the speeches in which these events are taken up into language"[71] -- operating in theatrical performances. The 'separation' that seems to occur is however

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69. BBC's text from the I-Bomb programme on *Horizon* transmitted on 27th March 1995, p.18.
70. M. Shapiro, *Strategic Discourse ? Discursive Strategy : The Representation of "Security Policy" in the Video Age,* in International Studies Quarterly, Special Issue ed. Ashley and Walker, *op.cit,* p.339.
71. F. Jameson, Sartre : The Origins of Style, Columbia University Press, New York, 1984, p.17.

always superseded in so far as the visual, in its pleasurable subversion, unfailingly draws its audience back to the story. It is hence the *text* that overcomes, through strategic lure, the excitements of the eye.

This had already been understood and exploited in Ancient Greece : an undisputed correspondence between "theatrical space" and "social space" reigned in the polis. Tragedy audiences were immense and there was no doubt as to playwrights' function within the political preoccupation of the City. Indeed, and most importantly for our thesis,

> ...the [...] playwright was not one standing apart inventing a performance to be applauded, criticised or remunerated, but was one who stood among the citizens, encouraging a reflection on questions of identity and social practice and on the conditions of possibility for coherent community, given the emotions and passions impeding such possibilities and the chance events intervening in and mitigating them. [72]

It is with a certain amount of irony that one points to the use of theatrical terminology within the discourse of i.r. Our field, with its interest in war and tacticians, talks about 'actors' and 'puppets', 'scripts' and 'plots', 'theatres' and 'stages'. Our field is the playground of the theatrical as much as theatre stages wars. Aeshylus started the genre : he had taken part in the Persian Wars (Marathon in 490 BC and Salamine in 480 BC) described in Herodotus' Book VI, and his plays, *The Persians* (472) and *Orestia* (458) proved fundamental -- both as a *catharsis* of his ordeals and as an attempt to *represent* to his contemporaries a fragment of their political history *from the enemy's point of view*. *The Persians* is the first dramatisation of a inter-group conflict : the masks worn by the actors allowed the distanciation process necessary between the Greek public and a defeated Persia. Between the assumed superiority of one group against its hither demonised Other. Drama, already then, could become a tribunal of war and an extraordinary medium, through its seemingly benign entertaining function, to question official discourses and de-humanising practices. There is neither time nor reason to cite all plays that have dealt with war and political issues : there is an exponential list of *théatre engagé* after Aeshylus, well into the modern takes of his plays by Pier Paolo Pasolini in the mid-sixties -- *Pylade* (1967) -- or Peter Sellar's early nineties variation on *The Persians* , in which 'Saddam Hussein' addressed us. In any case, it is this profoundly civic, political mission of theatre that should be stressed here -- and it is this which brings us to understand why cinema, in its modernity, is so meaningful for i.r. as it is taught and fought.

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72. M. Shapiro, (1992), *op.cit.* p.6.

Theatre had always been a site of confession and judgement. Privileged by the philosophers of Enlightenment as an ideal 'awakener' of the masses, it was seen as a platform in which demonstrations of Reason could be performed. W.W.I, and the crises it engendered (crisis of reason, crisis of sense, crisis of order) pointed theatre in a new direction : a radical reflexivity which denounced the illusions of orders and celebrated the fall from rational thought. Whilst it dissipated illusion, its anterior role -- as the 'creator of dreams', the spectacle of all possibilities -- was taken up by the fledging art of cinematography. To this we now turn.

III - Film Technology and the dis/location(s) of the Self : Some Variations on the Theme.

This I thought is power ! Not to be strong in limb, hard of heart, ferocious and daring; but kind, compassionate and soft.

- Mary Shelley, *The Last Man.*

III - 1 - Technologies of domination : from the reel to the real.

Der Derian's afore mentioned final chapter to his *Antidiplomacy,* closes with a caveat. Drawing on Walter Benjamin's warning against film's potential for the generation of fascism and Guy Debord's provocative claim that ...

> ...in modern societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of *spectacles* -- everything that was directly lived has moved away into representation...[73]

Der Derian established an effective analogy between the televisual conduct of the Gulf War and the ways in which popular cinema (*Alien, Star Trek, War Games...*) has pervaded the imagination and indeed the conduct of the body politic. The spectacle seems to have become the representation of all forms of power, becoming "the diplomatic representation of hierarchic society to itself, where all other expression is banned".[74]

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73. G. Debord, La Société du Spectacle, quoted in Der Derian, *op.cit.*, p. 190.
74. Der Derian, *op.cit,,Ibid.*

If Jameson was right in his contention that : " for some seventy years the cleverest prophets have warned us that the dominant art form in the twentieth century was not literature at all .. but rather the one new and historically unique art invented in the contemporary period, namely film"[7 5], Barthes argument that ideology always follows the route of the popular seems even more acute.[7 6] Film -- Lenin's 'most important art', Mussolini's *l'arma più forte* -- is increasingly becoming the most powerful text in its construction of discourses on identity, difference and the real. In fact, the perspectival analogy of the photographic image only partially accounts for cinema's 'impression of the real'. The photographs in a film are arranged sequentially and the viewing subject -- thanks to the "persistence of vision and the phi-effect (phenomenon of apparent movement)"[7 7] -- accepts shifting configurations of light as the equivalent of material tangible movement. The camera does not merely reproduce movement but also analyses it, conserves it through mechanical reproduction -- and then recomposes it on demand through montage editing and the aid of a projector. Such impression of real movement powerfully contributes to a feeling of depth and reality. The cinema hence developed as an apparatus that combined the mobile and the virtual and dramatically changed, for its spectatorship, concepts of the *present* and the *real* .

Baudrillard speaks of a Western culture that has progressed through three historical orders of appearance where images and signs changed their relationship to reality[7 8] : 1) *the counterfeit* -- the dominant scheme of the classical period in which art attempted to pervert reality and imitate life; 2) *the age of [mechanical re-] production* stretching through the industrial era "where signs marked the absence of a basic reality" and 3) *the simulation* -- where reality is transcended.

> In the third order of the simulacra the very definition of *real* becomes that of which it is possible to give an equivalent reproduction... [T]he real is not only what can be reproduced, but that which is already always reproduced : the *hyperreal* .[7 9]

Cinema's technology, possibly the most *believable* mimetic capital since the invention of photography, holds the power to not merely mirror life -- but also to structure and reproduce it. As Michael Ryan points out :

75. F. Jameson, Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, Duke University Press, 1991, p.68.
76. R. Barthes, Mythologies. Paris, 1957, p.23.
77. Stam, Reflexivity in Film and Literature. UMI, N.Y., 1985, Appendix, p.256.
78. Baudrillard, Simulations. Semiotext(e), New York, 1983, p.146.
79. *Ibid.* The French philosopher's metaphor of the transvestite perfectly illustrates the point that fiction has become truth, (that the simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth but that "the simulacrum is true.. it is the truth which conceals that there is none".

Film discourse and social discourse intertwine as a struggle not only over how reality will be represented, but over what that reality will be. Films play a role in the social construction of reality in that they influence collectively held representations or ideas of what society is and should be.[80]

III - 2 - Technologies of scopophilia : an interlude for sceptics.

The instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice -- politics.

-- Walter Benjamin,*Illuminations, 1968.*

Of course there are those who will object to cinema as nothing more than a modern fairy tale, a piece of visual narrative 'no one' could possibly mistake for the truth. And yet, is it not the very essence of all representational arts to have us mind "true things by what their mockeries be" ?[81] Without such conscious 'minding' representation is powerless. It is the viewer who transforms Tinkerbell into a real fairy, the cardboard edifice into the real towers of Saragossa. Is there not, as Jean-Louis Comolli wonders, "in the very principle of representation, a force of disavowal which gives free reign to an analogical illusion that is yet only weakly manifested by the iconic signifiers themselves" ?[82] All fiction -- and cinema does not escape this -- places the subject in the realm of half-belief, of "oui, je sais, mais quand même" -- where belief is ironically procreated by doubt. The reciprocal contract of deception, complicity and co-operation (a *will to believe*) is what turns film and its technology into such an important medium in the modern architecture of identity.

The "fourth wall convention" is, in that sense, an interesting concept upon which to briefly elaborate. The term was one fetishised by Bertolt Brecht in theatre -- stipulating that actors treat the dark open stage in front of them as a 'fourth wall', rarely betraying an awareness of being observed, and thereby placing the audience in an exhilarating voyeuristic position. In *The Messingkauf Dialogues*, Brecht writes :

> The audience sees quite intimate episodes without feeling itself being seen. It's just like somebody looking through a keyhole and seeing a scene involving people who've no idea they are alone. Actually, of course, we arrange it all so that everyone gets a good view. Only we conceal the fact that it's been arranged.[83]

80. Ryan, *The Politics of Film : Discourse, Psychoanalysis, Ideology,* in Nelson & Grossberg, *op cit.,* p.479.
81. Shakespeare, Henry V.
82. Comolli quoted in Stam, *op.cit.* p.34.
83. B. Brecht, The Messingkauf Dialogues, Methuen & Co., London, 1965, p.51.

Cinema -- the privileged medium of the eye -- not only inherited this 'convention' from realist novels and naturalist theatre, but perfected upon it. In a sense it is more like architecture than theatre since its very technology of representation *absorbs* its audience in an unprecedented 'state of distraction'.[84] The industry's primary aim is indeed to induce the viewer to consciously *choose* to go to the movie theatre : driven merely by *desire* . As Stam points out : "libidinal satisfactions are not incidental but central to what makes the cinema industry work. Existing close to the operative psychic centre of the collective consciousness, cinema touches subterranean zones of the self".[85] Here precisely lies its power : to subvert through the machineries of phantasm, where "an obscene ecstasy of communication surrounds sexuality and representation".[86] Film therapy becomes cathartic to the processes of unveiling the self and turns the camera into the ultimate 'eye of power'.[87]

III - 3 - Technologies of self-representation : the subversion of sight and sound .

It is easy to forget how mysterious and mighty stories are. They do their work in silence, invisibly. They work with all the internal materials of the mind and self. They become part of you while changing you. Beware the stories you read or tell : subtly, at night, beneath the waters of consciousness, they are altering your world.[They] can be bacteria or light : they can infect a system... or illuminate a world.

- Ben Okri, *The Joys of Storytelling* , 1993.

Cinema's technology of the *hyperreal* allows therefore a representation of difference that is directly presented to the viewer -- exploiting, whenever feasible and required a discourse of difference anchored in the stereotypical. It may indeed at will exacerbate the viewer's ability to recognise otherness by a conscious manipulation of the visual components that scaffold his/her already textualized and discursively socio-ideological views of identity. Whether viewed as art or as commodity cinema, cinema has established itself as an enormous repository of implicit and explicit information about the projected and perceived racial, ethnic and cultural identities of individuals or groups. Although any medium can promote or oppose stereotype, prejudice and discrimination, the cinematic image is the most powerful in that it so closely approximates the array of directly accessible visual and verbal information found in face-to-face interaction.[88]

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84. W. Benjamin, Illuminations, Schocken Books, New York, 1968, pp.239-240.
85. Stam, *op.cit.,* p.32.
86. Denzin, *op.cit.,* p.112
87. *Ibid.*
88. Cowen, *A Social - Cognitive Approach to Ethnicity in Film,* in Friedman (ed.), Unspeakable Images, University of Illinois Press, 1991, p.353.

Film spectators -- as much as any observers of social behaviour -- actively select, organise, transform and interpret film information guided by their needs, values and beliefs -- especially those concerning their approach to self and other. Yet because of the nature of cinema, viewed by most as a tool of escape, entertainment and self-loss, it is impossible to assess with certainty the extent of the spectator's *active* selection in the face of his/her wilful abandon to the screen's world, and passive absorption of tales. The subject's interpretative gaze may depict difference pending on his/her involvement and the way the film gratifies his/her identification process, whether the spectator feels mutuality or opposition when (subconsciously) comparing his/her group to the protagonist's. More significantly -- the advantages of increased "contact" with otherness film can offer, remain compromised by commercial interests and needs which thrive on regularity and standardisation of roles, actors and behaviours as token representations of whole races, religions and cultures. The manipulation, even if never total, will always be worthy of more careful consideration.

Successful occurrences of distribution have also proved that filmic texts could perform what social anthropologists such as Barbara Babcock call "symbolic inversion"[89] -- i.e. expressive behaviour that can invert, contradict, abrogate or indeed propose alternatives to commonly held cultural, linguistic, artistic, religious, social or/and political codes. However, the ruling technological hegemony and economic imperatives of the 'culture industry' as demonstrated by the GATT dispute shows how filmic discourses of difference remain entrapped in patterns of reified commodities against which the other's strategies of resistance are heard only with great difficulty. The master-narrative of cinematic discourse, channelled globally, used to be exclusively Western, white, patriarchal. Though 'non-Western' film-making is as old as its invention itself, Satyajit Ray -- an instance randomly picked from a lengthy list of Indian, Japanese, Mexican or Egyptian filmographies -- was only able to 'speak' to the West through the West's own visual grammar. Yet to see our selves through "the mirror of others' words" still allows a resistance at the borders where "historically specific constellations of power are made visible".[90]

> Filmic texts dramatise and enact their relation to social power
> not only through theme and "image" but also through their
> critical relation to the structures of discursive authority as
> mediated by the formal parameters of the text.[91]

89. quoted in Stam, <u>Subversive Pleasures</u>, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1989, p.105.
90. *Ibid*, pp.5-11
91. *Ibid*, p.115.

This is all to stress once again that cinema's discourse can, when given the means and the necessary space found at the "interstices" of authority, reverse norms and become a privileged terrain for the expression of contesting representations that articulate the struggle between commonly held models of identity and its Others.

The technology of sound, of the aural and oral metaphors -- may, if made visible, enable the viewer go beyond the lure of the visual, open up space for a redefinition of the parameters of self. The question of difference no longer becomes the colour or gender or class of the faces in the image "but rather of the literal or figurative voice speaking 'through' the image". [92] As Stam contends, the subject immersed in the 'reading' of a film is uncontestably a voyeur but also an 'entendeur'. And to reformulate film as image but also *word*, "disputes the hegemony of the visible and the image-track by calling attention to sound, voice, dialogue and language".[93] This emphasis on the discursive --'cinesemiology'-- opens the possibility of a new approach to on-screen others,

> not as unitary essences, as actor character amalgams too easily fantasised as three-dimensional flesh-and-blood entities existing somewhere 'behind' the diegesis, but rather as fictive-discursive constructs, thus placing the whole issue on a socio-ideological rather than on an individual-moralistic plane.[94]

To unveil the process of identification -- the socio-political topographies that map i.r. -- through cinema, as *text*, is always to point to the tragedy of the written. To film is like to write : always to speak for or on behalf of my kind or others. To film, like the act of speech, is always to judge. We remember Wittgenstein's comment, in his *Tractatus Philosphicus* : "ethics and aesthetics are the same thing".[95] To study cinema in correlation to i.r. theory goes thus beyond any attempt to instigate a constructive confrontation between self and other as it can never be divorced from its will to forge an ethics of dialogue and responsibility.

The greatest difficulty, however, will remain a methodological one : how to construct an exegesis of sight in a realm that so evidently escapes generalisations, empirico-deductive theorems ? Is it at all possible to maintain a theoretical grasp of the relations between moving images and viewers (hypothetical and differently positioned) without succumbing to an anything-goes pluralism ? How much empirical research will

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92. R. Stam, *Bakhtin, Polyphony and Ethnic/Racial Representation*, in Friedman, *op.cit.*, p.256.
93. *Ibid.* p.257.
94. *Ibid.*
95. I. Wittgenstein,Tractactus Philosophicus. Payot, Paris, édition révisée, 1987, 6.421.

be lost in the face of an unavoidable tendency to speculate about visual causes and their political effects on identification ?

It will be the contention of this work, that although we are moving in perilous theoretical grounds, there exist ways in which to establish interdisciplinary and intertextual links between films and i.r. that foregoe the temptation to succumb to unfounded, flesh-less conclusions. A few words on such a methodological *problématique* are now necessary.

IV - Methodological Problématique and Strategy.

> Unlike the political category of the state, the regulatory and coercive category of law, institutional mechanisms such as political parties or class organisations like trade unions, 'culture' generally and the literary / aesthetic realm in particular are situated at great remove from the economy and are therefore, among all superstructures, the most easily available for idealisation and theoretical slippage.[96]

IV - 1 - In guise of a defence against mocking detractors.

Gellner's central argument against Said's 'lit-crit analysis' of hegemonic political trends, was borne out of methodological dissatisfaction. Echoing Ahmad, he implicitly argued that there could not be any adequate formulation of an international relations of power based on cultural theory : the literary and artistic factors therein employed to explicate continuities and changes elude "the objective calculus of statistics and conventional empirical data".[97] These were hence deemed too subjective / speculative to befit a field that gained its *lettres de noblesse* through the rigours of empirical testing.

Ours were indeed gurus who had vested their authority upon an unfatiguable search for explanation defined in terms of scientific statements of the cause effect-variety[98] -- applying natural-scientific laws to make sense of observed phenomena in a way hitherto assumed to be objective, devoid of normative or emotional injections. Under the behavioural revolution that left such deep imprint on i.r., our gurus' methods were held as sole purveyors of truth : if the hypothesis of a given regularity "X" could withstand empirical testing it followed that explanation "Y" was irrevocably valid. Operating within such framework, Gellner has an indisputable point : from a purely

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96. A. Ahmad, In Theory : Classes. Nations and Literatures, Verso, London, 1992, p.8.
97. Armaturo, *op.cit*, p.19.
98. Jabri, *op.cit.*, p.22

modernist, positivist approach a simple reliance on textual interpretation would be unacceptable, because hermeneutic strategies are usually prone to contingency. The link between textual content and societal dynamics remains, even in the strongest of cases, unmeasurable.

Gellner's argument may be summarised in the following rhetorical questions : are we -- readers *as well as* analysts of other readers; followers and gurus -- not always already situated within the 'webs' of our identities, within the ideological complicities that link us to the objects of our investigation ? Can there ever be a *tangible* way to prove that societies and their behavioural patterns are transmitted by culture, even if the reverse is unquestionably valid ? The late sociologist concludes that the culture / identity dialectic is only part and parcel of a far greater dynamic involving the interplay of military, economic and technological structures. If i.r. were to entirely abandon the analytical tools of the harder science in favour of a post-structural 'intellectual policy' which does little to justify its methods and conclusions, the discipline might never account for the effectiveness of such vectors on the system : illuminating them partially and with mere inconsequence. In Gellner's own words,

> ...it is domination by symbols and discourse which really secures and retains [cultural analysts'] attention. They are enormously sensitive to the manner in which concepts *constrain*, and less sensitive to other, and perhaps more important, forms of coercion. Their attitude engenders a selective sensitivity which in effect ignores those other constraints, or even by implication denies their existence.[99]

To this we may reply by our own set of quibbles.

Have the above pages not shown that to relegate the cultural, fictional, textual to the backstage of historical and political happening is equally as reductionist and partial an approach ? Empiricism, by definition, is vested in assumptions : yet do these very assumptions in turn not always narrow the scope of the conclusions obtained? To simply rely on material causes in order to explain relations of power is also to indulge in a 'selective sensitivity' which denies the dynamic relations operating between the imaginary realm and 'harder' facts such as economy and politics.[100] It is also to deny i.r.'s scholarly imbrication in the textual, which actively mirrors and strengthens "the connections that we make, the traits that we establish as pertinent, the continuities that we recognise, or the exclusions that we practice".[101] Most importantly, it would be to

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99. Gellner, *op.cit.*, p.63, note 11.
100. See R. Williams' conclusions in his <u>Culture and Society</u>, Hogarth, London, 1993, p.282-3 and <u>The Long Revolution</u>, Hogarth, London, 1992, pp.35-47, pp.111-7.
101. Foucault, in Lodge, *op.cit.*, p.203, note 42.

further remain the silent accomplice of a disciplinary practice which has consistently ignored -- or at best marginalised -- questions concerning the relation between power, cultural representations and their international dissemination, *simply* because its methodology could not accommodate such questions' more elusive nature.[102] As Berman once very aptly remarked, it is lamentable that social scientists in general -- and i.r scholars in particular -- have preferred to dissect every-day practice in separate spheres of analysis, rigidly fenced off from one another and "have fled from the task of building a model that might be truer to modern life" :

> This has freed them from the extravagant generalisations and
> vague totalities -- but also from thought that might engage
> their own lives and works and their place in history.[103]

We have felt it urgent to dissipate the arbitrary, illusionary chasm that has so long separated the private from the domestic, the reader from the content of the read text, in a way that is acceptable and answerable to i.r.'s descriptive and prescriptive task. The greatest difficulty will be to find *within* i.r. the very tools needed to decipher such a complex, multi-faceted text as the movie. We will nonetheless attempt to do so without solely aestheticizing the political. To this perilous task will be added a concern to lend legitimacy to our empirical choices : which film ? which director ? which nation of origin ? which period ? ... and why are these materials, rather than others, best suited to illuminate our query and strengthen our conclusions ? The acknowledgement of the hardship ahead is complete.

Ours is primarily an exegetical exercise. We will seek to develop a critical understanding of the epistemological foundations of i.r. by questioning first and foremost, its claim to universal applicability. We will attempt to locate its natural bias in favour of an exclusionary western claim to knowledge and expose the role enacted by such a seemingly transparent commodity as the film in supporting -- or in some cases fissuring -- its ramparts. At the very least, we will soon embark upon a journey propelled by a critical interpretation of i.r.'s theory of 'Self and Other'. As such we shall ruthlessly seek "to analyse the connections or mediation between particularities and totalities, parts and wholes, individual artefacts and events and social processes and structures".[104] Of course, 'the discipline of i.r.' and 'cinema' are admittedly by no

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102. This obsessive compartmentalisation and desire to purify fields from external influences is perhaps the most characteristic feature of modernity as instigated by Immanuel Kant's systematic separation between the aesthetic and rational realm in the 1780s and as adopted by later generations of political scientists. Such dichotomisation "philosophically endorsed the treatment of the sphere of culture as an independent and autonomous reality : the source of eternal values, untouched by immediate history and the dirty hands of industry, commerce and the city". Ian Chambers, (1994),*op.cit*, p.98.
103. M. Berman, All That is Solid Melts into Air. Penguin, New York, 1988, p.33.
104. Jabri, *op.cit.*, p.24.

means an obvious conjuncture. Only by taking both to their root (i.e. grounding them deep within human agency or acknowledging the influence each of their sub-aspects exerts upon social reproduction) -- as well as using a methodology that trespasses beyond disciplinary borderlands -- do we hope to make sense of their processes of symbiotic cross-fertilisation and the salience of their bearings on identity formation and its oscillations.

IV - 2 - Sketching the rites and passages of our odyssey.

Each chapter will unfolds in a *roughly* analogous pattern : a) an introduction will outline methodological contours as it locates its respective terms within the larger framework of the thesis in general and international theory's insights in particular; b) a first section will be devoted to pure theory and explore, according to each case, how such idiosyncrasies may be enriched through others extracted from neighbouring fields (a promethean appropriation from social anthropology, linguistics, philosophy and historical / cultural analysis); c) an intermediary section will bring the study of film under our investigatory lens : what insights may ensue from the unorthodox intercourse between i.r. and the cinematic text (the sterness of the one bedded with the pleasurable subversion of the other) ? what may film-analysis contribute to a specifically *political* study of identity discourses ?; d) we shall only then move to the examination of case-studies : dissect specific films (mainly chosen within the 1980-1997 production span) and demonstrate how they reflect political realities or/and how they enact, or have enacted- upon the stagnation-transformation dialectic of the identity / knowledge / power triad.

• Strategies of *location* and *formation* helped Said in his decipherations. That is, positioning the author *vis à vis* his/her discursive choices and analysing the relation between the text, its environment and the general impact of such relation on the international sphere writ large. Said's double strategy will befit the first step of our enterprise. Chapter Two will explore the ways in which the most occidental of inventions, the technological apparatus of cinema, contributed in upholding the stark sense of Western epistemological superiority that has fuelled our discipline -- theoretically as well as practically -- since its inception. We will observe how a large number of Western films produced in the past decade only fuelled an already ancient tradition of 'orientalism' : a conquest over the self-imaginary only then to pave the way to later instigations of material conquest. In Said's contention, the orientalist text detains a material as well as ideational force that creates "a battlefront that ... [invites] the West

to control, contain, and otherwise govern (through superior knowledge and accommodating power) the Other".[105] This will be extrapolated to our film-study.

Notwithstanding the deep differences that tear western nations apart from one another -- culturally and politically -- there remain, as this chapter will show, many reasons to believe that the 'west' still holds sway in the making and unmaking of international political thought. This is evidenced in practical terms by the global impact of the Hollywood movie : the dialectic of rage it provokes when deemed imperialist and the relentless fascination it inspires world-wide as well as the *power* it confers to its political and economical backers. This is to chart...

> ... how the imagination is connected with the dreams, constructions, and ambitions of official knowledge... and how and to what degree culture, and therefore [cinema] has collaborated in the worst excesses of the State, from its imperial wars and colonial settlements to its self-justifying institutions of anti-human repression, racial hatred, economic and behavioural manipulation.[106]

How indeed has representational technology 'produced' a certain way of looking at the 'rest of the world' in perfect harmony with its masters' expansionist trajectory ? How have western cinematic texts produced and re-produced notions of the western self in contrast to this 'rest of the world' -- encoding and legitimating its economic and military creeds ? We shall survey in the process i.r.'s mechanisms of dichotomisation : the hierarchies and dependencies that propel the self / other dialectic and the role enacted by fictional visual representation in constructing a given socio-political reality, shaping senses of identity and impelling patterns of behaviour in times of conflict.

• Having uncovered the pervasiveness of politics (inseparable from ideology) in every sphere of human activity -- and having illuminated the exercise of power at every level of society (emphatically including the entertainment industry) as a strategy to secure epistemological foundations -- a next call in our travel will take us closer to the shores of the Other. How does the other represent itself, then ? Chapter Three will investigate in great depth the feasibility of the old western claim to 'universalism' through an hermeneutic reading of Chinese films, as a case-study of radical epistemological difference (extracted from an Eastern claim to universality). Central to the many questions this section will ask, is the riddle : "Is it possible to be absolutely 'modern' without being 'occidental' ?". If it may be true that the West "constitutes the universal point of reference in relation to which others recognise themselves as

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105. E. Said, Orientalism. Penguin Books, London, 1991, p.47-8.
106. E. Said, Culture and Imperialism. Vintage, London, 1994, p.177.

particularities"[107] and that non-western groups have not yet been able to circumvent western technology in their effort to represent themselves to the 'us' of the occident, that does by no means imply that the 'rest', the other, cannot appropriate and assimilate these idioms and technologies and reverse them in its resistance to pre-established structures of domination.

Watching and reading China's place in i.r. theory and a selection of Chinese films of the past decade will allow us to reflect upon the impossibility to forge an understanding of the Other without exegesis, without learning *how* to read -- an exercise that goes well beyond the merely anthropologico-interpretative and fundamentally challenges i.r.'s epistemic basis. We will here disclose how technological appropriation and the diffusion of the Other's self-image reveals the *productive* nature of power, its *enabling* potential. Learning to read the other's representation of itself will most saliently open up the question of how to situate tolerance in discourses of identity. It will hope to act as a counterpoint to the previous chapter in its attempt to show how processes of identity formation -- although usually perceived as conducive to antagonistic mobilisation and conflict -- may serve as an important prerequisite for *dialogue*. To export cinema, as with any diffusion of texts, is to demonstrate a will to communicate, beyond 'incommensurability', and undo stereotypical compartmentalisation. It always implies and impels "a process of common discovery... through a process of unrestricted questioning and dialogue".[108] Case-studying China's radical otherness will introduce the underrated concept of the 'dialogic encounter' within i.r.'s theoretical space. We will henceforth introduce Bakhtin's thought into international theory -- with specific emphasis on his notions of polyphony and creative understanding.[109] We will show how such dialogue with the Other poses 'us' as 'other' and ultimately impels us to re-think one's own political and cultural constellations.

• Posing ourselves as 'other' and opening i.r. to the possibility of dialogue with the hither 'incommensurable', will have brought us back to reconsider the West, the 'us' from which perspective i.r. theory was forged. Chapter Four will retreat within the Occident's inner Other, the marginal and excluded that further incapacitate any claim to homogeneous / universal stance -- and complicate a certain view of i.r. that remains

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107. M. Featherstone (ed.), Global Culture : Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity, Sage, London, 1994, p.12.
108. Jabri, *op.cit.*, p.161.
109. "Creative understanding does not renounce itself, its own place in time, its own culture. [...] Without one's own questions, one cannot... understand anything other.. Such dialogic encounter of two cultures does not result in merging or mixing. Each retains its own unity, and open totality, but they are both enriched". M. Bakhtin, *Response to a question from Novy Mir Editorial Staff*, in Speech Genres and Other Essays, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1986.

entrapped by the spell of the nation and the state as the measure of all relations. We shall here assess the extent to which struggle is written into the structure of all discourse, and how political power can be re-claimed through cultural / cinematic expression. This is to point out that...

> ...if power is no longer thought simply as a negative and repressive force but as the condition of production of all speech, and if power is conceived as polar rather than monolithic, as an asymmetrical dispersion, then all utterances will be potentially splintered, formally open to contradictory uses. Utterance is in principle dialogic.[110]

We shall therefore complement Bakhtin's insights into the West as a trans-cultural, polyphonic and 'heteroglossic' conglomerate of voices, with a case-study in resistance. We shall see how resistance is a *use* of discourse, deeply located with power and amenable "to fracture the ideological from within and turn it against itself... or of reappropriating it for counter-hegemonic purposes".[111] Here we will follow the 'relations international' of African-Americans -- their location within post-colonial concepts of identity; their position within i.r. -- and comment upon our discipline's all-too hesitant scrutiny of the race (gender / class) agenda and impact thereof in how we think and live the international.

Again, the genealogy and evolution of this specific 'other within''s sense of self is most strikingly illuminated by its use of the cinematic medium. By analysing "the mode in which patterns of signification are incorporated within... *day to day practices*"[112] -- we hope to further suggest the depth of the correlation between representational and political power. The complexity of subject-positions available to subaltern groups is indeed most readily apparent in their films and the examples used in this chapter will certainly disturb i.r.'s traditionally hegemonic constructs of singular subjectivities. This cinema of identity will here again prove to foster a will to dialogue. More significantly, discussing identity from *within* the Western nation-state hopes to highlight the very contingent, transient and volatile character of allegiances -- the permanence of selection, contestation and re-formulation and the incoherence of a speech about 'self' and 'otherness' that would not acknowledge the inextricable interdependence of these concepts (pending on location, bodily imprints and access to representational technology).

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110. J. Frow, *Discourse and Power*, in M. Gane (ed.) , Ideological Representation in Social Relations, Routledge, New York, 1989, p.209.
111. *Ibid*, p.210.
112. A. Giddens, *Four Theses on Ideology*, Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory, Vol.7, No.1 and 2, p.18.

• Having travelled from West to East, from relations amongst nations to relations within their porous confines, we will not be able to evade the problematic concept of identity on the borderlands. Journeying back and forth -- from self to other and from other to otherness within the self -- will have enthralled us with the *quasi* impossibility to speak about 'identity' in the formal either/or rhetoric of international theory. Our last section, Chapter Five, will attempt to open a dialogical space within i.r. for the perennial travellers, the frontier-dwellers and trespassers (diasporic communities, refugees, post-national dispersal and discentralisation). Here they shall unwrap the lessons on identity their unstable, hybrid experience affords. This chapter will both be apprehended as a natural outgrowth of the preceding and a conclusion to the entirety of our thesis. Up against efforts to territorialise both subjects and disciplinary thinking we will sway over chains of cosmopolitan, sub-national identities that neither befit the nation-state nor the epistemic locus of the 'west' / 'east' pendulum. We will survey some amongst the many efforts to represent such identities based on longing, remembrance and shaped by the non-coincidental and uncertain search for points of origin and points of arrival.

These identities of the 'in-between' make up for the most challenging part of our thesis, as it investigates the changing role of the border in an era of global flux and technological pervasiveness. The cinematic discourses therein explored all deal with the problématique of multi-cultural lives in a *fin de siècle* incessantly dissolving the nation-state only to recreate it elsewhere. Whether diasporic identities will ever transcend and supplant the national self is a question this chapter will not attempt to answer in full. Yet by focusing on the imaginary lines which determine appurtenance and exclusion we hope to shed greater light on the need to dislodge i.r. from its corseted standpoints -- both within modernity and within a self-limiting post-positivisic stance. Finally, watching the paradoxical yarns of the migrant -- clinging with one hand to his/her epistemological difference and yet often refusing with the other to give in to national particularisms -- takes us back to the notion of 'international responsibility' earlier evoked and cementing our work.

In Campbell's words,

> ...only a critical attitude which enable flexible strategies which are governed neither by abstract universals [...] nor by purely *ad hoc* ones (and thus unaffected by the ethical imperative of responsibility), can hope to respond to our responsibility to the Other. [...] we cannot flee politics and do other than negotiate politically the double imperative of

critical interventions demanded by our radically interdependent condition.[113]

By introducing the possibility of understanding and regenerating i.r. through critical movie-watching, we hope to dote i.r. with a fresh and challenging sense of purpose -- as this is first and foremost an experimental attempt to reconcile the homecoming of a prodigal theory with its normative orientation. Most significantly it hopes to bring i.r. back to where it belongs : undivorced from the most human of day-to-day creations and interactions; committed to understand, explain and -- above all -- emancipate.

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113. D. Campbell, *Interdependence : a Rejoinder to Daniel Warner*, in <u>Millennium</u>, Vol.25, No.1, 1996, p.141.

Chapter Two

Representing the Other

she has this fear
that she is an image
that comes and goes
clearing and darkening
the fear that she's the dreamwork inside someone else's skull...

Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera*, 1987.

We must conceive discourse as a violence which we do to
things, or in any case as a practice which we impose on
them.[114]

By 'cultural violence' we mean those aspects of culture, the
symbolic sphere of our existence - exemplified by religion
and ideology, language and art... that can be used to justify
or legitimise direct or structural violence.[115]

This chapter could have borne many names. We could have christened it
'Orientalism' if this title were still significantly original -- but it no longer is. A stronger
image would have been conveyed by the appropriation of Ngugi wa Thiongo's
Decolonizing the Mind, since its primary aim will be to disclose the operation(s) of
power within the most familiar of all representational discourses, film. Yet, beyond
naming games, what follows is, as always, about the Self. The Self construed and
constructed through its representational practices of Otherness - and the 'anguished
questions of identity'[116] triggered by any shift in what Stuart Hall once coined
'dominant regimes of representation'.[117]

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114. M. Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. D.F. Bouchard, also quoted in M. Shapiro, Reading the Postmodern Polity. Minnesota UP, Mineapolis, 1992, p.159, footnote 4.
115. Galtung, J. *Cultural Violence*, in Journal of Peace Research. Vol. 27, No. 3, 1990, p.291.
116. R. Rosaldo, Culture and Truth. Beacon, Boston, 1989, p.ix.
117. S. Hall, *New Ethnicities*, ICA Document 7. London, 1988, p.27-31.

In Chapter One we have sought to evoke the philosophical and social scientific centrality of the concept of Self and establish a parallel between discourses of identity in i.r. and the development and appropriation of those technologies that best capture and distribute (or impose) images of the 'I' in its perennial exercise of legitimisation.

It might be useful to resume a theoretical synopsis of Greenblatt's 'mimetic capital', a concept our first chapter fleetingly mentioned and that will lie at the very basis of what follows. In *Marvellous Possessions*, Greenblatt links the assimilation of Otherness by the Self to : 1) the inescapable connection between mimesis and capitalism; 2) the sense that representations are stockpiled and continually recycled for the generation of new representations and 3) the awareness that mimesis, as Marx said of capital, is an inherently social relation of production.

> Any given representation is not only the reflection or product of social relations, but is in itself a social relation, linked to the group understandings of status hierarchies, resistances and conflicts that exist in other spheres of the culture in which it circulates. This means that representations are not only products but also producers, capable of decisively altering the very forces that brought them into being.[118]

As Greenblatt later rightly points out, there are dangers in privileging an analysis of the circulation of non-mimetic over mimetic capital. This would incorrectly draw a rift between production and reproduction, presentation and representation, reality and simulacrum. Of course it would be a theoretical mistake and a practical blunder to collapse the distinction between the real and the fictitious. However, as our venture will contend, an isolation of the one from the other -- especially for a discussion on the Other in international relations -- is not only untenable but undesirable.

As Chapter One suggested, i.r.'s third debate might be rewarded -- even if only in a modest way -- from the hindsight offered by an analysis of popular cinema as a textual playground for concepts of Self, power[119], order and difference. The relation of film and international politics is here, as before, everywhere conceived as a process of discursive transcoding. This is to stress the connection between the representational technologies operative in film and the representations which give structure and shape to social and indeed international life. We have established how representational practices

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118. S. Greenblatt, <u>Marvellous Possessions</u>, Chicago U.P., 1991, p.6 "in the modern world order it is with capitalism that the proliferation and circulation of representations -- and devices for the generation and transmission of representations --achieves a spectacular and virtually inescapable global magnitude" *Ibid.*
119. "a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political..., power intellectual..., power cultural... power moral", E.W. Said, <u>Orientalism.</u> Penguin, London, 1978, p12.

are always taken from a given culture and internalised, adopted as part of the Self. Cinema, as we will increasingly reveal, is a particularly crucial area of cultural representation for carrying out such political struggle -- i.e. over the production and circulation identity discourses -- in the contemporary era. The political stakes of film *qua* text are therefore undeniably very high. As part of a broader system of cultural signs, cinema operates to create psychological dispositions that result in a particular construction of social reality, a commonly held sense of what the world is and ought to be, a *Weltanschauung* that may ultimately sustain or disrupt social institutions.

The structuring task of any given ideology is hence complemented and 'energised' through film's visual rhetoric. Like mental representations in relation to the psyche, cinema can orient perceptions of identity and difference; channel behaviour towards the in-group and the Other; and when needed, offer a discourse that butresses official attempts to maintain order and legitimise policy. We recall Said's warning against simplisitic academic approaches to culture as exonerated from power games, or the contempt of those who view representational practices as merely mercantile and apolitical, and conceive the divorce of past and present as complete.[120] This chapter will further hope to demonstrate the worth of stressing the political relevance of what the French call *petites histoires*, the seemingly benign sphere of the anecdotal, the televisual and the cinematic pleasures of everyday life -- as an essentially subversive matrix on which the reading(s) of the Other are performed.

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Representing the Other is an artistic, social and ideological rite that is spun and webbed in the discourse of the Self -- and, like the discourse of the Self, it shares with its concept a story as ancient as the mural paintings of Lascaux. This chapter however, hopes to engage the field of international relations in new 'pedagogical' openings towards identity and its various political representations :

• Such 'pedagogy' of the image as text would focus in a first instance on the ways in which representations are constructed as a means of comprehending the past through the present in order to legitimate and secure a particular view of the future. **Part I, "From the Dome of the Rock to the Rim of the World - and back"**[121], is about the visual (de)formations of the Other -- from the Sixteenth Century traveller's etchings to the hegemonic discourses to be found in one of the most contested issues in

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120. E.W. Said, <u>Culture and Imperialism,</u> Vintage, London, 1993, p.67.
121. This title I borrow from Greenblatt, *op.cit.*, p.26.

international relations, the media's dissemination of information. Echoing Connolly, the first half of Part I will be devoted to an exploration of 'international relations' "compounded ... out of the intertext between the Old World and the New".[122] We will look at encounters with the Other at the wake of the Renaissance and the salient role of *writing* and especially of *wonder* in constructing and narrating the Strange. This will help orient our thoughts once again, as in Chapter One, on the primacy of vision in our interdisciplinary academic field. The second half of Part I will be devoted to the 'cannibalisation' of the Other in contemporary identity politics. How information -- and knowledge of the Other -- is channelled and controlled by the media will be discussed here, with special reference to coalition-building process on the onset of the extensively scrutinised Gulf War and analogies drawn to other conflict situations.

Demystifying the act and process of representing otherness by revealing how meanings are produced within relations of power -- in turn narrating identities through history, social forms and modes of ethical address that claim scientific objectivity and universal validation -- is a process this part will hope to have triggered. Much has already been written in this direction, yet what is often at stake in these works about the Other, is an exploration of the intersection and relationship between different identities, ethnicities and political experiences within a particular field of domination. What is generally overridden or simply ignored, is how these constructions of identity are taken up and engaged within particular histories, locations and zones of daily experience as both a pedagogical and political issue.

• **Part II, "Film and the international narrative of identity politics"**, will plunge into the private, familiar pleasures of the film industry. Needless to say, international relations scholars and practitioners inescapably inhabit a photocentric, aural and televisual culture in which the proliferation of photographic and electronically produced images and sounds serve actively to produce knowledge about and for identities within particular sets of ideological and social practices. A deconstruction of everyday 'fictitious' imagery will highlight the ways in which these inhabit and sustain institutional structures that may only really be analysed within circuits of power -- circuits that constitute what one may call a '*political* - and also *moral* - economy of representations'. The machinery within which this economy of the cinematic image is at work -- an historical outgrowth of mass-communication and information technologies -- is indeed inextricably linked to the emergence of corporate-controlled and knowledge-based societies. We will view half a dozen cinematic texts, mostly part of the 'mimetic capital' of the Western Self, mostly reminiscent of what will have been disclosed in Part

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122. W.E. Connolly, *Identity and Difference in Global Politics*, in Der Derian & Shapiro [eds.] International / Intertextual Relations : Postmodern Readings of World Politics. Lexington Books, MA., 1989, p.325.

I. One film, Souleymane Cissé's *Waati*, will carry the burden of the representing the Other from a different ideological angle, a visual response from the margins to the center of representational power.

• Representations in general, and cinematic texts in particular, are always produced within cutural limits and theoretical borders, and as such are necessarily implicated in particular economies of truth. Thus,

> to address the question of production relations [...] is endlessly to reopen the question : how is the real (or the social ideal of good representation) produced ? Rather than catering to it, striving to capture and discover its truth as a concealed or lost object, it is therefore important also to keep asking : how is truth being ruled ?[123]

'How truth is being ruled' is but one of the questions that we will pose at the end of both these parts. The final act -- **Part III, "Speaking for Others"** -- hopes to carry this questioning further, in wondering -- both in film and international relations' theory -- whether is it desirable to speak not only about but also *for* the Other ? An analysis of the popular entertainment film, *Dances with Wolves,* will re-introduce the *problématique* of understanding and 'speaking for' the different in i.r. Our central hypothesis will focus around the notions of contingency and universalist discourses in cinema (always replicated in a certain i.r. theory) -- and our conclusions open a space for an interpretative -- for hermeneutical -- analysis of the Other's texts to unfold in Chapter Three.

I - From the Dome of the Rock to the Rim of the World - and back.

> It is necessary to analyse the weapons of the conquest if we ever want to be able to stop it. For conquests do not only belong to the past.
> I do not believe that history obeys a system, nor that its so-called laws permit deducing future or even present forms of society; but rather that to become conscious of the relativity (hence of the arbitrariness) of any feature of our culture is already to shift a little, and that history (not the science but its object) is nothing other than a series of such imperceptible shifts.
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> - Todorov, *The Conquest of America.*[124]

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123. Trinh Minh-ha,*Documentary is not/a name*, October. 52. 1990, p.85.
124. T. Todorov, The Conquest of America : the Oustion of the Other. Harper & Row, N.Y, 1985, p254.

I - 1 - Marvellous Cannibals or the Genesis of International Relations.

a) I.R.'s mythology.

...Individuals and cultures tend to have fantastically powerful assimilative mechanisms that work like enzymes to change the composition of foreign bodies.

- Stephen Greenblatt.[125]

Scholars in foreign policy and conflict analysis will have no quibble with what follows. The discovery and representation of the Other - for as Marx claimed, "they cannot represent themselves, they must be represented"[126] - lie at the very root of our discipline's biography. Each age has witnessed ebbs and tides of Barbarians. Each real or imagined community has gathered at some stage or another around the story-teller, the draughtsman, the marvellous fables of the explorer who has ventured 'out there' and has returned 'home' -- the mimetic capital circulated and reproduced by the Self in an effort to capture and assimilate the Other. Tales and dragons are as much part of our mind's landscape as the power political games of those who govern us. Myths, as Marina Warner's 1994 Reith Lectures hinted, have always defined *our* enemies and aliens, telling us 'stories to impose structure and order'. *Like fiction they can tell the truth even while they are making it all up.*[127]

'Myth-construction' is part and parcel of every day life and arguably the most effective amongst coalition building tools in times of conflict. It is hence no accident that conflict analysis should be so cemented in the awareness that 'what is perceived to be real is real in its consequences'.[128] Inter-personal strife aside and within the realm of i.r., conflicts occur around the group-molecule : groups divided by discriminating boundaries, boundaries defined in terms of a shared ideology of social identity. Mufazer Sherif's studies in the field imply that the influence generated by group membership is deterministic. In his view, attitudes towards the Other are not instinctive but psychological : groups form due to "the necessity of participating together in toil towards common objectives".[129] Comparisons with 'non-Xs' ensure that differences with them are enhanced and underplayed amongst insiders. For all its worth, however,

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125. Greenblatt, *op.cit.*, p.4.
126. Quoted by Said, (1978), epigraph.
127. M. Warner, Managing Monsters. Six Myths of our Time, 1994 Reith Lectures, Vintage, London, 1994, p.19.
128. Quote from W. I. Thomas. See also the writings of Mead, Goofman and especially R. Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics, Princeton University Press, 1976. Or his *Hypotheses on Misperception,* in World Politics, XX (3) 1968.
129. M.Sherif, Group Conflict and Co-operation, Routledge, London, 1970, p.2

Sherif's analysis fails short in explaining why groups so readily follow irrational goals and what motivates an individual to become part of a group in the first place.

Chris Mitchell suggests that it is the generalised tendency to avoid stressful influences (frustration, uncertainty / ambiguity) that leads individuals to attempt to achieve a 'balance' through the implementation of protective and idiosyncratic psychological processes.[130] Mitchell defined these processes as 'selective perception', 'selective recall' and 'group identification' -- clustered under the all-encompassing heading 'cognitive consistency'. The conjuncture of 'selective recall' and 'selective perception' produce a consciously limited perception of the Other. A group does not necessarily find its *raison d'être* before directly or indirectly affected by conflict. Rather the combination of frustration and anxiety unfailingly leads to the development of a protective 'us' in the face of an hostile 'them'. 'We' -- needless to mention -- are the best. The group's interests are consequentially elevated to the supreme good of a particular set of individuals.

The minimal intergroup experiments carried out by Billing and Tajfel[131] also enforce the theory of social comparison. They point to the primacy of social -- rather than physical -- standards favoured by the human species and hence suggest that the formation of social identity is an ideological process produced by group interaction. 'Objectivity' cannot be based on classifying phenomena as either social or non-social but in terms of the awareness of alternatives to the judgement one is making. Hence, "in-group favouritism is a *means* for the subjects to achieve positively valued group distinctiveness, rather than being a *product* of such a distinctiveness".[132] By implication, social categories are not necessarily 'real' : powerful groups can have a certain degree of control over the perception of an inferior group and create / maintain 'false consciousness'. Inventing tradition is one manifestation of the creation of social cohesion -- socialising and incalculating beliefs. The circulation or manipulation of mimetic capital is an equally efficient outgrowth of this procedural identity framework.

In practice, fabricated identity -- nationalism, ethnic hatred, transnational terrorism and the chronicles of territorial conquest and war -- perpetually wallow amongst breeds of monsters "which can turn a life-long neighbour into an hostile overnight, a casual community into an embattled tribe, and locate cannibals in the back garden and chimeras under the bed".[133] The boogie-man never fails to creep up over

130. C. Mitchell, The Structure of International Conflict, Macmillan, London, 1989, p.71-98.
131. M. Billing, Social Psychology and Intergroup Relations, Academic Press, London, 1976. And H.Tajfel. [ed], Differentiation between Social Groups, Academic Press, London, 1978.
132. Billing, *op.cit.*, p.352.
133. Warner, *op.cit.*, p.86.

the cradle of fledging nation-states, and the West, secure as it may be in its hegemonic status -- "apparent marker and custodian of history in both geopolitical and scriptural terms"[134] -- needs the Other to mirror back its deforming gaze. The invention of Otherness is both the founding stone of national culture, the root of its uncertainty and the only viable answer to its quest for legitimisation. Connolly writes :

> The ontology each accepts is a precondition to the credibility of freedom and realisation. But ... each advances a theory of freedom which supports suppression and subjugation in the name of the realisation for the self and the community. Because each ideal projects the possibility of drawing all otherness into the whole it endorses, any otherness which persists will be interpreted as irrationality, irresponsibility, incapacity or perversity. It can never be acknowledged as that which is produced by the order it unsettles.[135]

The most pertinent approach for investigating the Self caught in the act of representing the Other best turns to political history : indeed, as T.S. Eliot remarked, "the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of past, but of its presence".[136] Yet such excavation of the past confronts a literature on the encounter with the Other that seems endless. The act of selecting a site of encounter, the shores of the New World; a moment in History -- the decades that followed Cristóbal Colón's marvellous 'discovery' -- and the unity of one political action -- the pictorial and scriptural representation of the strange -- will hereunder be used as a methodological strategy that hopes to shed some preliminary light on the parallel trajectory of international relations and film into our intertextual *fin de siècle*.

b) The Self as "signifier" : decoding the signified New World.

I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth, and when I saw one particularly inviting on a map (but they all look that) I would put my finger on it and say, When I grow up I will go there.

- Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness.*

The people Columbus observes before him...have almost no opacity. What he sees when he reads the signs and looks off towards China, is himself.

- Stephen Greenblatt.[137]

Rather than 1648, the much fêted birth-date of the (universalised) modern nation-state at Westphalia -- or indeed any other 'significant' year in the rich calendar

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134. I. Chambers, Migrancy, Culture, Identity. Routledge, London, 1994, p.125.
135. W.E.Conolly, Political Theory and Modernity. Blackwell, Oxford, 1989, p.132.
136. quoted in Said,[1993], *op.cit.*, p.2.
137. Greenblatt, *op.cit.*, p.24.

of i.r. -- *1492* seems to best symbolise the moment of gestation of our discipline as we have come to study it. 1492 is the year that witnessed the eviction and diaspora of the West's perennial internal Others : the fall of Granada -- the last Moorish bastion in Europe -- and the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. That year was also chosen by Columbus to search for gold in China -- but above all to spread "our Lord's Gospel throughout the universe"[138] using the Western route -- a route that could well have led straight into the Abyss. Instead, he hit the shores of a *Terra Incognita* -- *Incognita* to the Self of Europe -- and the enigma of the West's external Other was about to unfold.

Tzvetan Todorov's *Conquest of America* ranks amongst the first study of such confrontation in its attempt to problematize the conventional notion of 'discovery' and shift attention to a representational practice of Spanish imperialism.[139] This text raises the polemical question of how difference is *produced* within economies of imperial power. "Did the Spaniards defeat the Indians by means of signs ?", the author asks.[140] Most European Renaissance writers, as well as Todorov, seem indeed to support that hypothesis. Signs did not shoot the Other, but they constructed the view of victory in a manner which, once imposed on the defeated and later exported 'back home', largely contributed to the inforcement of the self/other polarisation. As pointed out by Mariana, the Aztecs "lacked the use of letters, a notable deficiency"[141] and this lack subsequently exemplified a particular barbarism in the European *episteme* of cultural difference. As Root points out, "the textual construction of pre-Colombian cultures in terms of absence ... marked the radical 'Otherness' of these societies for Europeans."[142]

From the *a priori* evaluation of the "Indians" as lacking the manipulative use of signs, follows a 'metatypology' of binary oppositions that distance symbolically in Todorov's logic the conqueror from the conquered, the representator from the represented. The "Indian" Other lacks not only writing, but is earmarked by an absence of dissimulation, of perspective (in painterly representation), of improvisation, of the ability to "understand and recognise the difference of the Other".[143] Todorov believes that it is by means of exclusively phonetic writing that symbolic distance is created between the imperial Self and the Other, in turn producing the "individual" capable of recognising the difference :

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138. Todorov, *op.cit.*, p.10.
139. J. George, Discourses of Global Politics - A Critical Re-introduction to International Relations. Lynne Riener, Boulder, CO, 1994.
140. Todorov, *op.cit.*, p.62.
141. J. de Mariana in B.Keen, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, N.J, 1971, quoted in D. Root, "The Imperial Signifier", Cultural Critique, Spring 1988, p.197.
142. *Ibid*, p.198.
143. *Ibid*, p.207.

> ... I have been led to observe an evolution in the
> 'technology' of symbolism; this evolution can be reduced,
> for simplicity's sake, to the advent of writing. Now the
> presence of writing favours improvisation over ritual, just as
> it makes for a linear conception of time, or, further, the
> perception of the other.[144]

Such observation led to the construction of the Europeans and the "Indians" as 'signifier' and 'signified' in a same 'international text'. Thus, Todorov's delineation of the absence in "Indian" society of 'democracy', 'free will', and the most cherished of all Western values, 'individuality' all denote an absence of the capacity to signify -- as exemplified by the "lack of letters". Todorov fails, however, to demonstrate how this 'individual' is produced through the act of writing rather than by a pictographic system of representation.[145]

It is interesting at this point to note and stress that both Aztecs and Spaniards shared certain institutional practices and a parallel history of imperial conquest. The Aztecs, like the armadas that followed Columbus' so-called messianic mission, deployed a regime of violence and of signification in which the act of pictographic and ideographic writing performed specific functions within the economy of imperial power. Deleuze and Gattari's *Anti-Oedipus* offers some illuminating remarks on that corollary -- i.e. between systems of writings and systems of political power. The authors therein explicitly link the origin of imperialism and despotic governments to the origin of all "writing in the narrow sense" (ideographic as well as phonetic). Both the Spanish and Aztec systems could fit their demonstration :

> It is the despot who establishes the practice of writing ...; it
> is the imperial formation that makes graphism into a system
> of writing in the proper sense of the term. Legislation,
> bureaucracy, accounting, the collection of taxes, the State
> monopoly, imperial justice, the functionary's activity,
> historiography : everything is written in the despot's
> procession.[146]

What the Aztecs did lack -- according to most analysts, Todorov included -- was *manipulative power in the present* : the means to 'capture' and translate the defeated in

144. Todorov, *op.cit.*, p.252.
145. As Greg Dening rightly observed in his "Possessing Tahiti" [in Archeologia Oceania 21, 1986, p.117] : "Possessing Tahiti was a complicated affair. Indeed, who possessed whom ? Native and stranger each possessed the Other in their interpretation of the Other. They possessed one another in an ethnographic moment that got transcribed into text and symbol. They each archived that text and symbol in their respective cultural institutions. [...] They entertained themselves with their histories of their encounter. Because each reading of the text, each display of the symbol, each entertainment in the histories, each viewing [...] enlarged the original encounter, made a process of it, each possessing the Other became a Self-possession as well. Possessing the Other, like possessing the past, is always full of delusions".
146. Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus : Capitalism and Schizophrenia, Viking Press, N.Y., 1977, p.202.

its immediacy. There is a noticeable tendency here to fetishise *our* concepts of signs and there are arguably many problems with such approach, since -- and although communication was a crucial determinant in the conquest -- the possession of 'manipulative power' through the mere use of a different system of representation, offers too thin an explanation for the access of either culture to the 'inherent truth' of the Other. A more poetic -- yet possibly more fruitful explanation to this appropriation -- may stem from an unequal experience and manipulative usage of wonder and the deployment of imagination over reason in the depiction of Otherness.

c) **Wonder and Appropriation.**

Greenblatt's *Marvellous Possessions* offers a model of appropriation of the Other, that, too, is based on the importance of representational acts and the use of symbolic technology in the possession ritual. Columbus, Cortes, De Vaca, Sepúlveda and those who would venture in their steps, seem to have all shared a complex, well developed, and above all *mobile* technological power.[147] For Greenblatt it was the *technology* of mimetic capital deployed by the Europeans -- rather than their writing system alone -- that mooted their victory. European culture was already then "characterised by immense confidence in its own centrality, by a political organisation based on practices of command and submission [...] and by a religious ideology centred on the endlessly proliferated representation of a tortured and murdered god of love".[148]

The conviction of detaining an absolute and exclusive religious *truth* -- added to the narcissism that sustained such claims to universalism -- was thus further intensified by the possession of a technology of preservation and reproduction that allowed not reason alone, but imagination -- and *wonder* -- to generate further appropriation of the Other and legitimisation. Greenblatt's emphasis on the effect of *wonder* deserves lengthy quotation :

> Wonder ... is the quintessential human response to what Descartes calls a 'first encounter'. [...] By definition wonder is an instinctive recognition of difference, the sign of a ... 'sudden surprise of the soul' in the face of the new. The expression of wonder stands for all that cannot be understood. [...] (T)he ease with which the words *marvel* or *wonder* shift between the designation of a material object and the designation of a response to an object, between intense, almost phantasmagorical inward states and thoroughly externalised objects that can, after the initial moments of astonishment have passed, be touched, catalogued, inventoried, possessed.

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147. Greeblatt, *op.cit.*, p.9.
148. *Ibid,* p.9-10.

> The marvellous is a central feature then in the whole complex system
> of representation, verbal and visual, philosophical and aesthetic,
> intellectual and emotional, through which the people of the late
> Middle Ages and the Renaissance apprehended, and thence
> possessed and discarded, the unfamiliar, the alien, the terrible, the
> desirable, and the hateful.[149]

The experience of 'wonder' in the face of what Connolly coins 'the enigma of otherness' is what integrated and integrates Western[150] mimetic practices and political rhetoric about the Other. There were undeniably rifts in discourse and procedural boundaries that differentiated one textual regime from another or one European nation's way of perceiving the Other of its neighbour's. Yet shared assumptions and techniques, and the mediating agency of a powerful mimetic machinery tightly disclosed a unity in discursive practices.

"The early discourse of the New World is, amongst other things, a record of the colonising of the marvellous"[151] -- in which the marvel poignantly fills up the emptiness left by the maimed act of possessing the Other.

For practitioners and witnesses such as Cortés and Bernal Díaz, wonder and the representational discourse that it engendered, thus became strategic agents of war. On the one hand it could effectively disclose the similitudes between Self and Other. Indeed, the Other, seemingly human, could be christened, just as the *Terrae Incognitae* had been so easily re-named. The Other's Self was conceited, pagan, shallow. Like Augustine before him, Columbus "required *this* perception of the Other to enable the creation of the Christian Self".[152] The Infidels, the Cannibals, the Primitives, could communicate -- even if mutual understanding was difficult. Columbus thus writes in his diaries : "they did not understand me nor I them. Nevertheless I gathered that they told me that if something from this place pleased me that the whole island was at my command".[153] The Other, in fine, need not be understood -- he is an 'empty sign', a blank that needs 'filling in'. On the other hand, wonder could be used as a powerful 'blocking' rhetoric -- a tactic inescapably hindering the process of representing the

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149. *Ibid*, p.22-3.
150. Though I am aware that the all-encompassing term 'Western' is polemical, I take full responsibility for its use in the context of this chapter. I thereby follow Greenblatt [p.8] "[Western] mimetic capital, though diverse and internally competitive, easily crossed the boundaries of nations and creed, and it is therefore a mistake to accord these boundaries an absolute respect." Of course later in this discussion, there are internal rifts to be percceived, especially regarding the GATT episode. However, in the specific context of representation of the Other , i.e. the struggle over who determines the representation as well as access to the rights of representation, is one in which the "West" has been internally integrated for some five hundred years. The rifts and fissures emerging within this structure will constitute the flesh of Chapter Four.
151. Greenblatt, *ibid*, p.80.
152. Connolly, [1989]*op.cit*, p.324, italics mine.
153. The Diaró of Christopher Columbus's First Voyages to America 1492-1493, transl. by O.Dunn and J. Kelley Jr., Uni of Oklahoma Press, 1989, pp. 243-45.

Other as the Self. In this way, the Self of the conqueror could at ease protect and refine its "own cultural identity by concealing the enigma he had begun to encounter".[154] The European that had 'discovered' the Promised Land, became the universal 'we', able to grant or withdraw history from the 'others', *the pervasive 'I' that speaks in knowledge and science, never the object, the 'they' of these discourses* .[155]

The colonisation of the earth and mind began thus : propelled by the sense of wonder experienced on the rim of the world. Said, in his own study of the East as Other, refers to the similitude of this 'internally structured archive' -- the mimetic capital of the Self -- its discursive consistency as it generates typical encapsulations of the non-Self.[156] Wonder and its technologies of representation -- blurring the fine line distancing 'reason' from 'imagination', lie at the very root of every imperial practices -- and cement the basis of most international relations texts that, too, claim scientific universalism.

This fashioning of the modern *episteme* -- positing a value-free discourse in social sciences -- indeed echoes the long trodden history of identity formation as much as the construction, enunciation and interpretation rituals that ensued. A representation of the Other based on a mimetic capital spun by wonder could not be sustained without the reassurance of the witness, the indispensable 'eye' of the Self as a guarantor of objective, incontestable 'truth'. Our next section will explore Mary Louise Pratt's observation that :

> ... discovery... consisted of a gesture of converting local knowledges (discourses) into European national and continental knowledges associated with European forms and relations of power. [...] In the end, the act of discovery itself, for which all the untold lives were sacrified and miseries endured, consisted of what in European culture counts as a purely passive experience -- that of seeing.[157]

I - 2 - The Might of the Cyclope.

The question is no longer who is to guard the guardians, but who is to tell the story ? Who is to bear witness ? [158]

The primacy of the eye in the construction of identity / difference in i.r., has been explicitly highlighted in Chapter One -- with the first great Western representation

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154. Connolly, [1989], *op.cit.*, p.324.
155. Chambers, *opcit.*, p126.
156. Said, [1978], *op.cit.*, p.58.
157. M.L. Pratt, Imperial Eyes. Travel writing and Transculturation. Routledge, London, 1992, pp.202-4.
158. Warner, *op.cit.*, p.86.

of Otherness retraced to Herodotus' *Histories*. There we already dwelt upon the salience sight assumed for the Greek traveller -- and it would be redundant to reiterate Herodotus' obssessive concern with what he claimed to have *seen, witnessed* -- his insistence on the conjuncture bewteen what can be seen of the Different and what one can understand -- for, he believed, the eye cannot lie.

The representation of the Other, the possession of its 'truth', the power derived from its knowledge -- continue to rest on the act of witnessing.

Shakespeare's *Tempest* catches Trinculo daydreaming about bringing Caliban, the 'savage', back home : "Holiday fools... when they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian".[159] Money indeed well spent for the wonderful visual contact with a fragment of difference. The 'Indian' can be seen -- yet this sliver of the Other's world is never accessible to direct apprehension, never exempt from all mediating conceptions by which the viewer assimilates exotic representations to his / her own culture. Agents in- as well as obstacles to- any attempt to secure knowledge of the Other, these conceptions are ironically firmly bound to the primal act of 'seeing' -- revealer of truth. According to Walter J. Ong, our technological culture "addicted to visualism" -- with ocular vision regarded as "an analogue for intellectual knowledge".[160] The analogue is however profoundly flawed. Ong quoting Bernard Lonergan :

> Now if human knowing is to be conceived exclusively, by epistemological necessity, as similar to ocular vision, it follows as a first consequence that human understanding must be excluded from human knowledge. For understanding is not like seeing. Understanding grows with time [...] A further consequence of conceiving knowing on the analogy of the popular notion of vision, is the exclusion of the conscious subject. Objects are paraded before spectators, and if the spectator wants to know himself, he must get out of the parade and looked at. There are no subjects anywhere; for being a subject in not being something that is being looked at, it is being the one who is looking.[161]

As before what remains suppressed in such truth-sight correspondence is the fact that interpretations of the Other, even if 'directly witnessed', are produced in cultural, historical and personal contexts, contextually shaped by the witness' values. A stubborn conviction that seeing and capturing the object of our gaze may be trusted as

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159. W. Shakespeare, The Tempest, Act II, sc. 2.
160. W.J.Ong, Interfaces of the Word, Ithaca, Cornell U.P, 1977, p. 126
161. *Ibid*, pp.121-2.

the most meaningful mediation between the Self and the Other nontheless pertained : Herodotus is, after all, the father of History.

Later explorations might have proven that his representation of the nomadic Scythian never escaped the ideological grip of his own ethnocentricism, that the structural parallel he hoped to create between Athens and the Barbarians distorted his theoretical and essentially political reflections on human life 'beyond the borders' -- yet the herd of disciples he left to prosperity -- heralding their own sets of anamorphic illustrations of the virtues of mimetic circulation -- "a rapid movement between two apparently opposed systematic cultural constructs of reality"[162] -- are proof that even the most blatant of lies may cast spells beyond the ages.

> The effect of the circulation is to create a legitimating place for the historian [or indeed the political] eye in the zone of *aporia* , of absence, to suggest that the historian's apparently aimless wandering is strategic, to celebrate the historian' s blend of ideological engagement and elusiveness.

Bernal Díaz has served this very function throughout Cortés's campaign against the Aztecs. *"Como buen testigo de vista"* -- as 'a fair eyewitness' -- Díaz's representations, like Herodotus' *Histories,* all have claimed a quasi-*photographic* credibility in the direct encounter with the Other .[163] The eye witness indeed directly possesses the truth and can simply present it whereas "he who has not seen for himself must persuade".[164] And yet, as with Herodotus, the wonder Díaz experienced in the face of the unknown, the wonder indeed inherent to all such encounters, is also an experience of the failure of vision. Only the romance gestures towards the Other, for the act of seeing and re-transcribing what has been seen, never brings the assurance that the object of sight actually exists in these terms.

In times of conquest / conflict, the recollection of *violence* -- i.e. the emotion of horrified wonder -- most effectively rips the complex and ambiguous mimetic knot linking the witness to the world s/he transcribes, i.e the "Xs" away from the "non-Xs". The process of inevitable alienation starts there. The Other is radicalised, cannibalised, demonised -- exemplified by the channels of the international press, where so-called 'impartiality' always -- and strategically -- intertwines with eye-witness accounts of the horrors perpetuated by the crew of butchers dwelling and cutting 'on the Other side'. We have travelled a long way since Heredotus or Díaz : the written word in the 'West'

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162. Greenblatt, *op.cit.*, p127.
163. Bernal Díaz de Castillo, *The True History of the Conquest of New Spain,* ed Genaro Garcia, 5 Volumes, London Hakluyut Society, 1908 i, 3.
164. Greenblatt, *op.cit.,*p129.

has become more ubiquitous than ever, and more than ever, a formidable tool in the hands of its jealous beholder.

Yet it is ironic that despite the Word's remarkable power of persuasion, the turn of the Millennium has produced another race of disbelievers : the Word gains its credibility only when conjugated with the *Image. We too* must see in order to believe; the eye-witness account no longer quenches our thirst of the Other. No surprise that the technology of sight has now saliently matched -- and in many ways efficiently superceded the written -- in its political task as the maker and unmaker of identities. Our next part will focus on the significance of a critical i.r scholarship that recognises and intergrates the discourse of video-texts in its accounts of the Different.

I - 3 - Myth Information : of the marvellous use of videos in demonizing the Other.

[A] society that actively uses representations of war as a means of unifying the body politic in an imaginary fashion needs an eleborate network of signs representing Oneness and Otherness -- including a sophisticated economy distributing these signs and institutionalized practices that guarantee a rapturous public consumption of such signs.[...] [R]epresentations of war are an integral part of an economy of signs that engineer the fortification of the national body as 'Oneness' on the basis of excluding or marginalising alien elements as 'Otherness'.[165]

Since centering, demarcating and ordering are acts that are possible only by comparison with others and by a calculation or an account of differences, otherness never leaves the hegemonic order.[166]

a) The economics of representation.

Though this thesis is not the place to discuss the global commodification of 'hegemonic' (i.e. Western) culture, it is essential not to dismiss the connection between the economics of the culture industry and the ideologies of representation. It makes therefore sense at this point to reiterate, even if only superficially, the nexus established between technologies of information and the appropriation of the Other through these technologies. If the image and the eye-witness-account do play such a crucial function in defining the relation between 'us' and them', in international relations it indeed becomes of particular practical interest to establish a link between the conduct of foreign policy and the Chomskian 'manufacturing of consent' that the mass-media provides.

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165. J. and L. Schulte-Sassa, *War, Otherness and Illusionary Identification with the State*, in <u>Cultural Critique : The Economies of War,</u> Fall 1991, p.72.
166. M. Mutman, *Under the Sign of Orientalism*, in <u>Cultural Critique,</u> Winter 1992-3, p.177.

Though each identity possesses its own discourse of the 'Other', there is today -- as was at the time of the Aztec and Iberic imperial systems -- an unquestionable battle waged over systems of signification. The phonetic writing system has now ironically been outdated by the ideographic, yet the victors 'by means of signs' remain the same. Those who have mastered the techniques of visual communication jealously hold the tap of the information network. There is -- more than ever -- a contemporary manifestation of the broad equation : information is knowledge is power. Power over representation = power over the Other. As underlined by Susan Strange in *States and Markets*. :

> Knowledge has become more important in the competition between states than either crude manpower or crude gunpower. The superpowers, significantly were the first to launch earth-orbiting satellites. They were also the first to develop high-powered computers [...] The results of technical change have been to make both men and machines less important in military strategy than information and information systems...[167]

The development of, and control over the media network has thus become the "means both to military superiority and to economic prosperity, invulnerability and dominance".[168]

In 1978, UNESCO set up the MacBride Commission to investigate the implications of the "New International Information Order". Its aim was the establishment of an international code of conduct governing the transfer of technology which would correspond more to the needs of developing societies. Though the way in which the natural bias of informations acted towards the distortion of cultures and loss of ethnic identity was never made clear, some of the conclusions the Report reached are very much those the present discussion would like to suggest : that "sovereignty, identity and independence result not only from formal political decisions but are also, and perhaps even more, contingent upon the conditions of cultural and economic life... upon circumstances which affect... the overall development of each and every nation".[169] Over 60% of book publishers, newspaper editors and journalistic training is 'owned' by Western - or specifically American companies in Latin America and Africa.[170] In Asia, the impact of Western TV satellite dominion is still unclear, yet one wonders what space is left for an autochtonous, regional, information system to develop with global impact : Who, indeed, could "cover Asia better than those who cover the World ?" asks CNN a dozen times a day...

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167. S. Strange, States and Markets, Blackwell, N.Y. 1988, p.130
168. *Ibid.* p.132
169. Quoted in A. Smith, The Geopolitics of Information. London, 1980, p.174.
170. Figures from Manière de Voir. No.19.

State-asymmetry increases between those who have 'it' and those whose access to it can be denied. Representational power gained over the 'Other' is increasingly "passing to the 'information-rich' instead of the 'capital rich'".[171] The fact that English has become the new *lingua franca* highlights that the flow of information in what Strange coins the 'knowledge structure' is almost entirely one way - even if 'both sides' are seemingly communicating. Anthony Smith points out that :

> it did not occur to many people until the last decade or so that information lay at the root of sovereignty and that the movement for independence would have to continue beyond the political stage into the economic and informational struggles of equal intensity to those which had led to the first stages of the post-colonial era.[172]

This all leads to a re-questioning of the definition of 'knowledge' of the Self and Other. It has been suggested that knowledge shapes the values and beliefs of those who acquire it and/or fight over its access. And indeed it is the conquest of knowledge that has propelled the wheels of 'our' History forward and paved the path to the much adulated notion of 'modernity'. If knowledge is today so much believed to be granted through information channels -- and the visual in particular -- then the next logical question to ask is *whose* information ? Or, as Herodotus muses, "who is to be witness" ?

The phrase "free flow of information" (an uncontrollable avalanche at the receiving end) needless to say is pure chimera. For decades it underpinned the work of UNESCO - itself inadvertently contributing to the idea that information dependence on the 'Western' Self was the route, the only route, to independence and modernity. As Urho Kekkonen, former President of Finland observed in 1973 :

> More and more it can be seen that a mere liberalistic freedom of communication is not in everyday reality a neutral idea, but a way in which an entreprise with many resources at its disposition has greater opportunities than weaker brethren to make its hegemony accepted.[173]

The flow of media exports acts as a kind of ideological prerequisite for the flow of material exports.[174] The ownership and distribution of media images thus replicates and nurtures the commodity fetishism at the base of capitalist ideologies over the Other.

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171. Strange, *op.cit.*, p133
172. Smith, *op.cit.*, p.58.
173. Quoted in R. Armes, Third World Film Making and the West, Berkeley, 1987, p.47.
174. Smith, *op. cit.*, p.43.

As for Said there is little doubt, "we live today in a period of American ascendancy"[175]...

> The twinning of power and legitimacy, one force obtaining
> in the world of direct domination, the other in the cultural
> sphere, is a characteristic of classical imperial hegemony.
> Where it differs in the American century is the quantum leap
> in the reach of cultural authority, thanks in large measure to
> the unprecedented growth in the apparatus for the diffusion
> and control of information.[176]

This postmodern form of imperialism relies as heavily as before on the 'wonder' of the Other -- an Other located somewhere in the spectrum of a real or imagined 'threat agenda'[177] -- to construe its discourse of Self. Whenever order is in danger of being disturbed, the mechanical-eye / I of the televisual and cinematic apparatuses, taken in their most inclusive sense, records the threatening Different, projecting it accross the globe and fixes those in possession of audiovisual mastery in their subject position. Features of European colonialism are thus inevitably perpetuated, as "the ubiquity of these images produces "us" as subjects, transforming us into armchair conquistadores, affirming our sense of power while making the inhabitants of the Third World objects of spectacle for the First World's voyeuristic gaze".[178]

b) Electronic Orientalisms.

Those who claim that the subject of 'technology as ideology' is exhausted and no longer one to attract i.r. theory's attention, should perhaps have cabled into CNN on July 28th 1995, at 1730 GMT. The digitilised, computerised images of the Zepa and Bihac enclaves, the simulation effect of a virtual flight over -- and a Nintendo-type 'surgical strike' of -- the 'enemies' bases, acted as a powerful reminder of the technological capabilities of "those who best cover the world". Five years after the Gulf, as new Others have emerged within range of the threat agenda, the same old mimetic capital is taken out of storage and re-displayed. This mediatised manipulation of the Other-image in times of conflict is not novel, and yet its increasing usage in official media coverage and the perfection of propaganda technology through the channels of 'real' images, cannot be overlooked in our discussion of representational practices in i.r..[179]

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175. Said, [1993] *op.cit.*, p.344.
176. *Ibid*, p.352.
177. George, *op.cit.* p.239.
178. Stam and Spence, *Colonialism, Racism and Representation* in <u>Screen Education,</u> Vol. 24, # 2, March - April 1983, p.4.
179. For a good introductory analysis of this iconographic manipulation, see R. Ottosen's analysis of *Enemy Images and the Journalistic Process* in the <u>Journal for Peace Research,</u> vol. 32, # 1, 1995, p.97-112.

During the Gulf War episode -- and this has been discussed in our first chapter -- image and reality, information and knowlege, were all brought into the same discourse of power and control over the Other. An entire cultural rhetoric, based on an intricate and sophisticated use of stereotypes and video-montages helped achieve political cohesion and persuasion as never before. As anticipated by Said's *Orientalism*, our electronic world has but standardised and intensified the hold of the Nineteenth Century imaginative demonology of the 'mysterious Orient' . In *Covering Islam* the same author discusses how Western news reports have sensationalized and distorted events in the Islamic World.

> The activities of 'covering' and 'covering up' Islam have almost eliminated consideration of the predicament of which they are symptoms : the general problem of knowing and living in a world that has become far too complex and various for easy and instant generalisations.[180]

He further conceptualises the interrelations between the American Self and the Orientalised Other as a 'double bind'. The immense image-making capability of the American media makes this particular Self see Islam only reductively, coercively, and oppositionally : as an atavism, a threat to democracy, a return to the darkness of the Middle-Ages. In turn, in Muslim eyes, Islam becomes a "reactive counter-response to this first image of Islam as a threat". Said contends that "all these relative, reductive meanings of Islam depend on one another and are equally to be rejected for perpetuating the double bind".[181]

Theories over the construction and de-construction of enemy-images hold an ancient grip in i.r. literature. Succintly we may point to Heinrich Böll articulation of two essential meanings underlying the concept[182]: 1) characteristics presumed to define a nation (e. g. "Russian") or as Böll insists, 2) the set of 'images' these assumptions of a group or nation's characteristsics evoke. Here he means literally the pictures, photos, film images, caricatures or verbal metaphors..., the culturally anchored repertory of *collective symbols* -- Greenblatt's mimetic capital, again -- that the politician, the decision maker, and/or the media exploits in order to manipulate consent, cohere and solidify its constituencies. These images are inextricably dependent on the binarisms inherent in the larger system; i.e. on schematically divided dualistic structures -- black / white, friend / foe. During periods of crises, like the onset of war, these symbolic codes of representation are the first to be strategically exploited, deployed in full into the

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180. E.W. Said, Covering Islam, Pantheon Books, N.Y., 1981, p.xii.
181. *Ibid*, pp.51-52, also quoted by M.Mutman, *op.cit.*,p.184.
182. H. Böll, *Feindbild und Frieden* , Seminar Conference for the Karl Remmer Institut, Vienna, 1982.

people's living rooms. In the wake of the Gulf War images of gassed Kurdish children were taken out of the mimetic archives of silenced images -- shot at times when Saddam Hussein was still a 'friend' of the Western Self. Many such silenced images remain under cover, those of the victims of Suharto in East Timor, of Pinochet in Chile... Their strategic concealment or dissemination hence participates crucially in the dynamics of i.r. as they create spaces or erect walls between in- and out-groups.

The war-narrative that was spun by American mass-media as early as August 2nd 1990 consistently sought to deliver images in which mirror the public imagination could progressively constitute itself as a unitary body politic. The demonisation of Saddam Hussein was fermented by his persistent likening to Hitler -- whilst ironically the iconography used in this process likened him in significant ways to Hitler's Other, the infamous anti-Semitic film poster-image of *Jud Suss*. It is indeed interesting to remark, as Jochen and Linda Schulte-Sasse did, that "while the 'new world order' is dependent on finding new bodies that may serve as Others, it takes advantage of long-established images to sustain its strategies of exclusion".[183] On the level of visual semiotics old and new images may indeed perfectly complement each-other, as in the case of using coded 'Semitic' features to depict the Other (an easy recycling from the racist preconceptions of the 'Jew' as manipulator, ritual killer and cannibal to the 'Arab' as oilmonger, insane terrorist fanatic, rapist (of a feminised Kuwait) and pedophiliac (patting on child-hostages' heads) -- both as power-hungry schemers). Most videos sold to the public during and after Operation Desert Storm laid a particular emphasis on the gaze of a fanaticised / Orientalised Hussein -- as with the closed up face in Jud Suss' poster -- this gaze effectively created the illusion of a personnal threat to the spectator thereby acting as a subjective war preparation tactic whilst systematically -- and paradoxiaclly -- denying subject-status to the 'enemy'. The 'Middle-Eastern Other' was indeed consistently coded as representing chaos, "located outside the boundaries of a system centred in reason".[184]

As Otis Pike remarked in the February 17th 1991 editorial of the *Star Tribune* the mass of Others was systematically objectified by the Self's narrative.

> For four weeks, the war had been presented by military briefers in antiseptic minutiae, as if war were a laboratory experiment imposing agony on nothing but rats... No figures at all were given or even estimated for Iraqi military or civilian deaths. They were the rats.[185]

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183. J. and L. Schulte-Sasse, *op.cit.*, p.85.
184. *Ibid.*, p.89.
185. Quoted in *Ibib.*

This echoes Adorno : "Men are reduced to walk-on parts in a monster documentary film".[186] These procedures of dehumanisation function as what Slavoj Zizek called 'social fantasies', i.e. a result of ideological displacements and condensations of the symbolic order's impossibility to offer coherent explanations of the world.[187] Coherence and a sense of identity thus fundamentally rely on the active representation of 'social fantasies' -- what Walter Benjamin called the 'dialectical image', an ambiguous set of imagery collapsing desire and reality, past and present -- that help obscure and transcend the complexities of a conflict or a foreign-policy decision into a comprehensible, legitimate process.

The endless proliferation of video-images of 'we, the goodies' vs. 'the enemy' that saturated the coverage of the Gulf War is only amongst the most obvious demonstration of the use of representational practices in the *praxis* of (post-)modern i.r. It reflects and underlines the logical continuum in 'representations of the Other', from Herodotus' obsessive concern with the primacy of the eye -- now replaced by the scopophilic mechanisms of the camera -- via Columbus and his contemporaries' discursive strategies of conquest. Needless to say, the Middle-East, and the Orient's marvellous fables, never stood alone in providing a mirror for the West's narcissic Self. Shapiro's analysis of the *Kissinger Report* and the symbolic function therein deployed by the representation of Central America in general and Guatemela in particular, also provides a case in point.[188] The simplified U.S. representational discourse used throughout the *Report* allowed American foreign policy to "locate Guatemala as knowable part of power-politics agenda of meaning, centered on the anarchy problematique and a world of threat 'out there'" . The 'Guatemala - as Other' Kissinger purports to have discovered during his enquiries was only ...

> ... framed in accordance with a discursive strategy of
> Guatemala ... that was *already there* in the colonial mentality
> of European culture and literature and in the unquestioned
> premises of modernity corresponding to U.S. identity in the
> world.[189]

The *Kissinger Report* may undoubtedly have presented a good case in point on the role of collective symbols of the "Other" in organising political consensus on the 'home front'. It would be tautological to remind ourselves that American security discourse has indeed always been embedded within the constraints imposed by this internal *need* to represent the Other and act in accordance with what these representations inspired. Today, this is even more fervently the case. The narratives of

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186. Adorno, quoted in Said, [1993] *op.cit.*, p.390.
187. Shulte Sasse, *op.cit*, p.91
188. George, *op.cit*.
189. *Ibid.*

Self / Other may now at will, and with poignant ease, be distorted, manipulated, only partially disclosed, *via* the powerful technological channels offered by the audio-visual mimetic capital that characterises our *fin de siècle*. The *Report* -- as a written text accessible to only few -- loses much of its impact once contrasted and compared with the potentialities of video-constructs analysed *qua* ideographic political texts. Indeed the written word seems to have ironically been superceded by the icon, the image, the film. It will therefore be the main concern of the rest of this Chapter -- and by and large the remainder of this Thesis -- to plunge into this world of icons, exploring the privatised impact of films in accentuating, replicating, or/and disturbing -- from the "bottom up" -- the representation of difference in the conduct of global politics.[190]

II - Film and the international narrative of identity politics.

II - 1 - The Film-Industry : who owns what ? Hints towards representational politics' strategic implications.

"...the illusion has become real, and the more real it becomes, the more desperately they want it. Capitalism at its finest !"

Gordon Gekko, in Oliver Stone's *Wall Street*.

Portuguese explorers in sixteen century Brazil performed a spectacular version of the Nativity for local inhabitants that concluded with the 'signing over' of land.[191] In 1710 a group of Iroquois kings -- who had allied themselves against the French in their struggle to decolonise the province of New York) paraded through London on their way to a *Macbeth* performance. Once seated in the theatre, the mob of the upper galleries insisted these foreign monarchs be placed on the stage instead -- as to form part of the spectacle.[192] In 1993 strains of "We Shall Overcome" rose, accompanying giant screens superimposing the images of JFK, Marthin Luther King and Bill Clinton

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190. The conflict in the Gulf simply accentuated this 'Othering' trap whilst also perpetuating the paranoid logic of the Cold War, replacing one possibly defunct Other, by the next. Reagan's arms-control director indeed celebrated the Gulf War for demonstrating that SDI-type missiles "can work, especially against the kind of Third World threat we're more likely to face than an all-out Soviet missile attack" (read Ken Adelman's article "Star Wars in the Desert" in Newsweek Feb 18th 1991). We have here all the elements capable of satisfying the psycho-political need for an enemy, but projected onto hypothetical foreign threats by a unitary, chaotic, Third World Other. Video constructs of 'difference', the constant comparative visual narratives used by CNN and CBS between the jungles of Vietnam and the ascepticised potency of the technological apparatus deployed during the Gulf -- demonstrated that a new step had been taken in the reinforcement of First World identity.
Whereas the Vietnam War was known as the television-war *par excellence*, the Gulf War perfected its video-computing technique to such a level as to concentrate solely on the representation of ordered, channelled, controlled images of the supremacy of the Western Self on the battle field.
191. Arthur Teixeira de Mesquita, Essay sur le Bresil, Académie Montesquieu, Bordeaux, 1964.
192. Reported in R. B. Bond, Queen Anne's American Kings, Oxford University Press, New York, 1952, p.4.

while US forces bombed Iraq. Three different moments in time and space -- yet all bear witness (literally ?) to how the cultural, political and economic can become part of a unified system.

The polemic that raged essentially in France and the corridors of Geneva in 1993 over the possibility and desirability of including the 'audio-visual' in general and cinema in particular within the clauses of the GATT, offers another illustration thereof -- or how 'culture industry' and visual 'information system' are both inextricably woven to form an extremely sensitive component of a state - or group of states' - national identity.

As aptly underlined by Julie S. Peters,

> Theatre (broadly constructed) and its modern mechanical offshoots have been instruments of power, whether in the invasion of the 'New World' when Jesuit performances taught language and religion to the 'savage', in the importation of the exotic in the nineteeth and twentieth centuries (in world fairs... in the imitation of 'primitive rituals'...), or in the twentieth century spread of capital-intensive mechanical media [among which film] which have given the affluent country a capacity to monopolize the media market, and so to reinforce the cultural hegemonies already in place...[193]

The argument pertaining in the rest of our discussion is that the cinema, more so than the media, has become the most efficient political text of our *fin de siècle*. True heir to the perfomance rites that have scaffolded the histories of modern empires, cinema will be apprehended as the most apt -- when controlled and adequately channelled -- to carry out the representation of difference that underpins i.r.

The capture of international visual imagination by the cinematic industry was almost effortless -- and therefore almost invisible. Primarily because images have hitherto been considered far less harmless and far more accessible globally. Unlike indeed the later development of systems of communication and information (i.e. the broadcasting and computing networks), cinema has not *officially* been a tool or channel for the direct expression of the nation-state : as a free market enterprise its inception and development were always closely tied with the profit motive as it is expressed in -- and through -- Western capitalism. The essence of cinema is hence that of a commodity *par excellence* despite furious French claims to the contrary. Indeed it is the very

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193. J. S. Peters, *Intercultural Performance, Theatre Anthropology and the Imperialist Critiques* in J.E. Gainor (ed.), Imperialism and Theatre. Routledge, London, 1995, p.201.

peculiarity of film *qua* commodity -- bought and sold, produced and distributed -- which has defined the structure of the film industry. It is this commercial imperative that has turned Hollywood into a master in the art of seduction for the masses on a world-wide scale. Based on the premise that 'cinema is entertainment and does not make demands on the spectator's intellect', cinema takes a disguised meaning within the framework of the knowledge structure, yet is inherently part of it. As an export, it has over the years excelled in shaping the tastes of local audiences in ways that other accesses to information have not. As a 'factory of dreams', Hollywood progressively ensured its unchallengeable dominance over 70% of the world market. In France, 58.5% of the film market is American and the remaining percentage is local and international : it is not even a matter of filmographic choice since most cinema theatres are booked almost years in advance for the exclusive distribution of American films.[194] Local cinema survives thanks to subsidies yet only barely exports itself abroad. Again linguistic hegemony combined with technological hegemony ensure the 'stability' of the cultural balance of power in full favour of the U.S.-dominated Western market.

Everywhere outside the Hollywood structure, the development of a so-called 'national' cinema has to be a matter of state policy only. Not an individual effort - though in some parts of the so-called "South" a few examples may confirm the rule. Indian and Egyptian cinema cannot be 'exported' because they are paradoxically too deeply rooted within 'local' traditions and the films that 'sell' on the international market - such as those of Satyajit Ray or of China's Fifth Generation directors Chen Gaige or Zang Yimou -- only attract international attention because of the romantic stereotypes, 'the aesthetics of alienation', they portray. Most discouraging is the 'selling capacity' of Western films on Non-Western subject matters and culture - again with heavy stereotyping and an often severely flawed conception of the other's otherness. Worst is that such films do please and further encourage the ascendancy of a single market in the field. One could quote the Ethiopian born film maker Haile Gerima who has a child, in the '60s was drawn unquestionably to such heroes as John Wayne or Elvis Presley provided by the only movies his small town ever showed :

> It is as if you accept the heroes and stories of Western
> society... because of the social and political forces you
> are caught up in. As kids ... even in Tarzan movies, ...
> whenever Africans sneaked up behind Tarzan, we would
> scream our heads off, trying to warn him that "they"
> were coming.[195]

194. See J. Ralite, *Le GATT, Danger pour La Civilization*, Le Monde Diplomatique. November 1993.
195. Quoted in Armes, *op. cit.*, p.44.

Within the developing world the scope of state protection is rather limited. Film -- more than any other appendage of the mimetic capital of a given national culture -- fits indeed awkwardly into the state's institutional priorities : it cannot really be seen as a governmental achievement in modernisation (like the building of a dam or an industrial complex), nor is it *a priori* an aspect of traditional culture -- to be fervently even if unsuccessfully promoted internationally. Yet, this goes without recognising Lenin's plea anointing cinema as "the most important of all arts", "the most intrinsically revolutionary" -- the one with the most power of transforming society[196], the most agile in representing the Other. If the infiltration of postmodernism in i.r. has spread the telematic feel of First World consumerism around the globe, it has still only hardly begun to deconstruct and cicumvert the relations of power which continue to marginalise some national cultures. Our next section hopes to evoke the necessity of a deconstructionist task of the other-image in global politics that takes full account of the cinematic apparatus, a task scarcely begun at the *Cultural Identities* symposium held at the Commonwealth Institute, London, in March 1986 -- in which for the first time film-makers and critics from different cultural origins came together in a series of film screenings and discussions examining how individual and national identities are ideologically defined by, perpetuated through and constituted within film and the institution of cinema.

II - 2 - Cinematic narratives of Otherness : tropical fantasies, exotic subversions.

A 1988 poll showed that over 50% of American movie goers attend feature films with the conscious intent to find out information about other cultures and exotic locations.[197] Such interest is spun partly because the appetite of such audiences is daily whet by a series of recurrent headlines. Lacking in most cases an understanding of the more significant social and political forces that operate to make such names and places newsworthy, most Americans admitted that a tidy, preferably home-made, film narrative -- providing a rich mosaic of a foreign culture and its operative forces -- best served a relieving function in their cognitive 'gap' about the Other.

Christian Metz -- a film semiologist whose work our next chapter will explore in greater detail -- attributes the power of cinema to its impression of reality. Chapter One has already lauded the ability of films to duplicate life and ranked it as the possibly most 'believable' of all mimetic capital. According to Metz :

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196. For Lenin's pronouncements on film, see G.M. Boltianskii, Lenin i Kino, Moscow, 1925.
197. See the data-analysis carried out by Ph. Palmgreen *et al The Motivational Framework of Moviegoing : Uses and Avoidance of Theatrical Films*, in Current Research in Film : Audiences, Economics and Law Vol IV ed Bruce A. Austin, Norwood, NJ, Ablex, 1988, p.1-23.

> The feeling of credibility, which is so direct, operates on us
> in films of the unusual and the marvellous, as well as in
> those that are 'realistic'. Fantastic art is fantastic only as it
> convinces (otherwise it is merely ridiculous), and the power
> of unreality in film derives from the fact that the unreal seems
> to have been realised, unfolding before our eyes as if it were
> the flow of common occurrence -- not the plausible
> illustration of some extraordinary process only conceived in
> the mind. The *subjects* of films can be divided into the
> 'realistic' and the 'non-realistic' , if one wishes, but the
> filmic vehicle's power to make real, to *realise*, is common to
> both genres.[198]

Films indeed do not merely appeal like no other art form to the spectator's sense of belief -- releasing a mechanism of "affective and perceptual participation" (Metz contends that one is never totally bored by a film - and this might be the reason explaining most televisual news coverage 'movie-like' techniques). Films also absorb their audiences in an unparalleled sense of presence, of 'there it is'. This is achieved by the paramountcy of motion, which 'substantiates' the object from its setting, bringing movement, volume and a suggestion of life out of the screen towards the spectator. The reflexive attributes of cinema have been discussed in the previous chapter through the notion of the 'fourth wall convention'. To borrow one final time from an analogy with theatre, we should underline, with theoreticians such as Metz, Rosenkrantz and Leirens, that whereas the main character in a theatrical drama is the object of 'dissociation', the film character is an object of identification. Paradoxical as it may seem, the might of cinema's impression of reality thus derives *because it is not 'as real as'* a theatre production. Film leaves a high degree of reality in its images, "which are nevertheless still perceived as images". One of cinema's most powerful asset is thus "to inject the reality of motion into the unreality of the image [and] render the world of the imagination more real than it had ever been".[199]

The representation of the Other read through the 'realist' discursive practices of cinema could be exemplified through many instances. There may be dangers in extrapolating an analysis through only a few of such texts, but as the first part of this chapter has hoped to demonstrate, the economics and politics of representation of Otherness are clearly earmarked by a dominance of 'Western' imagery on the global market. It makes sense therefore to study *these* representations of difference, before analysing idiosyncratic counter-responses, exceptions to the rule, fissures bringing the periphery towards the centre.

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198. C. Metz, Film Language - Semiotics of the Cinema, Oxford UP, N.Y., 1974, p.5.
199. Both quotes*ibid*, p.14-17.

The film productions most closely related to our discipline, and those best illustrating our present chapter's concerns, are those so-called 'socio-political' films that combine either of two established genres : the action-adventure genre set in the developing world and the reporter-film genre. The narrative tradition of these films draw on a standardised plot in which the central character -- usually male, almost always white and Western, more often than not a journalist in search of 'truth' -- is in charge of investigating a political situation, typically increasing his/her knowledge thereof as the narrative unfolds. If the protagonist happens not to be a journalist, s/he is usually a righteous agent of the intelligence services, a seductive archaeologist/white-hunter or an adventurous tourist -- surrounded by an exotic *mise en scène* of cliched signifiers of the 'third world' as mysterious, ungraspable, sensual, corrupt, always dangerous and irrational. The outsider is propelled on a terrain of unfamiliarity that he will progressively seek to understand -- interpreting it with the spectator. As Caroline Springer underlines in her own study of reporter films, "because they revolve around interpretation, [these] films are unavoidably about constructing the Self"[200] -- through an encounter with the Other as object of study.

With exotic settings as catalysts for self-knowledge, we return to the point made here-above : all constructions of the ethnic Other are linked to constructions of self-identity and by implication, in all political films of the afore-mentioned genres it is the white, western, (fe?)male's ethnic identity that is inextricably at stake. All the films we will explore next, with the exception of *Waati*, religiously follow this narrative -- which here should also be seen as the narrative utilised by mainstream i.r.'s representational practices.

Waati as a Malian text disclosing representational practices of the Other, is an exception confirming the overwhelming Western dominance in the genre. This dominance is today everywhere in crisis, and yet there can be no denying that Fanon's prophecy in *The Wretched of the Earth* -- "the settler makes history" -- came true in the height of European imperialism and the Cold War, to a great extent exemplified in the battle raged and gained over 'images' and their infiltration in the minds of the 'ideologically different'. The extent to which 'truth' and 'righteousness' is *thought* to be disclosed *via* the lures of the audio-visual is a matter we may better leave to experts. Yet some schools of thought do profess that President Gorbatchev's *Perestroïka*, by re-opening the former USSR's gates to Hollywood might have *to a certain extent* caused its collapse. That Albania's satellite invasion by Italian films mooted the overthrow of Hoxha' regime. Or analyse how and why, at the brink of the Falkland War, Great

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200. See C. Springer's article, *Comprehension and Crisis,* in Friedman, [ed.], Unspeakable Images. Illinois UP, 1991, p.167-189.

Britain's movie theatres were saturated by films such as *A Passage to India, Heat and Dust, The Jewel in the Crown*, etc. Rushdie diagnosed : "the rise of Raj revisionism, exemplified by the huge success of these fictions, is the artistic counterpart to the rise of conservative ideologies in modern Britain"[201]... And indeed to become aware of cinema as a catalyst to political change is only one step. A challenging one may be to ask, paraphrasing Todorov : "Could the West 'defeat' the Other by means of cinema ?".

• *The Year of the Living Dangerously* , (Peter Weir, 1982) revolves around a new foreign correspondent's attempt to establish himself as a respected journalist. An obsessive desire to be welcomed will ultimately lead to Guy Hamilton's (Mel Gibson) inability to interpret the political situation in Indonesia beyond superficial appearances. The photographer Billy Kwan (Linda Hunt) -- half Chinese, half Australian, hence also a foreigner -- whom the journalist befriends, states in a voice-over :

> You are the enemy here, Hamilton, like all Westerners.
> President Sukarno tells the West to go to hell, and today
> Sukarno is the voice of the Third World.

When Hamilton gets insulted in Djakarta's slums, Kwan reassures him : "don't take it personally; you are just the symbol of the West". Kwan's persistent scrutiny of Hamilton plays an important part in the film's suggestion that all ethnic insiders and outsiders simultaneously scrutinise each other, but that the Other is never fully apprehensible. The use of extreme close-ups on the cross-cutting of Hamilton's eyes with those of a palace guard's, each searching the other for some revelatory sign, is a case in point. Eyes, again, are of primary relevance in the effort to understand the 'Other', foregrounding every step in the process of observation and interpretation. Kwan announces to Hamilton, at the near beginning of the film's narrative : "we'll make a great team; you for the words, me for the pictures. I can be your eyes". Hamilton, however, consistently resorts to Western clichés, when reporting on conditions in Indonesia, unable to free his vision of the Other from the naiveté of Western stereotypes. These are the stories that could 'sell' best. Truth is scarified on profit's alter. When Kwan realises this 'betrayal' he chides : "I made you see things, I created you" -- binding the construction of Hamilton's identity to the way he perceives the world.[202]

At the end of the film, Kwan is killed and Hamilton is badly wounded by a soldier trying to prevent him from entering a governmental building. His retina is detached. He loses sight, both literally and figuratively -- Kwan no longer is -- and

201. quoted in Said, [1993], *op.cit.*, p.22.
202. Springer, *op.cit.*, p.183

Indonesia is permanently closed to him. As one of his assistants remarks, "Westerners do not have answers anymore". Weir attempts throughout the narrative to construct a critique of the journalist's capacity to offer a detached observation of the "Other" when confronted with an alternative reality. Carolyn Durham writes :

> Weir associates a visual theory of knowledge with Western individualism. Although Guy believes that his traditional linkage of scientific objectivity with journalistic practice allows him to see reality as it really is, free from the interference of personal and cultural assumptions, in fact, he projects images of a profound subjectivity in which he reflects and sees only his own self.[203]

This radical critique of any possibility for a value-free rendering of the Other, of escaping the grip of the mimetic capital of the Same, is carried further by the failure of interpretation of Kwan's photography itself. The film links the scopophilic urge of Kwan -- constantly shooting at the Other with his 'objective' lens -- with a narcissist urge to control the Other. As a photographer, he is portrayed as fully subscribing to a visual theory of knowledge, using this mechanical eye to manipulate understanding of Others. The most critically challenging part of the narrative takes place in Kwan's hut, when he shows his Javanese puppets to Hamilton, and explains : "you must watch the shadows, not the puppets... In the West we want answers for everything. Everything is right or wrong, good or bad. But in the puppet play, no such final conclusions exist". A statement borne out by the inconclusive treatment this filmic text provides from Indonesian politics, but also a recognition of the dangers of binary classification underpinning any construct of identity. The metaphor of the puppet-show is also about cinema -- where only the viewer is responsible for building meaning out of the shadows projected on the screen. The walls of Kwan's hut are covered with photographic images of the Other, another reminder that photographs, too, are solely understood on the basis of interpretative conventions and cultural conditioning. Indeed the same photographs of faces are shown throughout the film, each time suggesting new readings, new interpretations in the light of different contexts. This editing technique, already used by the Soviet film director Lev Kuleshov in the 1920's, proves that no photography can offer a single truth about the object of depiction. It can merely reflect whatever the viewer *wants* it to reflect -- just as this film demonstrates that Indonesia-as-Other only reflects back to the Western reporters whatever they want to see, as any foreign culture becomes a mirror to ethnic outsiders who have no knowledge of historical complexities and therefore cannot see anything but their own cultural assumptions.

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203. C.A. Durham, *The Year of the Living Dangeruously : Can Vision be a Model for Knowledge ?* in Jump Cut, No.30, March 1985, p.6.

• *Under Fire* (Roger Spottiswoode, 1983), also raises critical questions about Western journalists' ability to adequately 'represent the Other'. This film opens with a violent skirmish between governmental troops and rebel soldiers in Chad. It later introduces Nicaragua with the explosion of a grenade in a night-club, and shortly after, reporter Russel Price (Nick Nolte) is emprisoned by brutal local policemen. By emphasising chaos and violence, *Under Fire* typically locates the 'Third World-as-Other' within the imaginary landscapes of a dark unknown, poignantly contrasting the order of the journalist's homeland -- and firing the spectator's desire for knowledge and for the authority it bestows. Needless to say, the Nicaraguans portrayed by the film's narrative are at best two-dimensional, whether they support Somosa or the Sandinistas. Rebels and peasants are granted a slightly less superficial portraiture since the director, and the protagonist, are sympathetic to their cause. However, the spectator is denied access to their thoughts, hopes, fears. The Nicaraguans remain voiceless throughout the plot, except for a few remarks that never attain the 'complexity' of those of the three American journalists or the French mercenary (Jean-Louis Trintignant). Ironically it is through Western outsiders that the film's moral and political issues are played out. Would the Western home audience not indeed 'better' understand, identify with and take sides through the mediation of protagonists they resemble, rather than through those who look, speak, act differently ?

At best, the film's replication of stereotyping is slightly redeemed by its critical approach to images -- again the most crucial 'subject' of the narrative -- indicating that they can never be politically neutral and, as in *The Year of the Living Dangerously* , that they construct meaning about the unfamiliar environment only in accordance to contingent factors. From the beginning freeze-frames of black and white stills interrupt the flow of the narrative : for instance, during footage of rebel-conflict in Chad, 1979, shots of elephants and a government helicopter are frozen into the motion. The sequence ends with a series of such stills climaxing with the low angle shot of an elephant from an helicopter's perspective, printed in colour. Only the next shot reveals Price, the human eye behind the mechanical. Later, around the pool of an hotel, haven to the foreign news-crew in Managua, the Chadian photos are looked at, praised as nothing more than skilful technique. The potential of representational practices to alter the course of socio-political events becomes a focal point in the rest of the film's thematique. The photo-montage of a Sandinista leader, dead yet shown as alive, has a series of unexpected consequences -- demonstrating that the significance of an image lies in how it is interpreted and that representations have the power to cause events during a conflict situation. Claire Sheridan (Joanna Cassidy) at one point even remarks : "things aren't what they seem". This photo, used both for and against the Sandinista's

plea, reveal indeed that no photography is ever innocent, whether for the 'Self' or the 'Other'.

Finally, it is worthy to note the film's commentary of a certain Western tendency to prioritize their 'Self's' presence in the act of representing the Other's conflict. After Alex's murder (Gene Hackman), a Nicaraguan nurse and rebel offers no sympathy for his former lover, Sheridan. She simply scorns :

> You know the man who was killed ? 50,000 Nicaraguans have died. Perhaps now America will be outraged at what is happening here... Maybe we should have killed an American journalist 50 years ago.

• *Salvador*, (Oliver Stone, 1985), claimed to present the 'true story' of real-life photojournalist Richard Boyle (James Woods) and establish the bane of American involvement in foreign affairs as Boyle leads the viewer through a series of re-creations of such well publicized events as the atrocities of the right-wing death squads, the assassination of Archibishop Romero and the rape and murder of four American Catholic layworkers in civil-warstriken El Salvador ca. 1980-81. The film was financed by an English production company as Stone's script was rejected by Hollywood's Majors for its anti-American undertones. Stone repeatedly stressed, however, that this was not a film about the U.S., but an attack on its foreign policy only. Like the films overviewed above, *Salvador* 's narrative is a critique of Western political and cultural dominance in the developping world, yet it does so by paradoxically using the very stereotypical images of Otherness established by the 'West' it wishes to condemn.

Like in *Under Fire*, the narrative perpetually stresses the chaos and violence of the political situation in the region. As soon as Boyle and Dr Rock (Jim Belushi) drive into El Salvador from the North, they encounter military brutality against the civilian population -- climaxing with a sudden execution. The two 'foreigners' are then immediately and violently imprisonned. The sound track complements the camera in creating confusion, with screams and shouts in Spanish intensifying the impact of cultural clashes, between West and this particular Latin exotica. At one point Rock reamarks about the Salvadoran surroundings "everywhere I turn there are dogs screwing other dogs, pigs in the street, it's like Baltimore or somethin'" -- a tongue in cheek reminder of a litany of different signifiers that separate the Self from the Other. Gratifying such remarks with images of an uncivilized, aggressive world is a primitive, yet seemingly vital first step in Stone's attempt to orient the viewers to the presecence of an on-screen political culture that is diametrically opposed to their own. Rich floral backdrops and the soudtrack, as before, littered with the rythms of marimbas or a

cascade of Spanish phonemes rolling off the tongues of the natives and eluding most viewer's understanding constitute the typical innocuous signs of a Central American locale that derives its imagery from the stocks of the mimetic capital of the West's *National Geographic* or Tortilla chips ads.

More deeply seeded assumptions about the Latin character -- what Charles Gibson called the Black Legend -- are reified throughout the text with varying degrees of complexity and intensity. On the one hand the land is romanticized -- especially through the female rebels -- but this idyllisation also panders to legends regarding this culture's perpetual rejection of (Western) progress. The curruption and barbarity of the locals is reaffirmed throughout the film, with insistence on the nochalance of soldiers as they fire at demonstrating students, or the assasination of Romero during the consecration of the Host -- powerful reminders that El Salvador-as-Other is a lawless, ethically skewed nation-state, beyond moral redemption. Taken as a whole, the cultural personifications that constitute Stone's narrative remain the by-products of a century's old messianic creed that had underpined Euro-American justifications of foreign expension and intervention.

It is ironic, and hardly surprising, that Stone -- in his desire to construct a critical discourse of the American Self -- fell prey to American mythic constructs of Central America. If a film's meaning must be constructed by the viewer, playing to the subconscious collective perceptions of a specifically Western audiance indeed facilitated this process. The romantic involvement of Boyle, the white Western male, with a Salvadoran peasant, the sensual Other, is as much a bid to capture the facts of this 'true story' and attract the viewer to the rebels' cause as a powerful enhancer of the film's commercial success. Vassiliou, Trandis and McGuire[204] refer to "non-normative stereotypes" as those based not so much on the the information derived from other sources (normative stereotypes) but as those that are purely projective in nature. It is not uncommon, they theorise, for us to project stereotypes we have inherited subconsciously (here we rejoin Greenblatt) on foreign people with whom we have had no hither contact. Hence to the extent that an American film audience shares a mythic understanding of themselves, these myths may be fodder for deforming an interpretation of the Salvadoran people.

The populism-based, metaphorically induced nostalgia of Stone's photographic direction (children studying, rebels kissing, close-up portraits of women, old and young, singing the refrains of a folk song) and even his mediated declaration that "the

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204. Vassiliou, Tandis and McGuire, *Interpersonal Contact and Stereotyping* in <u>Analysis of Subjective Culture.</u> edited by H. Trandis, Wiley, N.Y., 1972

will of the people or the march of history cannot be changed, not even by the Norte-americanos" -- is everywhere syndromic of a cultural hegemonic view of the life 'south of the borders'. The film becomes inmeshed in a paraoxical will to denounce U.S. concepts of a global cultural hierarchy and yet the narrative, by stressing that certain cultural universals link the Other to the Same -- and equating Salvadorean rebels' struggle with the US in a nascent stage -- encourage this very involvement. If the film suggests that the 'purity' of the Salvadoran has been violated by American presence, its perpetuation of Latin cliches coupled with the then current headlines about the civil war in Nicaragua, confirm the legacy that the Latin American approach to government is either tyrannic rule or revolution and discontentment. As such, Stone's 'true story' of El Salvador, confirms its status of "Banana Republic" in the midst of a perennial upheaval. U.S involvement, instead of being consistently critiqued, is finally construed as an effort to actively stop this viscious circle and crucial for the saviour of the Salvadoran citizen from him/her Self. The Monroe Doctrine is kept blithely afloat, defensively counteracting any damage to its official image of its Self.

• The above analysis of the narratives underpinning *The Year of the Living Dangerously, Under Fire* and *Salvador* hopes to have set a pattern for the reading of Western so-called 'politically committed films'. Though all acknowledge that their own generic discourse on cultural power may be problematic, they nonetheless reproduce the same representations of Otherness that they purported to overcome. Films such as the Cambodian set *The Killing Fields* (1984), Richard Attenborough's anti-Apartheid scenario in *Cry Freedom* (1987) or very recent productions such as *Lamerica* (Gianni Amelio, 1994, about the fate of post-Hoxha Albania) or *Beyond Rangoon* (John Boorman, 1995) -- all fall within this same representational pattern, even though all actively 'use' the Other, rather than just a western protagonist, as an enigmatic pawn that propels the narrative. In all these films, however, the native Other never fully becomes a protagonist with whom the viewer can fully identify. Rather s/he is conflated with the nation or culture the film seeks to 'cover' (Western 'individuality' vs. Non-Western lack thereof ?).

In *The Killing Fields,* Dith Pran (Haing S. Ngor) is conflated with Cambodia as Sydney Schanberg (Sam Waterson) describe how he grew to "love and pity" this country over a close-up of Dith Pran's face. In *Cry Freedom,* Steve Biko (Denzel Washington), shot from Donald Wood's (Kevin Kline) point of view, is obscured with the glares of light in Wood's eyes and merges with a tree as the viewer sees him for the first time. Though the reporter is at home in the location that surrounds him, Wood is nontheless taken to a black township that functions filmically in relation to the then ruling white South African culture like a third-world location in relation to Europe or the

U.S in the other films. In *Beyond Rangoon*, it is a woman (white, western) who performs the principal mediating role between the Self and Other in the representation of the Burmanese political repression. Laura's (Patricia Arquette) encounter with the gaze of the pacifist opposition leader Aung San Duu Kyi (Adelle Lutz) and her later commitment to the cause of the Karen rebels, are all exarcerbated by her involvement with Aung Ko (himself in the role of himself). Aung performs as an icon for all resistance movements in Burma as well as Burma's Buddhist teaching. Though Laura is not a journalist, the photograph she briefly encounters in the streets of Rangoon during the violent military shooting sequence plays a crucial part -- as Burma's access is denied to foreign news correspondants. At the end of the film, a voice-over comments on this photographers' successful escape to Thailand and that the release of his photos enabled, "at last", an awakening of Western consciousness to this peoples' political fate. As with all Western politically committed films, these narratives stress the capacity of the Western protagonist to "cover" an unfamiliar location on the basis of his/her sight. Vision is, as discussed befores vested with, if not full explanatory power, at least the power to move the Self into action *for* the Other.

• The current international economy of the film-industry, as seen above, leaves very little space for an alternative -- and commercially profitable -- representational discourse of difference to be voiced. In the late Eighties, the Chicano Studies Research Centre at UCLA offered a virulent criticism of Chicano film-makers' tendency to submit their narrative to the same 'Carmen Miranda-type' representational biases of the Latino community as those favoured by WASPs. The price paid for a film to become 'mainstream', targetted to win over a majority of viewers, at home and abroad -- was to reafirm the Hollywood imagery of the Mexican as Other, as illegal, oversexed, machistic towards his women, drunk with Tequila and wearing sombreros during his all-too-frequent *siestas*. This ideological reproduction of an inherently Western representational politics of Otherness subsists into the Nineties, although some interstices in the system seem to offer scope for another (non-Western , non-White, non-Male) epistemology of difference to inscribe its features in our relations international.

Chapter Four will read texts of difference springing from within the increasingly heterodox character of the Western Self. Yet there is still space in the present discussion for the marginal narrative of Souleymane Cissé's latest film, *Waati* ("Time", 1995) to be read. Cissé presented his work at the 1995 Cannes International Film Festival as a conscientious demonstration that the African epistomelogy of identity could be represented in ways that utterly departed from the Western pattern described hereabove. *Waati* is a film about a black South African female, Nandi (Mariame Amerou Mohamed

Dicko) through whose eyes the viewer discovers the many masks of Africa. The story begins with her discovery of the Boer elite in her homeland. The Boer only functions as one of the Others this film purports to represent. Nandi's story only really begins after her arrival in the Ivory Coast, and as the narrative develops, we understand that her encounters with the student body and the black upper middles class of Abidjan or the Tuaregs she aids in the sands of Mali, function as the Other her South African Self attempts to grasp. Interestingly, Nandi's eyes are doted with a magical force that grants them the power to "transform things". Cissé has hoped that *this* eye-witnessing of the Other would be understood as literally and figuratively disturbing -- especially transform the viewer's own gaze over these many locations. The extent to which Nandi's vision / perceptions of the Other are flawed is impossible for a Western viewer to assess. Yet this is not the point. To a Western viewer, *Waati* offers a unique perspective of Africa, not as some romanticised or famished, or tragically homogeneous dark continent, but as a culturally heterogeneous and politically extremely diverse region which no longer needs the philantropy or representational fantasies of the West to construct its various Selves.

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These texts act as as many manifestations of what Part I has ventured to excavate. We might take up Billing's approach where we left it, as he concludes that "social reality can be made to conform to the false consciousness, and the position of the group legitimated"[205] and stress once again that group formation and identational development must be seen on a perpetually shifting basis. Social change, new openings in the political and economic structure, those that allow for the production and circulation of alternative identity reprentations to be made visible, insure that intergroup dominance is always precarious. As Gallagher once demonstrated through an analysis of the differing degrees and aspiration within the Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland, the production and reproduction of social identity 'out there' is always in the making.[206] The dynamism of the identification process allows for fissures in the dominant interpretative system to be created.

Ricoeur's statement, stressing the constant battle waged between knowledge as it attempts to rid itself from collective symbols and ideology -- always the 'grid code of interpretation'[207] -- offers a paradoxal conclusion to our venture. We understand the paramountcy of perception, of vision, as being all to easily subverted by the

205. Billing, *op.cit.*, p.336
206. A.M. Gallagher, *Social Identity and the Norther Ireland Conflict*, in <u>Human Relations</u>, Vol 42, 1989.
207. P. Ricoeur, <u>Soi Même Comme un Autre</u>, Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1991, p.22.

empowered. What people perceive to be real, or indeed the perennial circulation of a deragotary mimetic capital, underpins the formation of groups, of the ideology of superiority their thoughts and actions are based on.

> Images of the enemy depend to some degree on enemy behaviour, while images of an enemy affect expectations and one's own anticipatory behaviour. The latter, in turn affects both the enemy's perception and his reactions.[208]

On the other hand, however, the dynamic essence of these perceptual ideologies and their non-hermetic character -- combined with the critical awareness that popular culture must be politically scrutined and alternative views demarginalised -- offer the hope for a more responsible, more open-minded representational politics to progressively overrule the imagery most these Western films have exemplified.

III - Speaking for the Other : is it desirable NOT to ?

Let us consider, finally, the much acclaimed and rewarded Kevin Costner motion-picture, *Dances with Wolves* (1990). Costner stars as Lieutenant John Dunbar, the film's white protagonist. The film opens with a Civil War battle scene shot in a way that may well remind the viewer of Coppola or Stone's Vietnam movies. Like so many young men of the Vietnam period, Lt. Dunbar rejects his structural relation to the establishment of the US government and its military -- which in this case are also engaged in imperial conquest over Native American land. His disillusion turns him into a lay ethnographer of the 'enemy', the Lakota Sioux. On the last frontier, he keeps a journal -- an ethnographic 'fable of rapport' -- in which he records their costumes and customs as well as his own process of personal redemption. Dunbar indeed progressively 'goes native' as the narrative unfolds, re-inventing his Self as a Lakota Warrior -- "Dances With Wolves". He in fact writes (or carries or looks for) this journal throughout the entire film, turning this book into a primary tool for the textualisation of Lakota experience (as is the film - as text itself !), that will rescue the "vanishing primitive culture" from historical oblivion. Are the Lakota thus not encoded as incapable of representing themselves ? most Native American viewers pondered. There is indeed, as in most traditional films, a nerving sense that the technological and visionary of Dunbar's system of signification confers upon him an authority to best capture the 'truth' of these so-called "authentic" Sioux. Writing becomes the record, but also the sign of the protagonist's ability to 'see' beyond his own culture's racist and flawed constructs of difference. "Nothing I had heard about these people was correct". But are

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208. Mitchell, *op.cit.*, p119

the imperialist agendas really disowned and transcended through the act of transcription ? Most of this chapter suggests not.

Of course, this text has the impressive merit of countering most of Hollywood's stereotypical characterizations of the Western "Indian" -- and by implication a white-American's 'mimetic capital' of the Native that can been traced back to the Sixteenth Century. There is equally no doubt that Costner's extensive employment of Native Americans actors, his sympathy for their culture(s) and use of subtitles, are significant revisionist steps in the 'representational practices' over this internal "Other". And yet the film remains, in the end, unavoidably entrapped in a colonial discourse over, and about, the Other. Indeed, the "redemptive anthropology" that depicts the Lakota as noble savages -- "no matter how well intended, perennially reinscribes Western domination over natives".[209] The implications of the film -- that languages can so easily be translated into one another, that their nuances are transparent and that there is therefore a common, universal reality and humanity -- act as as many catalysts to Costner's appropriation of a Sioux Self. And they ultimately prepare the ground for his *rewriting* of the Sioux. At the end of the narrative Dunbar and Kicking Bird only speak one language : Dunbar's.

Stephen Greenblatt's *Learning to Curse* [210] identifies all textualisations of the Other -- mostly by 'educated' and 'humanist circles' -- not with the transcendence of imperialist agendas, as Costner hoped to achieve, but as a central site on which colonising processes move forward. The author is particularly incisive about the ways in which *both* racist constructions of identity / difference *and* liberal constructions of cultural sameness -- "all Others are just like 'us'" -- may at any time assume colonising purposes. This critique finds a strong echo in the post-positivist rewritings of our field. That there is no universalism, no possibility of attaining a single truth -- that any attempt to speak for the Other, silences "them", privileging the location of the speaker and further construing their 'subject -position' as inferior. Daryl Chin speaks of such appropriations as inevitably forming a "hidden agenda of imperialism"[211] whilst Gilles Deleuze has characterised as "absolutely fundamental : the indignity of speaking for others".[212]

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209. Newton and Stacey, *Learning Not to Curse : Our Movie Date with J. Clifford and S. Greenblatt*, in Cultural Critique, Winter 1992-3, p.60.
210. S. Greenblatt, Learning To Curse, Routledge, N.Y., 1990, a title alluding to the linguistic colonisation of Shakespeare's Caliban by Prospero, p.63.
211. D. Chin, *Interculturalism, Postmodernism, Pluralism*, in B.Marranca and G. Dasgupta (eds.), Interculturalism and Performance PAJ, New York, 1991, p.87.
212. Quoted by L. Alcoff, *The Problem of Speaking for Others*, in Cultural Critique, Winter 1991-2, p.11-2.

A few years earlier, a similar outcry had followed Peter Brook and Jean Claude Carrière's theatrical and later, cinematographical rendition of the 3000-year old Sanskrit epic, *The Mahabharata* (1985). Una Chaudhuri, for instance, refered specifically to Brook's film when she wrote :

> ... (here) the West helps itself to the forms and images of others without taking the full measure of the cultural fabric from which these are torn. This practice... claims the interculturalist label for itself and often seeks to elaborate a moral-political model of (cinema) as a *vital* ... cultural *exchange* . [...] is there something of the 'glass-bead-for-land' model of exchange at work here ? Is this kind of interculturalism a sophisticated disguise for another installment of Orientalism, or worse, of cultural rape ?[213]

The controversy Brook's adaptation raised had much to do with the concept of 'authenticity'. His dramatisation of The Mahabharata was attacked on the grounds that it claimed universalism without true understanding of this text's cultural value. To many of its detractors Brook's version was little beyond a disguised form of orientalism -- attempting to make the Indian epic comprehensible to Western audiences only by simplifying it into mere spectacle -- adding ambivalence to its political implications. His avoidance of intercultural dichotomies seemed to disguise a claim for ownership, an appropriation akin to these discussed in the earlier moments of this chapter. For...

> ... in the identification of the likeness of other and self (the likeness of deep structural patterns, the likeness of emotion, the likeness of spiritual force) those ostensible 'others' are simply assimilated. Difference is denied to them.[...]

and...

> Claims to universal rules of performance tend to classify disparate global forms under categories that the 'West' has identified as universal. Eurocentric categories have coerced individual non-Western categories into acquiescing to them.[214]

Reading *Dances with Wolves* or *The Mahabharata* under such auspices gives further resonance to the GATT debate evoked earlier : the need to guard cultural subjects from simplisitic representational appropriation and essentialism -- the need, in concrete terms, to provide adequate film-distribution channels and fissure thus the prevailing hegemonic order. However (and although this chapter sympathises to a great extent with a critical 'de-construction' of Western representational acts) there are dangers in perpetuating the post-modern paranoia that dictates that all practices of

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213. U. Chaudhuri, *The Future of the Hyphen : Interculturalism, Textuality, and the Difference Within*, in Marranca and Dasgupta, *op.cit.* p.193.
214. Both in Peters, *op.cit.* p.205.

'speaking for others' are to be systematically rejected on political and epistemic grounds as illigetimate, inevitably ideological and always imperialist.

Linda Alcoff articulates the problem of 'speaking for' around two premises. The first is one that posits that any such representational practice exerts a bearing on truth, so that it becomes impossible to attain a scientific objectivity in which the location, the context and the position of the one who represents can be disclaimed as 'irrelevant'. From this follows Premise #2, that the discursive context is always a political arena in which power relations of domination and subordination, oppression and resistance, are at play. Consequently all locations / contexts in which these representations are being made "are not politically equal, and given that politics is connected to truth (see Premise 1), all are not epistemically equal".

> The conjunction of premises 1 and 2 suggests that the speaker loses some portion of his / her control over the meaning and truth of his / her utterance. Given that the context of hearers is partially determinant, the speaker is not the master or mistress of the situation. Speakers may seek to regain control here by taking into account the context of their speech, but they can never know everything about this context and with written and electronic communication it is becoming increasingly difficult to know anything at all about the context of reception.[215]

This loss of control and the potential for further disempowerment of the 'other' does however not mean that all representation thereof is politically subversive. Ironically, there is a danger of perpetuating the 'structural violence' one sought to eradicate if one continues to endlessly use monolithic notions of "orientalism", "Self / Other" -- since the ongoing proliferation of these concepts may in themselves enunciate and be deeply implicated in the very logics of domination and subordination they seek to critique. To demand 'authenticity' on the screen is very much akin to claim for 'pure representations' : sterotypes that fix and homogenise, deeply complicit with national ideologies.

That sort of cultural protectionism -- one that assumes that to never talk about or for the Other is the best means to counteract hegemonic ideologies, one that seeks orthodoxies so as to proscribe any tresspassing between territories -- is crippling rather than enabling. To believe that one can possibly retreat into a monholitic individualist realm supports this other 'Western' representational chimera : that the individualistic Self is an impermeable 'island', capable of full autonomy from the Other. Our first and

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215. Alcoff *op cit,* , p.15.

second chapters have never ceased to demonstrate that even when I claim to only speak for myself, I participate in the creation and reproduction of discourses through which my own and other selves are constituted.[216] The practice of a more equitable encounter with the Other calls instead for an awareness of the presence of such privatised discourses (such as the seemingly benign films quoted above) as significant components of this 'textualisation' process -- and develop strategies for the author, but also *for* and alongside Others to enable their speech to be heard. One of such strategies would be to establish a pedagogy along those lines:

1 - Fight against a *systematic* tendency to speak for.

2 - Always interrogate the consequences of our location / context as well as of the representational practitioner on what is depicted and how it is read.

3 - Be accountable for how the Other is represented -- for "the 'right to culture' (promised in the international human rights convenants) is the right to as much of it as we can participate in, without any of it being taken away from anyone else".[217]

4 - Evaluate both the location, the contents but also the *effects* of representations of the Other 'for the other', in a discursive and material context. Where does the speech go ? What does it do there ?

This amounts to a wariness of the ideological contents of every representation and getting into the methodological habit of establishing a genealogy of representational strategies. By genealogy is implied an examination and systematic questioning of "how a position or view is mediated and constituted through and within the conjunction and conflict of historical, cultural, economic, psychological and sexual practices".[218] It is also to recognise the increasing heterogeneity of acts of representation. That not all representation is exclusion, but that the process of 'reading' the Other, and speaking about his / her Self might also be an enabling mark of inclusion -- for

> ... translation *is* indeed necessary in order for communication to take place -- communication between cultures and between individual expressions within cultures; that translation is the precondition for human political life, whatever direction that politics may lead.[219]

This reading of the Other -- as inclusive rather than dismissive -- is one taken up by the Russian linguist Mikhail Bakhtin. Discourses for Bakhtin do not exclude each other, but rather intersect. It is essential, he would argue, to bring into political theory the possibility of the issue of speaking 'for' the Other to turn into one that *speaks up for*

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216. *Ibid,* p.21.
217. Peters, *op.cit.* p.211.
218. lAlcoff, *op.cit.,* p.28.
219. Peters, *op.cit,* p.206.

the Other, *alongside* the Other.[220] Whatever may be lost in translation may be gained in dialogue : a principle of communication which relies on the recognition of both differences *and* sameness -- and a necessary hermeneutic exchange whatever boundaries translation might have to transgress.

Chapter Three -- a logical outgrowth -- will attempt an interpretative reading of the Other's 'self', disclosing the powerful 'anxiety of exoticism' inherent to such readings. What indeed happens to the analyst of texts, when s/he finds her/himself confronted with a *Weltanschauung* that departs dramatically from his/her own ? Such hermeneutical exercise will question with more depth the ruling Western idea according to which a grammar of universalisation is to be found in the visual. It will also question the objectivity of the i.r. scholar as an ethnographer of difference, with particular emphasis on the intertextual encounters between the West and Chinese film-making and politics.

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220. R. Stam, <u>Subversive Pleasures</u>, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1989, p.233.

Chapter Three

Reading the Other's Representation of its Self

An exegesis of China through her filmmakers' lens.

Minding the Gap.

COTRONE : ... and each of us talks and talks and talks. Once we get exhausted from so much talking, we always discover that most of the talking was in fact useless. Then we can only but retrieve into the silences of our inner Selves like those dogs that retrieve into their huts after having spent half the night barking at their own shadow.

- From Luigi Pirandello's The Giants from the Mountain, Act II.

Did Chapter Two, in its confessed desire to critique contemporary economies of representation fail its creed ? Did such will to denounce *merely* reflect the paranoid guilt of a West uneasy with its self-proclaimed triumph ? How can a 'Western' research student, addressing a 'Western' university and a fundamentally 'Western' audience, *possibly* question the ontological grounding of international representational practices when she herself has been peppered and spiced and boiled into the stew she so fervently refuses to be spooned down Others' throats ?

These questions answer much for the anxieties of a discipline at the cross-roads. One that has come to realise that :

1) we should become increasingly attentive to our own historical practice of projecting our cultural practice onto the other;

2) we need to begin anthropologizing the West : show the exoticism inherent in its construction of reality; up-root the historically and geographically contingent set of universals it has so long taken for granted and show how their claims to a higher truth have always been tightly embedded in social and representational practices that have become effective forces in the political sphere.

3) we need to pay attention to a plurality of texts and approaches that would allow centres of resistance against philosophical or economic hegemony to be even more diverse; beware of reverse essentializing, of replacing a fissured epistemology with another, of inflicting Occidentalism as a cure against Orientalism.[221]

Happy times of belief in the Enlightenment Project are today long past, though of course its sprouting detritus still cast reassuring shadows onto the walls of i.r.'s funnel (ill-lit and cave-like) leading into the next millennium. This great crisis of modernity -- ruthlessly dis-locating Western epistemology from its privileged status as custodian of Knowledge and Truth -- arose from various failed diagnoses and prognoses. Amongst the many are those of the apostles of the 'End of History' : the proclaimed 'consummated universalism' fêted by Fukuyama or the expediency by which Samuel Huntington foresaw a future of clashing self-contained *Weltanschauungen* , starting with 'Islam' and 'Liberalism'. It is with a great sense of reluctance and disillusion that the modern architects of Babel had to abandon their scaffoldings. The French Revolution gave early warnings that should not have been too easily discarded : "Enlightenment" had been followed by the reign of "La Terreur", a nationalism of the worst kind seeded in a sense of mission and righteousness that has more than one parallel with the good-will-to-universalise implicit in our discipline. It was wrong, from the start, to draw a polarising ethical line between a certain kind of nationalism on one side, one that was perceived as tribalistic, fermenting hatred -- and the 'universalist' -- and hence 'good' -- nation on the other, flag-carrier of emancipation and hope. These good / evil boundaries were already then infinitely precarious. Today William E. Connolly contests such Augustinian legacy and its unethical insistence on universalist moral codes, whilst Adda Bozeman claims that we live in "a world that has no common culture and no overarching political order and that is no longer prepared to abide by western standards of international conduct".[222] Fronts of resistance within the discipline were struggling against the tide. For academics like the late Hedley Bull, closely following arguments previously put forth by Martin Wight[223], to acknowledge the 'revolt against Western dominance' should not necessarily overshadow the fact -- because it is a fact -- that a 'common culture of modernity' has set in place a certain view of the world that brings enough commonalty to further support the ideas and practices of international society as we know it.

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221. See P. Rabinow, *Representations are Social Facts* in J. Clifford & E. Marcus (eds) Writing Culture - The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography, UCP, Berkeley, 1986, p.241.

222. A. Bozeman, quoted in R. Shapcott, *Conversation and Coexistence : Gadamer and the Interpretation of International Society* in Millennium, Vol. 23, No. 1, 1994, p.61.

223. See H. Bull, The Anarchical Society : A Study of Order in World Politics, Macmillan, London, 1977 and the lectures of M. Wight in G. Wight & B. Porter (eds), International Theory : The Three Traditions, Leicester University Press, 1991.

And yet this 'modernity' -- including amongst other cosmopolitan tokens the adherence of all to the static system, the processes of industrialisation and the flow of information and modalities of thought -- is also as severely contested both from *within* the West and from without. One of the most persuasive arguments against this modernity theory is to be found in Terry Nardin's *Law, Morality and the Relation of States* .[224] He therein usefully distinguishes between a 'purposive' and 'practical' affiliation to the system : by extrapolating his stance to Bull's thesis it becomes clear that the majority of states in the world are members of the system out of practical rather than purposive grounds. As Chan argued :

> Some may hate their own membership; some may seek the overthrow or change of that to which they are members; some may resist the coerced nature of their membership; some may wish to be the powerful or capital-rich coercers of the future. The social values, the society, within the system are not always for the system. [225]

If inclusive association can significantly be, as Chan believes, of a practical nature, what space remains for a discussion of the terms of coexistence ? More importantly, what space remains for the units to *communicate* at all ?

Rengger and others would put forward the "Incommensurability Thesis", for which any application of a Western grid to a non-Western system of thought is bound to fail because all interpretation is relative in a relative world. The late Ernst Gellner's essay *Relativism and Universals* has attempted to bridge the 'incommensurability gap' by conceding that a plurality of truths need not preclude "de facto or contingent human universals" :

> In a word unbounded by any unique truth, it might still be the case, by accident, that all human languages had a certain grammatical structure, that chromatic perception was identical in all cultures, that all societies proscribed certain relations as incestuous.[226]

And that the reverse too might be true. "There is one world only, there are many men; and just because there are many kinds of men, there is one world". Yet this "one world" thesis runs the risk of re-enforcing the claim that there *must be* objective and rational choices for the adoption of occidental norms within and outside the West. Reinforcing

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224. T. Nardin, Law, Morality and the Relations of States. Princeton University Press, 1993.
225. S. Chan, *Cultural and Linguistic Reductionisms and a New Historical Sociology for International Relations*, in Millennium. Vol.22, No. 3, 1993, p.426.
226. E. Gellner, *Incommensurability, International Theory and the Fragmentation of Western Political Culture*, in J.G. Gibbin, (ed) Contemporary Political Culture, Politics in a Postmodern Age, Sage, London, 1991. p.245.

the stance proclaiming that only two options are left for inter-cultural relations : either domination or minimal coexistence, either Western-type modernity or nothing.[227] However, the terms of the debate should no longer to be framed by means of an either / or rhetoric but, to appropriate Rorty, in terms of a triumph of contingency. A contingency, that distinctively from Foucault's notion of incommensurable truth, need not be seen as hermetically sealed to attempts in understanding, but quite on the contrary, able to engage openings for conversing with the plurality of "others" straining and fissuring the West's epistemological fences.

To recognise this contingency, to recognise the arbitrary nature of morality and the breakdown of the old assumed consensus surrounding 'modernity' are painful and disconcerting steps to take. To 'explain' and 'understand' international relations without the reassuring foundations of *a priori* universals has become necessary, yet the methodological -- let alone theoretical -- difficulties this entails for scholars concerned with deciphering the Different, are particularly daunting. As Paul Ricoeur confesses :

> When we discover that there are several cultures instead of just one and consequently at the time when we acknowledge the end of a sort of cultural monopoly, be it illusory or real, we are threatened with destruction by our own discovery. Suddenly it becomes possible that there are just *others*, that we ourselves are an 'other' among others.[228]

It is this fear, this paranoid sense of being under siege, that needs to be overcome in order for the 'gap' between Self and Other to be significantly filled and ontologically challenged. The Other needs urgently to be de-marginalised, and our knowledge broadened before 'understanding', i.e. a stepping out of a debilitating or paralysing fear, may be attempted.

The previous chapter has used the insurrectional tone of media activism to highlight the mechanisms of domination as well as subversion at work within and throughout the channels of image technology. Yet as was the case with Chapter One, this was primarily presenting an argument from the West against the West, an argument always in close reference to the Self and its processes of hierarchisation and preservation.

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227. Shapcott, *op.cit*, p.69.
228. P. Ricoeur, History and Truth, Northwestern University Press, Chicago, 1965. Quoted in C. Brown, *Turtles all the Way Down : Anti-Foundationalism, Critical Theory and IR*, in Millennium, Vol. 23, No. 2, 1994.

The present chapter, on the other hand, wishes to move beyond the realms of the Same and explore, "read" -- or at the very least *learn to read* -- some of the representational practices of the Other.

This was deemed a natural and necessary move, not only because talking from the standpoint of the Self is assumed to have been utterly exhausted or recognised as presenting an evil trap to be avoided at any costs. Its constraints are natural and unavoidable, and as we hope to have previously suggested, ethnocentrism is a *point of departure* that must be confronted if our path towards a more open-minded approach to the Different is ever to unfold. The very nature of ethnocentrism will undoubtedly place severe limits on any objectivity the following study may wish to claim... For reasons of clarity and efficiency merely *one* amongst a plethora of "Others" whose epistemology has barely begun to make their grip felt on our increasingly porous archipelagos of knowledge, will be case-studied. I have chosen China.

This analytical odyssey must with lucidity be grasped as serving *primarily* a mediatory function within this thesis. To borrow Bleiker's defensive or in any case apologetical tune "it is my intention to follow Niezsche's advice that in order to investigate our (European) morality from a certain distance, one should proceed like a wanderer who desires to know how tall the towers of a city are : s/he must leave the city".[229] Leaving the crumbling city will be what this chapter is about. Not so much to take refuge in another kind of ethnocentrism (or as might legitimately be feared in the case of China, an Other's claim to universals) but rather to eradicate the fear of the 'sirens out there' that still bind our discipline to its mast. A fear further fuelling the hermenuetic nihilism plaguing our field, one that so hinders the prospects for a dialogical rather then a merely incommensurable relation with the many Others.

This discussion will leave the economical relations of power previously discussed aside, and engage a perhaps more poetic investigation of the Self / Other dichotomy. This reading will be grounded, as before, in the belief that international relation -- or in this case, the international relations of China -- can be approached from a variety of angles, each enlightening the next, with disciplines as varied as semiology, anthropology, history and film studies complementing our exegetic path towards difference.

• **Section I** will constitute the theoretical basis of our investigation. Such section will stress in a first instance the importance of language -- by implication of text and

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229. R. Bleiker, *Neorealist Claims in Light of Ancient Chinese Philosophy : The Cultural Dimensions of International Theory*, in <u>Millennium</u>, Vol.22, No.3, 1993, p405.

discourse -- in any apprehension of identity. There it shall proceed in dissipating some of the last remnants of an eroding universalism within the parameters of linguistics. There will follow both a warning against and an encouragement for the borrowing from other disciplines to support i.r.'s groping gaze in reaching out towards the Other. This will lead our discussion, in the second sub-section of Section I, to turn to interpretative anthropology and its critical theories. We will see how language never leaves the process of interpretation, its tentacular hold hindering any exegesis from incontestable success.

The process of adequately and comprehensively *reading* the Other, will nevertheless be proven fundamental despite the disclaimers of post-modernism, to which any such gesture is illusory because of the Self's inescapably contingent gaze. Facing this 'Rashomon condition'[230], will hopefully prove more liberating and enlightening than the religion of exclusion our discipline hitherto professed in order to legitimate its universalist priesthood.

• **Section II** will test these lessons against the empirical exercise of 'reading' China. An overview of its poetic epistemology, determining both its sense of Self and its voice within the political arena, will illustrate with more tangible resonance why i.r. theory 's prescriptive and descriptive creeds can no longer rely on the insights offered by an exclusively Western epistemological context.

'Reading' China's difference through the lens of 'native' contemporary filmmakers will provide the main focus of our attention. We will concentrate on the evolution and political underpinnings of Chinese cinema, with special attention given to the difficulties of Self-representation and international distribution encountered by the Fifth Generation. Two texts, *Yellow Earth* and *Farewell my Concubine* will prove that reading China's Otherness from a Western position is feasible -- depite the pitfalls entailed -- and that the very possibility of such reading, which is already a 'conversation', eventually fissures the dichotomising processes at work within our discipline.

Our conclusion, which will propel our discussion into Chapter Four, will carry such possibility further. It will suggest that by devising the possibilities of conversation with the Other, i.r. has already engaged in accepting Bakhtin's intertextual and heteroglossic approaches to Otherness.

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230. See Chan (1993, p.442) in reference to Kurusawa's epynomous 1950 film -- which relates the same event six times, through the accounts of six different individuals who all partook in the episode -- either as detached witnesses or as affected protagonist. After the first plot construction in *Rashomon*, each subsequent plot reconstructs its major story elements and implicitly deconstructs the other versions -- presenting each time equally valid assessments of 'truth', varying accross multiple ideologies of storytelling. The 'truths' presented are in the end no more and no less than what the individual film spectator makes of them.

Section I - Exegegis.

And there stand those stupid languages, helpless as two bridges that go over the same river side by side but are separated from each other by an abyss. It is a mere bagatelle, an accident, and yet it separates.
<div align="right">- Rainer Maria Rilke, Letter to Clara, 1902.</div>

I - The poetics of politics : language, text, discourse - and the locus of cinema.

I - 1 - Language and contingency in social praxis.

<div align="center">
So I renounced and sadly see :
where the word breaks off

no thing may be.[231]
</div>

Amongst the many commonplaces that underpin academic ventures, lies the proclamation that ours is a century relentlessly language-haunted.[232] As Julia Kristeva argued, ours was a century of the atom and of the cosmos -- and everywhere one of *langage*. Though an object of philosophical reflection for millennia, it is only recently that language has become so obsessively central to social praxis, assuming the role of a fundamental paradigm, a virtual 'key' to all aspects of human existence. Central to the project of thinkers as diverse as Wittgenstein, Cassirer, Heidegger, Derrida, Lévi-Strauss and Merleau-Ponty is a concern with the crucial importance of language in the realm of thought. The metadiscipline of semiotics can therein be seen as a local manifestation of a more widespread 'linguistic turn' -- or as Jameson may put it, this tendency to "rethink everything through again in terms of linguistics". Indeed, despite the general recognition that signs do not exclusively operate through words but that there exist 'micro-languages' rooted in silence and visual patterns and symbols, it is always extremely difficult to escape the tentacular grip of verbal language as a central point of reference to any study in 'linguistics'.

Methodologically, linguistics has generated a diversity of structuralisms that can essentially be traced back to the seminal dichotomies put forth by Saussure's *Course in*

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231. Stephan George quoted by Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, quoted in W.E. Connolly, <u>Politics and Ambiguity</u>.The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1987, p.143.
232. see R. Stam, <u>Subversive Pleasures.</u> The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1989, p.26.

General Linguistics (1916), such as the concepts of diachrony / synchrony or language / parole. Saussure's analyses were applied to other disciplines, such as literary study by Jakobson and the School of Prague, after which the Saussurean method was appropriated by Lévi-Strauss. By articulating kinship relations in terms of language, in a way akin to this of Jakobson's questions of phonology, the French anthropologist took the fundamental step that made the extrapolation of structural-linguistic logic to all social, mental and artistic structures possible. Roland Barthes, as a result of his researches in the language of costume, concluded that it is impossible to escape the pervasive presence of the word - everywhere entering the discourse of another order either to explain or fix an ambiguous meaning that cannot otherwise be communicated, like those necessary in the bubbles of strip-cartoons. "Words either anchor meaning or convey it".[233] Only in extremely rare cases do non-verbal system exist without the auxiliary support of the verbal code. Even music or paintings rely on words - especially so on the popular level. The History of Art is itself intellectualised according to the nexus of "word and image" and even though the Renaissance attempted to banish words from the pictorial space, these have long groped their way back in. Even economics, in its semiotic dimension, came to be regarded as a symbolic system comparable with the exchange of words in a language, and psychanalysis, with Lacan at the forefront, enforced the view that the Unconscious was always structured like language.

In the field of political sciences in general, and international relations in particular, the flirtation with- and hijacking of linguistics was a schizophrenic one. Schizophrenic because the attraction and appropriation served both the defensive cause of those believing in the system as it was and the set of universalisms it impelled -- as much as it served the discipline's emancipatory process, its turn away from science to a critical genealogy of the humanities, to literature, to inter-textuality. In sum, to the possibility of the Other.

Greatly indebted to Foucault's archaeological method, it soon became clear to the critical investigators of politics that language and its control vastly influenced power-relations within the system of social praxis. Language is recognised as providing the essential means for "approaching, dissecting, negotiating" a subject matter[234] as well as presenting all the rules and commitments out of which the subject matter can be *created*. To understand in an ideologically self-conscious way how language operates is fundamental to a discovery or even a mastery of certain aspects of political life that

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233. Barthes, quoted in Woolen's Signs and Meaning in the Cinema, BFI, London, 1972, p.118.
234. Shapiro, M., Language and Political Understanding : The Politics of Discursive Practices, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1981., p.199.

could easily remain otherwise unnoticed. As stressed by Shapiro, "We need a perspective on the speech-phenomena relationship that allows us to monitor the politicising implicit in alternative discursive practices".[235] This was attempted, amongst many, by Hannah Pitkin's discussion of language membership, in which a distinction is made between the political and linguistic dimensions of the Self, the former being active, the latter passive. Yet the break-down between the two stops there, since "our speech practices, even at time when they are not explicitly politicised, carry political commitments".[236] Political action indeed takes place within the constraints of linguistic action, altering its traditional borders, insurrecting against prior rules of speech and frames of thought.

> Because our linguistic habits tend to be shaped by a relatively passive language membership, we are apt to neglect the political import of our characteristic modes of speaking. If we ignore the rules of how we speak about and *how* we speak about it, this passivity spills into our political membership, promoting an insensitivity to much of our political life. To enlarge the realm of politics -- to politicise more aspects of human relations -- one must analyse language as a domain of political relations and thereby use it rather than be used by it.[237]

Analysing language as part of an emancipatory process has however only recently begun in i.r.. It had hitherto been assumed that the scientific study of language as a unit of textual analysis would contribute to obliterate -- rather than render visible -- signs of Difference and dissent within the system. It was assumed that a value-free analysis of the semiotic dimensions of the species could reveal commonalties that could further legitimise the exclusion of other epistemologies from reaching and straining the discriminating fortresses of the West.

A deconstruction of the maze of universals our introduction has called into question begins with a dissection of the linguistic foundations of international society. As a point of departure, let us consider the four modern 'universalistic traditions' distinguished by Chan[238]: 1) Jung's collective unconscious; 2) Chomsky's prenascent grammar for all language; 3) Levy-Strauss's totemic universality and 4) Mircea Eliade's "primordial religious mythology with its universal features of a totemic staircase to heaven and the eternal return". All premise their faith on the existence of a universally discernible pre-articulation determining linguistic articulation and implicitly uniting humanity's unconscious to an uncontaminated core. By extrapolating this, one

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235. *Ibid*, p.231.
236. *Ibid*. p.133
237. *Ibid*. p.233
238. following thoughts and quotes from Stephen Chan, *op.cit* p.431.

confronts the theorising behind the notion of a 'unitary language', a stem around which all others are believed to have sprouted. The idea of this 'one language of truth' can be found also in Aristotelian poetics, the poetics of the medieval church as Augustine understood it, in Descartes' neo-classical interpretation of the world, in Leibniz's idea of a 'universal grammar' and in all the centripetal forces that served the project of centralising and unifying the European languages. As Bakhtin critically re-traces :

> The victory of one reigning language over the others, the supplanting of languages, their enslavement, the process of illuminating them with the True Word, the incorporation of barbarians and lower social strata into a unitary language of culture and truth, the canonisation of ideological systems, philology with its methods of studying and teaching dead languages, languages that were by that very fact "unities", Indo-European linguistics with its focus of attention, directed away from language plurality to a single protolangue -- all this determined the content and power of the category of "unitary language" in linguistic and stylistic thought.[239]

At the core of this crusade for an Esperanto, was, as briefly mentioned, the notion of a universal grammar Chomsky borrowed and forcefully defended in a series of works, lectures and interviews since the early 1960's. Though departing in fundamental ways from Leibniz, Chomsky's view, both anthropological and biological -- derives from a deep belief in the un-learned nature of the structures determining human behaviour and thought. The most intricate of these structures is indeed language, hence the necessity of all human analytical ventures to start with an analysis of the essence of linguistic mechanisms. The greatest achievement in this field :

> ...has to do with the search for very abstract features of what is sometimes called 'universal grammar' : general properties of language which reflect a kind of biological necessity rather than a logical necessity; that is, properties of language which are not logically necessary for such a system but which are essential invariant properties of human language and are known without learning. We know these properties but we don't learn them. We simply use our knowledge of these properties as the basis for learning. [...] By universal grammar I mean just that system of principles and structures which are the prerequisites for acquisition of language, and to which every language necessarily conforms.[240]

The genetic basis of language and of the learning process thereof is thus thought to be universal, despite possible disparities of mental structures and the variety of languages

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239. Bakhtin quoted in Stam in *op.cit.,* p.58
240. N. Chomsky, *Language as a key to human nature and society* (Sepetember 1983), in Otero, C.P. (ed.), Noam Chomsky - Language and Politics, Black Rose Books Ldt., Montreal, 1988, p.401.

to be found in international society. This would imply that by keeping to the study of only one language, the social scientist would be able to find there all the 'parameters' and insights necessary for him / her to understand the functioning of other languages. Chan's scrutiny of the here-above challenges most of these claims as indeed "if we are all born with an inbuilt universal template, does this mean that the template is itself proof against distortion ?" and "[...] what about the later privileged use of language as a tool of power or a tool of powerlessness ?"[241] -- or the purely symbolic and bargaining role assumed by language in most societies ?

We could illustrate the difficulties entailed in such assumptions by turning to the works of Sapir and Whorf, and their "linguistic relativity hypothesis" . Sapir on the one hand argues that "speech is a non-instinctive, acquired, 'cultural' function", and Whorf, on the other, holds that all languages have fixed patterns along which lines thought is constrained, and therefore that "consciousness is a mere puppet whose linguistic manoeuvrings are held in unsensed an unbreakable bonds of pattern".[242] Words are therefore at the mercy of grammatical patterns of sentence constructions. To those who opposed such a view by arguing as did Pinxten and Feuer that universals did exist since the same physical, chemical and biological laws apply to all human beings and "one would therefore not expect cultures speaking different languages to have different ways of perceiving space, time causation etc. because a correct perception of these elements is necessary to survival"[243], Whorf puts forth the very peculiar - yet nonetheless real - example of the Hopi Indians. The Hopi make no contrast between complete and incomplete action, their tenses are not in the past, present and future, but rather make a distinction between past/present manifested and manifesting - and therefore do not refer to time continuum implicitly or explicitly. This profoundly changes their perception of the physical world - though still enabling them to 'survive' and feel. This is also what Eco's *Limits of Interpretation* concluding lines suggest:

> Since man can only think by means of words or other external symbols, these might turn round and say : "You mean nothing which we have not taught you, and then only so far as you address some word as the interpretant of your thought." In fact, therefore, men and words reciprocally educate each other [...] the word or sign the man uses *is* the man itself... My language is the sum total of myself.[244]

241. See Footnote 18.
242. See Sapir's Language, p.4 and Whorf's Language. Thought and Reality, Cambridge, MA, 1956, p.257.
243. Feuer, In J.B. Carroll's Introduction to Whorf, *op.cit.*, p.28
244. Eco, The Limits of Interpretation, Indiana University Press, 1990, p.282.

There are dangers, of course, for the Whorfian illustration may well come across as singular and too obscure, too polemical to convert the sceptics. One may indeed quite rightly object that the focus is always on words -- and that this fulcrum of language expression is oblivious to more 'instinctive' means of communication, such as those based on ritual, and of course, imagery. Indeed, what about the politics of cinema ? Does image technology not perfectly illustrate that a 'grammar of universalisation' can exist ?

I - 2 - Language and the moving image : a grammar of universalisation ?

Chomsky pointed to the studies carried out by David Marr, Shimon Ullman and Elizabeth Spelke on the parallels between the iconographic and the linguistic. They attempted to demonstrate the ways in which the human visual system is based on a "rigidity assumption" that automatically translates the codes seen into a two-dimensional object recognisable to all. The identification of objects, their contour and shape, are unfailingly shared by all, despite different approaches to colouring. This is all part, argues Chomsky, "of the initial endowment, the way in which a child comes to terms with experience, or organizes experience".[245] This of course is a confirmation of his conception of linguistic principles, innate ideas, universal grammar, core grammar. Such line of thought, is, as we shall argue, an oversimplification of the readings of the visual -- which, once dismantled, further shatters the universalist paradigm. To demonstrate the untenability of such argument let us turn again to cinema, an art which was long believed to embody a visual esperanto, a grammar of universalisation that would suture rather than rupture its billion spectators.

Cinema has indeed never been immune to linguistic contamination. The notion of 'film language' is one that appeared in the writings of some of the earliest theoretians of the image. In the early 1920's the metaphor was institutionalised by academics such as Canudo in Italy or Delluc in France, who both saw the language-like nature of the cinema as linked to its nonverbal nature, its status as a 'visual esperanto' transcending the barriers of national language and creed. And yet, there is nothing more incorrect than to assume that cinema 'speaks' through the image only. Invented a hundred years ago, it underwent only a brief 'silent' phase, in which only the image on the screen 'spoke'. There is therefore no monolithic cinematic language *per se* via the image, but rather languages, each contributing to the whole with idiosyncratic grammars and syntaxes.

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245. Chomsky, *A Cartesian view of language structure* (May 1968) in Otero (ed.) *op.cit.*, p.105.

It is indeed incoherent to speak in terms of a unitary film language based on 'the image' at the expense of other languages -- such as those of the soundtrack, the subtitles, the dubbing, the lighting, the dialogue and so forth. The dynamics of film depend upon the complex interplay of a myriad of interrelated 'texts' that often appear to convey contradictory statements. A whole series of debates around this theme resulted under the pens of scholars as various as Roland Barthes, Christian Metz, Umberto Eco or Pier Paolo Pasolini. It was Christian Metz, however, who examined the question of this language / cinema interrelation with the greatest depth and sensitivity. The question that orientated his early work was whether the cinema was *language* (language system) or *langage* (language). This distinction was extended so as to differenciate *cinema* (the codes specific to that medium) and *film* (the textual system construed of codes specific to that medium and those that derive from other media, other cultural forms, other institutional modes). An active process of placement, interrelation and restructuration amongst many kinds of codes constitutes the *film text*. Concluding its definition, Metz argues :

> The system of a film, is among other things, a unique utilization proper to this film of the resources provided by the cinematic language system, but it is also a certain vision of the world, a certain thematics, a combination of obsessive configurations which are no less proper to the film.[246]

Faced with this effervescent, porous, maleable linguistic hydra, it becomes exceptionally difficult to delineate the constituent elements of 'grammar' within the filmic discourse. John Harrington in his *Rhetoric of Film* enters a lengthy discussion of what may constitute such 'grammar' of cinema. Given that grammar studies the way units of communication operate in the creation of a structure (sentence or paragraph), and given that film - as a complex form of communication relying on both simultaneity and sequentiality dependent on aural and visual elements - quite a few difficulties and inconsistencies may be encountered in defining the 'units' such filmic grammar presupposes. Harrington's 'grammar' is solely - and it may be suggested incorrectly - based on visual elements : the frame - the boundary of the filmic image - is equated with the letter; the shot - "the smallest functional unit of filmmaking" can be associated with the word for "the shots of a film draw meaning from their context as much as words derive significance almost exclusively from their linguistic context".[247] Harrington's analogies are confusing as he starts to argue that a shot can also be a paragraph whereas a sequence is a chapter -- and says little of any significance on the importance of montage, the crucial element of film syntax according to Eisenstein. On the other hand,

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246. Metz quoted in Goodwin, <u>Akira Kurusawa and Intertextual Cinema</u>, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1994, p.2
247. Harrington, J., <u>The Rhetoric of Film</u>, Holt Rinehart and Winston Inc., NY, 1973, p.11.

Metz 's most thorough exercise in cinesemiology, *Langage et Cinéma* (1971), usefully devotes a chapter on the problems of 'denotation' in the fiction film and shows a more specific concern against ready-made assumptions about 'the grammar of cinema'. Metz[248] agrees with Pasolini that it is impossible to separate the grammar from the rhetoric in a study about the nature of the semiotics of the 'filmic fact'. Films are granted the ability to connote "without generally requiring *special* (i.e. separate) connotors because they have the most essential signifiers of connotation at their permanent disposal : the choice between several ways of structuring denotation". But denotation itself is structured - and "because the cinema is a great deal more than just photography films are able to connote without the permanent assistance of discontinuous connotors".

I - 3 - From cinema as language to cinema as text : implications for *reading*.

The art of structuring and the art of persuasion are thus inextricably interwoven and it would be misleading to validate one dimension of cinematic language unilaterally. "There is no pure cinema, grounded on a single essence, hermetically sealed from contamination" : contamination from other texts, other authors, other 'readers', others full stop. It seems that a better approach to film language would be to drop the misleading - let alone unhelpful - notion of 'grammar' altogether. Pictures, it seems, rather operate both within the framework of language knowledge *within us* - and outside the framework of language *in itself*. It is not so much the image and its technological manipulation that can be said to have a rigourous set of rules employing a lexicon, a grammar, an ability to construct paraphrases etc., but we, as viewers, have an inborn *faculté de language*, in general, about all symbolic materials, so that in motion pictures, for instance, where sequence and time become parameters to be manipulated, we can instantly bring to bear linguistic rules for implication and inference.[249]

This is to highlight that experiences only exists through *texts* -- which in turn are mediated presentations of what they purport to represent. One must hence discover "how current textual practices reify structures, subjects and social experience"[250] and attempt to deconstruct these practices so as to reveal how they keep in place a

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248. Christian Metz, Film Language - Semiotics of the Cinema, Oxford University Press, N.Y., 1974, especially p.117-8
249. An excellent illustration of our argument was submitted by the studies of Navajo film-making, carried out by Sol Worth and John Adair. The authors have shown that people who are native speakers of Navajo will frequently use Navajo syntactic rules as justification for the structuring of films that they themselves have photographed and edited. [Worth & Adair, Through Navajo Eyes : an Exploration in Film Communication and Anthropology, Indiana University Press, 1972] See also Worth in Sari (ed.) Film/Culture, *Pictures Can't Say Ain't*, p.106.
250. Michael Shapiro, Reading the Postmodern Polity, University of Minnesota Press, 1992, p.128-30.

"politically repressive picture of the social that is out of touch with the world as it is lived and experienced". As Michael Shapiro proposes[251] , the epistemology of belief that the representation industry has attempted to install in order to displace the 'politics of fear' a mediated world has introduced -- needs deconstructing. Escaping from closed systems, from the web of codes that remain unread because they are confused with the 'real', disclosing and acknowledging the "layers of ambiguity" Don DeLillo suspects hide behind every stark fact -- such are the real tasks the image-consumer should assign him/herself to in order to shield him/herself from the Babylonian illusions of universalisation the screen, the video, the moving image attempts to lure him/her into.

This brings us neatly back to the realm of international relations theory. Here too, the unit of departure is language, yet language loses its privileged status to the concept of "discourse", i.e. an emphasis placed on the "meaning- and value-producing practices in language rather than simply (on) the relationship between utterances and their referents".[252] This accentuates the ways in which our immediate consciousness is fraught by the post-nascent world that governs, shapes, distorts our Chomskian template. This stress not only appreciates the intimacy that mingles textual (and representational) practices with the sphere of the political, but also -- and because of this awareness -- sheds a crucial light on how political reality is always mediated by dominant forms of representations, and how these are "not descriptions of a world of facticity, but are ways of making facticity".[253] The terms of apprehension are thus shifted towards structural or historical factors, enquiring how meaning is generated through the channels of ideology -- from which grip no form of writing is exempt. This leads to a fundamental requestioning of what is / can be known of the Other's experience *through* language and textual practices. Yet, if the Other cannot be approached and understood from the shores of the Same, what strategy of disclosure can be used ?

This discussion supports that the construction of *rationality* -- of the *real* -- which a 'universal' perception of experience and sensation would pre-suppose is untenable. As we shall see in a later part of our discussion, there is indeed no way in which a Chinese text can be entirely comprehended by a 'Western' reader, even if the image of a suffering child or the aesthetic emotion induced by a long-shot of an opera scene, may suggest otherwise. There is no evidence either that two Chinese (a Cantonese woman and a man from the Northern Provinces, a land-owner or a peasant) would read a same text in an identical manner, let alone understand the syntax around

251. *Ibid.*
252. Shapiro in Der Derian, J. & M. Shapiro (eds.), International/Intertexual Relations - Postmodern Readings of World Politics. Lexington Books, MA. 1989, p.14.
253. *Ibid.* p.13.

which such text is articulated. There are not only limits to our understanding of difference but also to our understanding of similarity. It is also an illusion, as demonstrated here-above, to believe in the possibility of a visual Esperanto through the cinematic medium : images control us only in so far as we let ourselves be controlled. Yet we ourselves can no longer claim to be able to be sole masters of the meaning of visual/aural/written texts. We all succumb sooner or later to the 'dilemma of intelligibility', in which no space is granted to illusions of universalisation : how indeed to "discover how what is known can be reliably separated from the ideational enactements of the knower - how in short, to distinguish the perceptions of objects from the object effects of perceptual acts" ? [254]

As we have already established, recognising, reading and understanding the representational practices of the Other without the foundations of universals, is a difficult task in desperate need for a careful strategy. To recognise the centrality of language, text and discourse in the production of political relations and the assignment of meaning, is perhaps the only way to begin an opening towards Difference. To continue digging and tracing this disclosing path means to recall that no language, no text, no discourse exists in a vacuum, but that all are contingent upon one another, so that the voice of the other may filter through many blurred sites of encounter between the political, anthropological, literary or cinematographic, the sites of *intertextuality*.

I - 4 - Intertextuality : "reading the other" made accessible ?

The concept of *intertextuality* is one that permeates all the pages of this thesis, and particularly this discussion on the means of apprehending and possibly *understanding* the Other. It designates a multidimensional relation through which a particular text is intelligible in terms of the other texts it cites, reiterates, revises and transforms. In its most restrictive sense, intertextuality is limited to the relation between a given text and only the other texts from which it directly derives. In its more comprehensive sense it encompasses any signifying unit in relation to the forms of communication, cultural codes, and social customs that endow it with meaning.

For Umberto Eco, "intertextuality is a function of overcoding that facilitates the social exchange of signifying units".[255] With the exception of its manifest level in the aesthetic text, however, Eco consigns this function to a deep structure of cultural meaning that remains largely undetected by the recipient party. Kristeva, for her part,

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254. Shapiro (1992), *op.cit.* p.123.
255. Eco quoted by J. Goodwin, <u>Akira Kurosawa and Intertextual Cinema</u>, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1994, p.9.

approaches culture in all its aspects as a vast aggregate of texts and intertextual relations. Every cultural unit of signification from colloquial jargon to social rites to a work of art is embedded in processes of inscription, absorbtion and dissemination with other units. No meaning can therefore be discrete. From Kristeva's perspective, culture exists at the point of interference of various textual systems and within a perpetual dialogue between these practices. For Barthes, concepts of *texts* are everywhere set against a culture's *work* (be it of scientific or artistic dimensions). The work is here construed as a source of institutionalized value and orthodoxy within culture and it assures a definitive meaning. The text, on the other hand, is a differential system that functions plurally and creates a field of signification in which spectrum many possible - and often contradictory - meanings converge. The text is the field wherein codes and textual systems are redistributed :

> Any text is an intertext; other texts are present in it, at varying levels, in more or less recognisable forms : the texts of the previous and surrounding culture. Any text is a new tissue of past citations.[256]

By the definitions of both Barthes and Kristeva, a text is hence inherently a plurality, or *intertext*, that operates within any given text. The intertext is a discursive space for the dissemination, rearticulation, interrogation, and recontextualisation of cultural materials. It is a tissue for the distribution of various social discourses, image systems and codes in which the author-function becomes relational, ambiguous, unstable.

I - 5 - Dialogism and the intertext.

This legitimates the use of cinema as a political text where difference can spread its own meaning. Bakhtin -- who admittedly never wrote about cinema -- will be dislodged and introduced into our international theory of the visual. We shall appropriate his categories of 'dialogism', 'polyphony' and 'heteroglossia' as an helpful illustration of the difficulties an audience may encounter in deciphering the 'meaning' of a particular film.[257]

Bakhtin would have for instance argued that not only is complete realism impossible but above all that all spectators come equipped with a 'sense of the real' rooted in their own social experience, on the basis of which they can accept, question, or even subvert a film's representation. All discourses hence exist not only in dialogue

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256. *Ibid.* p.10.
257. See Robert Stam's excellent *Bakhtin, Polyphony and Ethnic/Racial Representation*, in Friedman (ed.), Unspeakable Images. University of Illinois Press, 1991, p.251-59 especially.

with prior discourses, but also with the recipient of the discourse - an "interlocutor" situated in time and space. Although films are on one level powerful machines which produce a very seductive and very convincing "effet du réel", this effect can by no means be separated from the desire, experience, and knowledge of the historically situated spectator. No matter how close to 'universalisation' cinema's grammar may come, the cultural preparation of a particular audience will almost inevitably generate counterpressure to a racist or prejudicial discourse. Hearing 'voices' everywhere, a Bakhtian 'reading' of a filmic text would stress more the 'intonations', the 'accents', in sum, the *aural* elements within this hybrid 'grammar'. His *Dialogical Imagination* , as we will have many occasions to remind, has as its central point notions concerning the multiplicity of 'bounded verbal-ideological and social belief-systems'[258] that disfigure any possibility of homogeneity amongst speakers of a same language. Each individual utterance is hence heavily imbricated within its particular "semantic and axiological" system, so that the process of 'listening to' and deciphering speech in its polymorphus content and context -- rendered all the more complex by the demise of any unitarian authority -- becomes of paramount importance.

> ... [Bakhtin's] predilection for aural metaphors ... argues an overall shift in priority from the visually predominant logical space of modernity (perspective, evidence in empirical science, domination of the gaze], to a postmodern space of the vocal (oral ethnography, people's history, slave narratives) all as a way of restoring voice to the silenced.[259]

Such shift away from the predominance of 'image technology' and the visual, to a concept of *voices* and ever flowing dialogues opens up new boundaries for interpretation as it redefines the very mission of cinema as an orchestrator of pluralities and celebrator of difference. Avoiding the trap of relativist defeatism on the one hand and the colonization made out of universalist assumptions on the other, means to create a vital space for a conversation with the Other, a space around which hermeneutics roots its premises.

I - 6 - Beyond relativism and universalism : hermeneutics and the art of conversation.

Based on the distinction Wilhelm Dilthey established between explanation and understanding and the acknowledgement of the historical foundations of knowledge, hermeneutics involves the study of the relationship between meaning, interpretation and understanding. Its principal task is to achieve objective understandings of inner

258. M. Bakhtin, The Dialogical Imagination, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1994, p.288.
259. Stam (1991) *op.cit,* p.256.

experience via the interpretation of the 'works of man'.[260] The philosophical hermeneutics developed by Hans-Georg Gadamer in his *Truth and Method* (1960), use the ontological hinsights of Martin Heidegger to deepen and supplement Dilthey's project. His primary concern does not involve the creation of a value-free historical methodology but rather is to do with how truth and what kind of truth is attained by textual translation. To him all understanding is interpretation. This implies that it is the process of understanding that one must investigate first.

In the process of doing so Gadamer employs the same unit of analysis as we have by dissolving Heideggerian thought in the direction of a dissolution of Being into language. "The only Being that can be understood, is language". *Language is the fundamental mode of our being-in-the-world and the all embracing form of the constitution of the world.*[261] The only universalist claim, according to Gadamer, is that we are all understanding, interpretative and ultimately linguistic beings. Our *dasein* is hence a continual process of interpretation in which truth can only be approximated. An hermeneutic notion of truth is indeed always a dialogical one "... contingent upon an intersubjective consensus rather than upon a transcendental subject ..."[262] This, however, does not mean that the Other can never be reached, or that by displacing the West from its central locus, all Others become incommensurable to our understanding. On the contrary, because temporal and spacial exchange and learning -- as much as the movement created by intertextuality as we have discussed it -- are features inherent to all societies, understanding is a possibility.

Understanding the Other has three modes, according to Gadamer. 1) Trying to understand human nature : what is indeed 'typical' and / or predictable of the Other's behaviour; 2) a reflective / self-related mode of approaching the Other as a 'person' -- from a distance; 3) an undertsanding that is immediate, open, which requires that the interpreter acknowledges or recognises his/her biases, the presence of difference, the otherness of the other, without suspending their claim to truth. It is this third mode which, according to Gadamer, is the site in which true conversation with the Other occurs.

> The experience of the Thou also manifests the paradox that something standing over me asserts its rights and requires absolute recognition; and in that process is "understood". But ... what is so understood is not the thou but the truth of what the thou says to us.[263]

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260. Shapcott, *op.cit.*, p.70.
261. *Ibid.* p.73.
262. *Ibid.*
263. *Ibid.* p.76.

We cannot possess the Other in his /her understanding of his / her self, but we can at the very least reach agreement with the Other, despite difference. In this sense relativism is overcome by the ablity to 'talk' to one another and the understanding reached through conversation is, in Gadamer's view, ontologically fundamental. We know our Self by contact and contrast with / to the Other, turning intercultural criticism into a fundamental aspect of human existence that *can* -- and often is -- manipulated by constellations of power and subordination -- yet not *only* so manipulated.

Coexistence in an incommensurable and relative international society, is replaced, in the hermeneutic tradition, by conversational practice in an intertextual world, which celebrates the universal possibility for engaging openings as much as it celebrates difference and discord. It is a tradition that abandons an approach that views states and cultures as coherent, hermetic wholes by re-conceptualising international society in terms of its mediated interactions, in literature, history and / or on the screen.

As Schapcott's analysis of the place of Gadamerian precepts in i.r. theory concludes, hermeneutics opens possibilities that may allow our discipline to move beyond 1) the Realist goal of understanding the objective laws of i.r. and 2) the emancipatory agenda of critical theory. Neither stresses enough the importance of interpretation and yet without this interpretation, and the acknowledgment of the Other's truth, i.r. would be at a theoretical dead end. Hermeneutics's only gesture resides in celebrating the *attempt* to include and listen to the Other. Its art of the conversation requires of its partners to remain "with" one another, conducted by the object of the conversation and not *conduct* the conversation.[264] Presenting as it may an enlightened and encouragingly optimistic approach to our reading of the Other, it nonetheless fails to provide specific guidelines on how to best carry out dialogue, negotiation, interpretation. Even though guidelines have lost much of their vigour in the face of an anti-foundationalist *Weltanshauung* -- it seems nonetheless crucial to accompany our 'gesture' with a few warnings against the taken-for-grantedness of interpretation. These caveats, borrowed from the field of (an increasingly self-critical) anthropology, will be overviewed and assessed next.

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264. For a similar line of thought, see this presented and defended by Emannuel Lévinas in his *Totality and Infinity* (1969). Here the philosopher argues for the possibility of engaging a 'rapport' with the Other that moves beyond reflexivity and its reductionisms by opening the web of language. Again it is a view that highlights the ethical event of dialogue : "the surplus of the encounter that cannot be reduced to one or the other of the speakers, that is irreducible to a common measure or totality, that remains vulnerable to the radical alterity of infinity" (Ian Chambers).

II - Interpretation : some caveats borrowed from critical anthropology.

> The essential vocation of interpretative anthropology is not to answer our deepest questions , but to make available to us answers that others, guarding other sheep in other valleys, have given, and thus to include them in the consultable record of what man has said.[265]

The above quotation is double edged and seems a perfectly appropriate introduction to what follows. On the one hand it seems to denote a sensitive commitment to making the Other's story tangible and valuable. Yet its rhetoric also diffuses a sense of conceit and enclosure illuminating some of the many traps our discussion wishes to avoid -- such as a "marked tendency to judge, and explain"[266] in *our* terms. Notwithstanding the many dangers of anthropologizing diplomacy from a Western perspective -- a *speaking for* that was our previous chapter's main object of critical scrutiny -- the present discussion considers it nonetheless crucial to account for the warnings and learn from the voices of those who have made a profession out of the art of *speaking for* . This interdisciplinary project -- and the lessons learnt from it -- is believed to make an alert, empirical gesture to converse with the Other possible.

In the process of doing so, we will firstly evaluate the many gaps that traditional interpretative anthropology have left to be straddled, starting with an assessment of the difficulties encountered by Geertz in the process of decoding the Other. From there we will carefully appropriate the critical theories put forth by James Clifford, Paul Rabinow, Talal Asad and all those who have grown increasingly aware of the wherewithals by which one has written culture from a reductionist -- or at best ill-informed -- Western core in the name of the Other.

II - 1 - "From the Native's point of view" ? - Geertz confronts Hermes' Dilemma.

Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun. Max Weber's definition of culture quite correctly points towards the difficulties any cultural interpretation attempt has fostered. Interpretative anthropologists, such as Clifford Geertz, argue that in order to understand the culture and cultural products of different societies, we must grasp the native systems of signification. To interpret a gesture or an event or a symbol within its cultural context, one has to think in terms of the system of

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265. Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, Fontana Press, N.Y. ,1973, Chapter 1, p.30
266. Chan, *op.cit*, p.428.

meaning by which a given group of people perceive, interpret and act or react with respect to different phenomena. To identify 'winking' Geertz shows that the perception of eyelid contraction is not sufficient in itself - but one has to try to understand the conspirational meaning, or whatever meaning is associated with such an eyelid movement by a group of people. Culture therefore consists of socially established structures of meanings in terms of which people for instance 'wink', interpret such actions as 'conspiracy' or something else, and formulate their actions in response to their comprehension of reality, such as punishing a real or imagined conspiracy .

When this Geertzian concept is applied, for instance, to the study of Chinese films the same kind of knowledge is required of the systems of meanings associated with what is visually and aurally presented in the context of Chinese culture.[267] Since any comprehensive methodology in *this* case must pay attention to the *mediations* which intervene between reality and its representation, emphasis must also be placed on narrative stucture, genre conventions, style and so forth... rather than only seek the correctness of the reality, prototype portrayed. Hence, in order to read Chinese films in the native way, one has to know what phenomena (scenes, shots, action, etc.) one has to look for and know what the Chinese way of relating these phenomena is. This of course poses a number of difficulties. *Speaking for others*, thereby reproducing ourselves as "universals" may / will misspeak 'the critical localism' (or difference) of this very 'other'. As a critical reading of Geertz implies -- or indeed as the hermenutic tradition of Gadamer has underlined -- total knowledge of the 'other' is based in pure delusion. There is no innocent perception : all observation is interaction, and ultimately changes the persons observed. As pointed out here-above, the cinema is in itself little more than a 'cultural product', and cinematic depiction of the 'other' therefore reinforces rather than it alleviates the frustrating limitations of our perception of difference.

Yet an awareness of these pitfalls never discouraged Geertz from attempting to read culture "over the shoulder of those to whom it properly belongs".[268] This image is indeed a striking one, the sharing / not sharing of a text with the shadow of the ethnographer behind and above the native, hidden and yet at the top of the hierarchy of understanding. As Crapanzano aptly remarked, it is in the light of such shadow that the best defense of the Other is to refrain from telling all about its Self -- a reason that

267. See Jenny Kwok Wah Loh, *A Cultural Interpretation of the Popular Cinema of China and Hong Kong*, in C. Berry (ed.), <u>Chinese Cinema</u>, BFI, London, 1991, pp.166-173.
268. In Geertz, C, "Deep play : Notes on the Balinese Cockfight" in *Myth, Symbol and Culture* Ed. By Geertz, New York, WW Norton, 1971, p.21.

"Zeus understood when Hermes promised not to tell lies but did not promise to tell all the truth"[269].

II - 2 - Gellner's excessive charity : a diagnosis but still no remedies.

Overcoming Hermes' dilemma is a task that has obsessed anthropologists and i.r. academics alike. Ernst Gellner's *Concepts and Society* [270] follows the argument that : (a) contemporary anthropologists insist on interpreting exotic concepts and beliefs within a social context but (b) in doing so they ensure that apparently absurd or incoherent assertions are always given an acceptable meaning, and that (c) while the contextual method of interpretation is in principle valid, the "excessive charity" that usually goes with it is not. Gellner concept of 'excessive charity' is displayed as follows :

> The situation facing the social anthropologist who wishes to interpret a concept, assertion or doctrine in an alien culture, is basically simple. He *[sic.]* is, say, faced with an assertion *S* in the local language . He has at his disposal the large or infinite set of possible sentences in his own language [...] There is no third language which could mediate between the native language and his own, in which equivalences could be stated and which would avoid the pitfalls arising from the fact that his own language has its own way of handling the world, which may not be those of the native language studied, and which consequently are liable to distort that which is being translated.
> Naively, people sometimes think that *reality* itself could be this kind of mediator and "third language" [...] For a variety of powerful reasons this is of course no good.[271]

And yet Gellner, too -- according to Asad's reading thereof -- fails to complement his diagnosis with viable remedies. The *writing* of culture -- or the *speaking for* the other -- he proclaims are always seriously flawed, are correctly depicted, dissected and critically assessed in their ability -- or indeed their good-will -- to make the Other a part of our story. Some more crucial aspects of interpretation, however, remain ignored, such as, for instance those related to the 'inequality of languages' (and by suggesting inequality one should not presuppose a relation of subordination) -- an issue also silenced by the hermeneutical project. Indeed, 'cultural translation' must always accommodate itself to a different language not only in the sense of English as opposed

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269. Crapanzano, in Clifford and Marcus, *op.cit*, p.76.
270. see T. Asad, *The Concept of Cultural Translation* in Clifford & Marcus *op.cit*, p145.
271. *Ibid*, p146.

to Kabbashi Arabic, but also in the sense of a British, middle-class, academic game as opposed to the modes of the 'tribal' Sudan. In that sense,

> ... the stiffness of a powerful established structure of life, with its own discursive games, its own 'strong' languages, is along other things what finally determines the effectiveness of the translation. The translation is addressed to a very specific audience, which is willing to read *about* another mode of life and to manipulate the text it reads according to established rules, not ot learn to *live* a new mode of life.[272]

In that light, the very act of translation can be seen as little more than mere *verbal representation.*, akin in structure and intent to the visual representations previously discussed in this thesis. Reading the *implicit* in the alien culture, one must bear in sight that only too often it is the translator, the reader, who assigns its status as the *author* of its subject matter -- with processes of subjugation so very often pervading the very tissue of the translation -- both a discursive and non-discursive practice. These asymmetries, once again, need to be brought to the fore in all 'readings' that hope to unravel a path that forgoes the conceit of location and genuinely opens space for other voices to be heard.

II - 3 - The unequal burden of culture : resisting systematisation.

A final, but nonetheless crucial warning issued from the discipline of critical anthropology : although the function of the decoder or interpreter in the imposition of meaning on cultural forms is theoretically recognised, this recognition is again effectively ruled out in actual analytical practice. The possibility that the same text may be differently interpreted by different people, and may hence carry a vast array of diverging 'meanings' for different people is never seriously entertained. If it were the case, culture would have to be conceptualised as consisting of all the different meanings imposed on the shared forms, or, the shared forms would need to be perceived as part of a number of more or less different cultures. This is what undermines Geertz's assignment of meaning on the Balinese cockfights -- or indeed undermines much of the wishful thinking of those who forcefully proclaimed in the aftermath of the Pearl Harbour attack or the Vietnam War, that had politicians paid more attention to ethnographic accounts of the Japanese or the Vietnamese, the ensuing horrors would never have occurred. It is this systematisation that Wosley condemned thus :

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272. *Ibid.* p.159.

A spurious unity is projected on other's beliefs by outside observers [...] This oversystematisation of belief [...] is a natural disease of academics, a consequence, again of their specialised role in the division of labour as dealers of ideas.[273]

Analyses of culture which on the other hand have been more sensitive to the actors' comprehension of cultural forms and to their specific role in cultural innovation and / or the perpetuation of tradition, have also proven that culture is not a burden that each party carries equally. It is through this notion that cultural analysis has in the most recent years reconciled itself with sociology of knowledge in admitting that the same cultural form may be a symbol and a sign at the same time : a symbol for some and a sign for others. It is the very dynamism inherent in the shift from one of these two motivations to another (or shifts from one kind of comprehension of cultural forms to another) which determines both the persistence of a cultural tradition or its change. These shifts, argues Holy, "are part of the communicative process through which the actors constitute, reproduce and change their culture".

Understanding that culture is a dynamic process which actors appropriate differently and in which individuals -- rather than only collective forces -- play an important part in the creation of representational systems, makes it possible to read the Other in a less static manner. It allows us to appreciate how cultural traditions could have persisted as "collective representations" without the present members of the collectivity being aware of the meaning of these representations -- "which persist not because they are meaningful symbols, but because they are meaningful signs".[274] It also allows for a *reading* of the Other that is not only based on an hermeneutical -- or textually-based -- model, i.e., a primarily *cognitive* model. Such revision recognises that the Other's culture can sometimes be a mere mental phenomenon sustained in existence only by those who use and manipulate it, and that culture does not only fulfil a cognitive, but also practical function -- which facilitates interaction and pragmatic integration.[275]

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273. Holy, L., *Culture, Cognition and Practical Interaction*, in <u>Cultural Dynamics</u>. Vol.II, No.3, 1989.p.275.
274. *Ibid*, p.282.
275. This is a view that regards not all communication to be meaningful, some fulfilling merely a social function (what Bronislaw Malinovsky called "phatic communication" Holy *op cit* . p.279)

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The main body of this section can be summarised by the following points :

• There is no 'grammar of universalisation', hence no set of guiding assumptions in which our approach to the Other can be safely vested. The heretofore systematic application of the mirror-image in diplomacy and intelligence has in practice proven to lead both to : a) a failure in assessing accurately the Other (over- / under-rating or simply ignoring its differing construct of rationality) that led ultimately to closure and an often unnecessary construction of alterity at times when conversation might have proven salutary; and b) a conceit in the fixity of standpoint 'from the West' that strengthened lines of dissent and resistance rather than making the silenced's own notion of i.r. conduct more accessible -- or at least enlightening to the Occident. It makes sense that in theory we began to accept the notion of contingency without indulging in the 'incommensurability thesis'.

• This acknowledgement may begin by focusing on the most elementary -- and in this sense universal -- core of social praxis and communication : language.

• By shifting attention away from the abstract -- though central -- system of 'langue' to the concrete heterogeneity of 'parole' (the dialogical, conversational nature of language) we begin to see tresspassings, intertextual affinities between disciplines and texts, the verbal and the visual -- that facilitate the establishment of viable conversational practices. The Other is never irremediably shut away from our spheres of knowledge and apprehension.

• Social anthropology, human science *par excellence* (and one that surpasses in scholarship i.r's attention to the contentious binarisms of Self / Other), may, if cautiously and not exclusively administered, teach our discipline how not to fall victim to the delusions of "understanding" and "explaining". Though professing that no test tube resists the unexpected and unquantifiable nature of our species and guarantees that our reading of difference reaches completion, its self-critical proceedings leave room for a less naive, more open-minded and sensitive disclosure to begin.

Section II - Reading China

Though it is hoped that the exegetic framework devised will contain general validity on the "opening to the Other" process, it will be developed within the state-specific context of The People's Republic of China.

Choosing just one amongst so many Others may rise the cynic's eyebrow. Why indeed has it been so violently claimed that universalisms are defunct, but that generalising about the different feeds rather than famishes the stereotyping and closures one seeks to denounce, that this very Section dissects merely one of so many ignored, feared or misunderstood Others ? There are many 'practical' reasons for doing so, the most obvious being that this section is a 'case-study' and as such, wishes to illustrate and not to bring ready-made answers that would befit all. As a case-study it misses out on other stories, other directions. As a case-study, however, it has some advantages of depth, focus and clarity, and most importantly, of engaging a conversation that may provoke more to follow.

Why China ?

China has been selected for a variety of reasons. It offers first of all one of the most ancient and undiluted forms of universalist belief, opposed in its ethnocentrism to that of the West. Its epistemological underpinnings rank amongst the most sophisticated in the world, yet have remained largely ignored by Western political philosophers and social scientists engaged in the writing of i.r.. A long-drawn isolationism coupled with a disconcerting interpretation of Communism and re-interpretation of the world have established China as a tremendously provocative model of difference. Its rejection of any political form of assimilation to 'the West'-- as witnessed during the repression at Tienanmen or indeed its stark cultural censorship -- question much of modernist claims of globalisation. Its increasing use of image technology however suggests that intertextual influences do permeate China's fabric. The Chinese film-industry has nonetheless consistently expressed its faith in developing a *purely national* film-aesthetic and its ability to deal best with the immediate problems in a society it knows at first hand. By successfully exporting some of these images to the West -- an exportation India or Egypt never sought in the same way -- filmmakers have proven that space for a genuine dialogue exists, without necessarily the need for representational practices to cater for dominant expectations.

Methodologically, a less slenderly acquainted student of the Far East, might not have chosen such a tortuous path to 'read' and introduce this Other's epistemologies into our field. The unspecialised gaze has nevertheless tremendous advantages. Not knowing 'enough' about China's ontology seems endemic to most scholars in our field, and the process of deciphering, of reading, and interpreting -- i.e. 'bringing in' new visions of the world, new senses of Self into our Occidental premises -- from a Western perspective , is a step that, with time and hope, could create a path many will tread. The two films that will serve to exercise our gaze in moving beyond the stereotypical landscapes of difference and truly engage a 'reading', have strategically been selected to cover the ground from the beginning of China's "Open Door Policy" in the mid-eighties to its closure in the early Nineties (a policy which in itself never led to the dilution of China's Otherness). They have been chosen for their ability to best express the many ambiguities and contradictions of Difference -- the economical, cultural and political webs this particular Other has spun or been spun into.

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There is a scene in Hergé's famous *Tintin and the Blue Lotus* in which our Belgian hero rescues a little Chinese boy from the tormented waters of a river and is flabbergasted to discover, as his friendship and knowledge of this region grow, that at least not *all* Chinese are snake-eating, opium-smoking, women-torturing, infant-drowning creatures. There is unfortunately always a layer of truth burried deep beneath the laughable stereotypes Hergé dismantles. China has always been an enigma to the Self of the West, and one may well contend that despite satellite dishes, tourism and the general euphoria accompanying globalisation, China and its billion citizens might indeed remain cryptic to the rest of the world if its challenge to and re-interpretation of the world is not taken with greater consideration.

In spite of the undeniable brevity and incompleteness of the genealogy that follows, it must be remembered that, to quote Edmund Burke : *"the biggest mistake was made by he who did nothing because he could only do a little"*... And indeed it might be suggested that even the faintest cross-fertilization of Chinese and Western methodologies, epistemologies and visions -- as it draws attention to the biased and culturally conditioned construction of 'reality' and Self -- could favourably support i.r. theory in its fledgling attempts to overcome ethnocentric ignorance and the many misunderstandings induced by a fragmentation of world-views.

I - Towards another writing of IR : shedding light on China's ancient political philosophy.

Chinese culture is all Art and Ethics. Western culture is all Science and Law. This is one of their most obvious difference.

- Wu Sen.

As Ancient Greece viewed itself as the centre of the civilised world, as medieval Christian Europe thought of Jerusalem as the centre of the universe, or India looked down upon its neighbours as barbarians perenially relegated to the peripheries of happening, so too the Chinese viewed China as the sole centre of the world and the centre of all humanity. As Adda Bozeman emphasised :

> Every intellectual effort to understand the place of the "Middle Kingdom" in contemporary world affairs, be it as a member of twentieth century world organisations or as a participant in twentieth century Asian politics, should issue from a preliminary understanding of these views.[276]

Understanding this self-interpretation would indeed shed an invaluable light on China's complex evolution in international history as well as account for the Three-World Theory underpining her approach to i.r.. This latter rationale indeed permeated her stance during the whole course of the Cold-War -- viewing the world as fundamentally tripolar, with both the US and the USSR conflated in one pole, China firmly established in another as virtous leader of the Third World, and the third formed by all those who had not quite made up their minds. What we seem to have are all the ingredients of classical bipolarity, good facing evil, with a re-distribution of the cards in China's favour. What was overwhelmingly discarded as presenting too simplistic a *Weltanschauung* and subsequently ignored had "...in its craftsmanship consummed expanses of Chinese ritual, rhetoric, strategy, sense of isolation, and a poeticised form of epistemology".[277] This 'poeticised form of epistemology' -- one that favours a correlative or narrative approach to the world, vesting its discursive efforts in the elaboration of poems, stories or aphorism -- can be traced as far back as the Chou dynasty (1066 - 770 BC). It is not our intention to assume that China's re-entry in the world, or indeed her frequent glimpses into 'our' world (be it after Mao's death, at Tienanmen in April and May 1989 or hypothetically after 1997), could cancel the memory of generations of Chinese and Asians that saw China as a relentlessly separate and self-sufficient world; a world whose normative principles, starkly restated and

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276. A. Bozeman, Politics and Culture in International Theory, Princeton University Press, 1960, p.133.
277. Chan *op.cit*, p438

expanded by Confucius in the Sixth Century BC, still govern her contemporary beliefs and actions.

China's relationship to warfare and generally to the views held by i.r.'s neo-realism were recently the object of scrutiny of some of our field's more inquisitive scholars . What held their attention most was China's own notion of dualism. Contrary to Western juxtapositions of good / evil, war / peace, order / chaos, self / other etc., which impairs one side of the equation with moral superiority and seeks its dominance over the other, a Chinese view of the same would draw heavily from Taoism, explicitly rejecting such conceptualising. The Yin-Yang philosophy at the core of this school holds opposites as complementary, and hence irretrivably linked. Neither can exist without the other, hence events and actors are always interdependent and no transcendent source determines actions :

> Structures mediate thought and behaviours of agents, but the will of agents also influences structures. From this view, structures are not accepted as given and unchangeable, particularly the ones that may be responsible for a great deal of conflict. [278]

This view of world order had little if no intellectual impact on an international level. On a national level however these highly influenced every strata of inter-personal or inter-social interaction for millenia. Confucian thought -- which derives its notions of order and hierarchy from an aspiring attempt to reconquer a lost 'Tao', or path towards harmony -- can be said to represent, by virtue of its longevity, the greatest success story of normative theory impinging on social forces.

Confucianism centres around five cardinal sets of relationships : sovereign-subject, old-young, father-son, husband-wife, friend-friend. These are believed to form the ordered and hierarchical core of all human interaction and hence explain the virtual absence of anarchy in Chinese cosmology -- or at least in its Confucian core. The one central assumption all Chinese share, is, according to Benjamin Schwartz :

> the idea of a universal, all embracing sociopolitical order centering on the concept of a cosmically based universal kinship; the more general idea of the primacy of order in both the cosmic and human spheres; and the dominant tendency towards a holistic, immanentist view of order.[279]

Each unit in this sino-centric system has according to its central Confucian doctrine, a very specific place and function within the pyramidal structure that link all

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278. Bleiker, *op.cit.*, p.406.
279. *Ibid*, p.416

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humans to another, all citizens to the emperor, all emperors to Heaven. Beginning with the absolutist dictates of Qin Shi Hang, China's first feudal emperor, the notion of supreme authority -- one which stands above the people and guides them to their destiny -- is one central to any approach to the People's Republic today. Understanding their sense of Self -- in which *ta wo* (a Greater Self concerned with society and humanity as a whole) has always precedent over *hsiao wo* (the Smaller Self referring to the individual's own desires that is so central to the West) -- proves fundamental to unlocking the patterns of social and political stability and change. This reduction of any central sense of 'individuality' merged with a strong stress on patriarchy, a characteristic of China's cohesive family life ever since its inception, also explains how the norms and behaviours of such family were increasingly adapted to befit political conduct. Paradoxically, the Cultural Revolution -- that tried so violently to eradicate these principles' impingements on the ways and lives of Chinese citizens -- was itself inextricably part and parcel of such framework. Mao and Deng's complex appropriation and re-interpretation of Soviet Marxism and its French inflections, was indeed most heavily indebted to autochtonous sources, precisely extracted from within the well of traditional tales that rooted its popular cosmologies. Mao, for instance, was a devoted reader of *The Water Margin* , Shih Nai An's 13th Century epic novel which tells the story of 108 outlaws, each alledgedly 'born under a star' -- each "heaven's instrument to depose those who had disqualified themselves from heaven's mandate".[280] Armed, amongst other things, with a red stars on their caps, Mao's recruits thus marched, from village to village, implicitly as reincarnations of these mythical heroes. The Cultural Revolution, despite its claim to bypass / reduce Confucian traditionalism, was not only strongly reliant on this very tradition and accompanying fables to mobilise and enthuse the masses -- but, cast in terms of unity of purpose and of total devotion to a very disparate -- and mostly literary -- set of ideological principles, this revolution hence ironically demonstrated the length to which folkloric / fictional beliefs can be taken whilst re-interpretating the rest of the world.

A greater knowledge of Confucian perspectives would certainly also lift a few layers from the opaque veil surrounding the Chinese mystique of political action. It would for instance account for Chinese perceptions of an immanent or cyclical history, that fuses all perceptions of time into a state of immediate awareness. Or account for Chinese philosophy's distrust for the power of *logos* and reason -- a distrust most explicitly represented in Chuang Tzu's anti-rationalist writings -- as in his second of seven *Inner Chapters* called "The Sorting which Evens Things Out".[281] Rejecting

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280. S. Chan, *A Summer Polemic : Revolution, Rebellion and Romance. Some notes towards the resacralisation of IR*, Paradigms. Vol.7, No.1, Summer 1993, p.96.
281. Chuang Tzu, The Inner Chapters. Unwin, London, 1986, p.48.

dualism and undertsanding Confucianism would also explain why the main focus of Chinese thought is not searching for truth, but locating the path that may lead to truth. Not understanding the world, but making Man great. Not determining the causes of war, but establishing the conditions for peace.[282]

II - Between the ancient and the modern : the *Yin* and *Yang* of televisual practices.

Neo-Confucian dogma in an age of televisual practices further complicates the *rapport* between 'our' and 'their' colonization of imagination for political ends. The resistance movement in China, with its emphasis on 'democracy' and defiance against the tradition of autocratic rule could certainly not have had its voice heralded without television. Though inherently authoritarian -- as a monopolised tool of the empowered institutions -- China's television system as a promoter of national modernisation increasingly backfires. As James Lull remarks,

> ... despite [the government's] intentions, a 'single leader, single voice' complementarity of communist politics and modern communications technology, wherein official mandates are diffused efficiently and unproblematically through the electronic wizardry of television, has not taken place. [...] TV exaggerates and intensifies each stream of information in the ideological flood that it cumulatively delivers to its audiences, producing an electronic amplification of contradiction that has dramatically altered the nation's cultural and political contours.[283]

The flow of paradoxical tensions that have beset China since 1979 -- ranging from technological modernisation to cultural expansion whilst attempting to maintain a nationalism deeply rooted in the Taoist epistemology refered to above -- has led to a form of internal schizophrenia from which televisual alternative subversive practices burgeonned. Coupled with an increasing awareness of the *polysemic* power of the image, these ill-defined contradictions were soon articulated and diffused through the controversial series *River Elegy* in the mid-eighties.[284] This series forcefully highlighted the compelling role television had gained in China's society and the hitherto

282. Bleiker, *op.cit.*, p.411.
283. J. Lull, China Turned on : Television. Reform and resistance, Routledge, New York, 1991, p.208-9.
284. A six-part television series that was shown on CCTV in 1988 *River Elegy*, attacked traditional Chinese culture by claiming that some of the Republic's most revered symbols -- the Yellow River, The Great Wall, the Dragon, mythic Confucianism -- actually represent China's backwardness and passivity, not its greatness. The series argue that China fell behind other nations in the development of a modern civilization because of a persistent inward orientation, a fixation on the feudal habits of the land that led to isolation from the rest of the world. A line from the series goes for instance as follows : "This yellow land cannot teach us the true spirit of science, nor can the fierce Yellow River reveal the true consciousness of democracy". Audience members became intimately involved with the series because of the inviting, open-ended structure and tone therein employed -- an approach that contrasted sharply with the implicit messages of propaganda films.

unparalleled communicative force of cinematic story-telling as an ideological mine-field for its viewers. *River Elegy* is said to have most adequately portrayed China as 'subject in crisis', having stimulated political resistance throughout the People's Republic and led to the still-born Beijing Spring of April 1989.

The extent to which China is indeed 'changing' through the cybernetic twist of televisual appropriation, or becoming more transparent to our occidental gaze because of satellised imperatives, remains at a purely speculative level. As before all basic characteristics of this particular Other invite disctinctive interpretative practices grounded in historical and philosphical knowledge and above all linguistic awareness. Language is never as problematic as in China. Here every spoken and written character calls for a careful decoding and falls easily prey, as mentioned, to polysemic translation. If this is already true for a Chinese, it becomes a deconstructive inferno for the non-native. For instance in spoken Mandarin (only recently nationalised as China's official language and reluctantly used by many Cantonese) each sound can be expressed in four tones : flat, ascending, descending and a combination of ascending and descending. The meaning of the utterance crucially relies upon these inflections and very subtle shifts of emphasis must sometimes be deciphered. Written Chinese characters also require such interpretative athletism as they are individually far less denotative than the basic symbols of other language groups.[285] More aesthetic than it is efficient, the language itself thus encourages playful articulations and interpretations all the more tempting in a climate that is politically repressive. This characteristically Chinese play on ambiguity spills over and beyond the written or spoken into the non-verbal. Gestures, body-movements, facial expressions etc. are all equally subtle and unavoidable determinants of meaning. A strategic coordination of these frail signs as sent from sources of public messages -- TV, journalists, filmmakers... -- to the audiences makes unofficial communication possible, starkly toying with the many ambiguities between linguistic resistance and control.

To re-enter China in our discourses therefore tests our ability to 'read' the political in the aesthetic, or indeed capture the aesthetic in the political -- a mental exercise best put in practice when investigating the 'meaning' of Chinese films, a more challenging extension to the televisual narratives. To this we turn next.

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285. Lull, *op.cit*, p.218.

III - Chinese cinema and political identity : the contested voice of the Fifth Generation.

In the last few years, and ironically precipitated by the events of Tiananmen, and the demise of the 'Beijing Spring', Chinese feature films have become more easily accessible to a wider non-indigenous population. After decades of severely curtailed film production and effective cultural isolation, a surprisingly high number of China's most recent films were indeed submitted to international juries at Cannes, Venice and other festivals from which most of them received unprecedented acclaim and attention. The success of this very generation of filmmakers peaked in 1988 when *Red Sorghum*, Zhang Yimou's first film as a director, won the coveted award for best foreign film at the West Berlin Film Festival. Despite the favourable attention this film and those of the so-called Fifth Generation[286] have in general received, there have always been serious objections in Beijing to their cultural and political implications. This essentially contested re-entry of Chinese representational practises will be the focus of our study.

III - 1 - Historical and political context.

This focus should however not obscure China's long film-making tradition to which these new films are clearly indebted. The tradition of 'electric shadowplays' (as it was then called) indeed developed from as early as the immediate aftermath of the Chinese Revolution of 1911 -- which had overthrown the Manchu dynasty -- and especially since the May 4th Movement -- a massive student demonstration organized in Beijing in 1919 against the Paris Conference's decision to give the German concessions in Shandong to the Japanese. The May 4th Movement had planted the seeds of intellectual endeavour within the political life of the future People's Republic. Heavily disappointed by the Guomindang's corruption and by its supine attitude in the face of the menace of foreign imperialism, they placed most of their hopes on the Communist Party. This was, as we mentioned above, an appropriated and transformed version of communism -- one inspired by but certainly not *based on* occidental prototypes. Its firm epistemological closure to the West explains how it is possible that the League and *this* version of communism could act as *modernising* agencies even if their core was in no way *modernist*.

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286. The classification based on 'generations' refers to age-stratas and ideological / stylistic turning points in Chinese filmmaking, from its officialisation in 1913 onward. It is generally accepted that the five generations are directors of silent films, directors of sound films (1930's and 1940's), directors between the period of post-Liberation and the end of the Cultural Revolution, directors directly filming after the Cultural Revolution annd recent graduates of the Beijing Film Institute (the first after the Cultural Revolution) in 1982.

The CP went underground after 1927. Its membership nonetheless expanded after the loss of Manchuria when it indeed became clear that the Guonmindang was inefficient -- content merely to contain the Japanese and primarily concerned for the elimination of its own political opponents. It was in this context that the League of Left Writers was formed followed within a few years by the League of Left Dramatists in January 1931.

It was not until the Japanese strike on Shenyang, the occupation of Manchuria by Japanese troops and their subsequent attack on Shanghai on January 28th 1932, that the Left grew aware that cinema could greatly contribute to resistance. An article by Hong Shen, published in 1934 and reviewing the 66 productions of 1933 ("the year of Chinese cinema") classified all of them as raising the great problems of the period in three main categories : 1) anti-imperialist films; 2) anti-feudal films and 3) 'denunciatory' films. This pattern left a deep imprint on the productions that were to follow -- climaxing with the militancy latent in most post-WW II films, all anti-Japanese, all denouncing Guomindang corruption.

When the Communists took power in 1949, and when Taiwan broke-off, the Party's primary concern with consolidation brought them naturally to take over the film-making apparatus -- with the support of Soviet finances. From then, Chinese cinema became thoroughly determined by the didactic requirements of the Party. Mao's Yan'an Talks on Literature and Arts established as early as 1942 that all aspects of national culture were ultimately at the command of high politics. In an article inspired by the Chairman's speech, "Films for the Millions", Zhang Junxiang wrote :

> Our cinema is for the sake of the workers who are putting all their efforts in the construction of a new China for themselves and their children. They do not wish to be cut off from reality and are investigating the way to progress, inspiration in their work and models to follow... What they like are films covering peoples' struggles against the former oppression, showng the revolution's battles and the immense effort of constructing socialism.[287]

Realism thus soon became subordinated to the more abstract demands of socialist ideology.

'Modern Chinese cinema history' -- which is agreed to have sprung from Mao's speech[288] -- is generally discussed as divided into three periods : one period of

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287. Downing, J. (ed.), Film and Politics in the Third World, Autonomedia, New York, 1987, p.190.
288. His doctrine that 'art must not only aim at imitating life, but to transcend it' was widely adopted as the ruling motto of this first amongst vehemently *Chinese* schools of filmmaking. See *Elements D'Histoire du*

seventeen years (until the launching of the Cultural Revolution) and two periods of ten years each. The dominant ideology of the first of these three periods was political utilitarianism. Its erroneous policies inevitably led to the destruction of most of the industry during the span of the Great Leap Forward. The first of the latter periods indeed refers to 1966-76, from the beginning of the Revolution to Mao's death. During this disastrous time, going to the cinema was practically the only cultural activity availabe to the mass. However uninteresting the films were, however transparent the propaganda they contained, they could never fail commercially. When a movie happened to raise objections, it was the film's director alone who would bear the political responsibility for not satisfying popular demand and suffer adequate punishment. This suffocating atmosphere coupling intellectual terror with physical maltreatment discouraged a clear majority of film-makers from displaying social criticism and artistic innovation. It is on the ruins of a devasted cultural field that the film-industry battled in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution.

Himself a victim of the Cultural Revolution, Deng Xiaoping was officially rehabilitated in July 1977, when he assumed power as part of a triumvirate. The following year, under Deng's leadership, the People's Republic reinstituted nationwide college entrance examinations and permitted the reopening of the Beijing Film Academy. The short lived 'Democracy Movement' of 1979 -- leaving a permanent imprint on the poetry and literature of the generation to come, the reopening of China to tourism, the launching of Deng's economic reforms, and an increasing access to world cinema, all provided as many fissures for a new generation of artists to explore. The Party now refrained from using the discredited method of the mass movement to carry out the suppression of dissident opinion -- evolving from open interference and public punishment to an "internal" settling of problems. This allowed a little more manoeuvring space to dissident voices (i.e.fissures of internal otherness which did not accept China's ideological and aesthetic isolationism from the rest of the world). It is amidst this breathing space that the New Chinese Cinema was able to spread its fledgling wings.

As critic Shao Mujun warns,

> The special political environment in which New Chinese Cinema was situated in the period of its inception and development determined not only its characteristics but also the limitations within which its output had to be confined. An audience not familiar with the history and present condition of Chinese cinema, particularly a foreign audience, might

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cinéma chinois, by the Chinese Cinematèque of Beijing, as translated by the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1985,

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find difficulty in appreciating the films of the New Chinese
Cinema and might even misinterpret them.[289]

The most important breakthrough in terms of cinematic innovation and political
dissidence was made by the 'Fifth Generation'. Like their predecessors, they were
taught not only film history, theory and practices but also political economy, ideological
theory and CCP history -- in short, trained to make the sort of films needed by the
government. Their teens were spent amidst the fractures of the Cultural Revolution --
plunged in the anthologies of Mao's *Thoughts*. Yet their main asset was that they had
all been born *after* 1949, and their lack of personal experience of the 'old society' left
them less open to the propaganda claiming that all is far better now than it was then.
Freshly graduated in 1982, they were able to begin working immediately and were
greatly encouraged in 1984 by the crash of the "Gang of Four", leaders of the Cultural
Revolution. Esther Yau has claimed that this very event is a determinant for an accurate
understanding of the socio-political climate underpinning their work, for it is only in
1984, "when China becomes a phenomenon of the 'post-' -- a nation fragmented by
and suffering from the collapse of faith in the [stubbornly Chinese version of] modern,
socialist politics and culture -- [that] the search for meaning by the perturbed Chinese
character begins to occupy the electric shadows of the new Chinese Cinema.[290]

III - 2 - Semantic Underpinnings.

Though very distinctive works were produced by this generation, the following
characterise their style:

• Their first concern is not to represent the aspiration of the State but the plural and
complex identity of the people.
• Their interest in national characteristics and national culture is greater than their
concern for the realities of every day life.
• All share a desire to reject the primacy of literary qualities of film - traditional in
Chinese filmmaking - and emphasise instead cinematic qualities relying on visual /

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289. S. Mujun in Eder & Rossel, New Chinese Cinema, NFT, London, 1993, p.29
290. Yau, in Chris Berry (ed.), Perspectives on Chinese Cinema, BFI, London, 1991, p.62. On a more
professional basis however, they were immensely helped by the breathing room found in a space opened for a
Third Generation figure. Indeed, during the late Seventies and early Eighties, as Deng was scrambling for
foreign capital to finance his modernization drive, his attendant cultural diplomacy included the promotion of
Xie Jin, a recently rehabilitated Third Generation filmmaker made to symbolize the liberalization of China.
Whilst he was sent to the United States with a retrospective of his films the younger generation was already
shooting and attracting increasing attention. By 1987, foreign investors had grown used to China, the need
for cultural diplomacy had drastically lessened and the critics had passed over Xie Jin to the young upstarts of
the Fifth Generation.

painterly elements and the dynamic interrelations between image and sound to express their perceptions.

The Fifth Generation are indeed largely responsible for the 're-writing' of the more traditional and politically committed language of Chinese cinema. Although they continue to draw on literary sources, they no longer use melodrama as the main structuring principle, but instead start with a potential story and in the process of telling it, fragment it into smaller temporal units. Such fragmentation turns film as finished product into films as process so that the many cultural voices that speak in it can be revealed. In that sense, their films are not so much stories as discourses commenting upon the broader cultural and political context from which they came.

III - 3 - A Voice of the Self, yes, but for who ?

Mostly heavily censured at 'home' and therefore marginal in reception, they nonetheless provide one of the most direct means for apprehending Chinese contemporary identity *in and for the West* . It is through the lenses of these particularly contested filmmakers that China entered the cultural imagination of our side of the hemisphere and that its Self was either discovered or re-considered. They are certainly not representative of all Chinese culture, and some Chinese may argue that New Chinese Cinema has nothing at all to say except to quench yet another Orientalist thirst *abroad.* The alarming hostility these films received at Deng's court and their general vilification from the inside out should not deny their status as representative texts of a certain China eager to be deciphered. A China that partakes in the world's market economy -- hence operating in an ideological context that is no longer *uniquely* Chinese (as it was during the Cultural Revolution) and yet still resists both ideologically and epistemologically any imprint from the Occident. It is in this context of double alienation, from within and from without, that these readings will attempt to address the challenge Section I contemplated.

This chapter is not intended as a full-scale analysis of all the films that the Fifth Generation released in our theatres. These encompass amongst others, *One and Eight* (1983); *Yellow Earth* (1984); *On The Hunting Ground* (1984); *Horse Thief* (1986); *Big Parade* (1986) *Red Sorghum* (1987); *King of the Children* (1987); *Women's Story* (1987); *The Old Well* (1987); *Code Name Cougar* (1988);*Ju Dou* (1989); *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991); *The Story of Qui Ju* (1992); *Farewell My Concubine* (1993); *To Live* (1994); *The Blue Kite* (1994) *Shanghai Triad* (1995)... Instead of summarising them all with an unfair and unavoidable tele-grammatic terseness, two have been selected amongst the many. These were chosen because they illustrate two

distinct periods of this generation's filmic practice (separated by a decade of ideological, intellectual and technological ripening process). They offer, each in its own idiosyncratic way very suggestive samples of the challenges faced by a China transformed by and transforming itself through its exercise in cinematic self-representation. The following studies hope to show the relevance of these somewhat exclusionary choices.

a) The case of *Yellow Earth* (1984).

> Taking the history of an ancient nation as its object of representation, *Yellow Earth* has itself taken a place in history. Simply speaking, after [it] appeared in 1984, noone, no matter with what attitude, could look upon Chinese films as in the past, before *Yellow Earth* was made. [...] An Oriental culture had produced a film authentic by all international standards, that was aimed at them. [...] This was a film likely to be regarded as a proclamation of hope and change, in which the leading roles are not only characters, but the yellow earth from which the Chinese people arose. They saw indeed a true Chinese story.[291]

Yellow Earth is a political allegory. Yet because its allegory is never overt it was embraced with considerable hostility by the older members of a Chinese film establishment not prepared for the subtle hues of ambiguity. It triumphed nonetheless at the 1985 Hong Kong Film Festival. With a 99% Chinese audience this recognition meant that its impact on China itself could not be dismissed as an aberration. One of the directors of the Fifth Generation, Tian Zhuangzhuang claimed in 1986 that this particular film represented the future of Chinese cinema as a whole[292]; that it was the most provokingly 'different' film to have been made for decades. It was this very difference which initially alienated and challenged local audiences -- long used to stereotyped storylines with overt political messages. *Yellow Earth* on the contrary emphasised imagery over plot, symbolism and song over dialogue, ambiguity over explicit didactic function. As Chen put it : "a single word sums up the essence of the film's style : 'concealment' (*cáng*)". How then can an audience -- let alone a Western one -- 'read' a film which consciously 'conceals' its meaning ?

Esther Yau's *Western Analysis of a Non-Western Text* raises the questions that most haunt our chapter :

> What is the relationship between aesthetic practices and the political discourse of this film ? In what way is the text

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291. Ni Zhen in Semsel, G., Chen Xihe & Xia Hong [Eds.], <u>Films in Contemporary China - critical debates 1979 -1989.</u> Prager, N.Y., 1993, p.31.
292. Hitchcock, p.154

different from and incommensurable with the master narratives (socialist dogma, mainstream film-making, classical editing style, etc.); in what way is it 'already written' (by patriarchy especially) as an ideological production of that culture and society; and finally, how does this non-Western text elude the logocentric character of Western textual analysis as well as the sweeping historicism of cultural criticism ?[2][93]

The film's conception and its musical mode were originally inspired by one of the trite literary screenplays which glorified peasantry and the early days of the socialist revolution : a soldier influenced a peasant girl to sever the bonds tying her to her feudal family. The plot is indeed deceptively simple : In 1939, an Eighth Route Armyman, Guo Qing, is sent into a border region of the Shaanxi Province in Northern China to collect folk songs that could be used as rallying cries in the war waged against Japan. A local farmer and his two children, Cui Qiao, a teen-aged girl and her younger brother accomodate him. The film thus focuses intensely on the family -- which in its sense of cohesion is a highly symbolic unit of Confucian culture, the fundamental place within which to view and examine the psychological world of the Chinese best. The only daughter, Cui Qiao establishes a relationship with this curious middle-aged outsider, but after he leaves, promising to return for her, her father persists in her marriage to a man she does not love. This forced marriage and the desperation that ensues impells Cui Qiao to steal down the turbulent Yellow River in a small boat, towards her apparent death. Too late the cadre returns to find the land parched, and the local men praying for rain.

After months of observation carried out in Shaanxi, Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou shaped and re-focused the cultural and aesthetic elements that would so disturb their audiences. The structure of the traditional story was kept, but *Yellow Earth* conjured many political and epistemological ambiguities enmeshed in a fundamentally aesthetic language. Yau remarks that the text itself set up two complementary forms of 'subversive pleasures' : "a hermeneutic movement prompts the organisation of cinematic discourse to hold interest, while the Taoist aesthetic contemplation releases that narrative hold from time to time".[294] The text perpetually shifts from an ambiguous statement on class (backwardness of peasants before the Liberation) to a statement of culture (the enclosure of patriarchy) to encode Ciu Qiao's tragedy. "With an intertextual understanding of most post-1949 Chinese films, presenting feudal

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293. E. Yau, in C. Berry (ed), <u>Perspectives on Chinese Cinema</u>, BFI, London, 1991, p65.
294. *Ibid*, p.70

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marriages, this cultural statememt becomes a subtle comment on the (pro-revolutionary) textual appropriations of folk rituals for political rhetorics".[295]

Yau's own reading of this text has suggested that a lack of knowledge of the Taoist elements implicit in Chen's narrative would undermine any Western attempt to decipher its contents. She explicitly refers to Chen's quote from the Taoist classic *Dao De Jing* commenting on the film's aesthetics : "the greatest music has the faintest sound, the greatest image, the faintest form" (*Da yin wu sheng, da xang wu xing*). From the direcor's own perspective, the films may be read through key symbols and principles of Taoist cosmology. And indeed it is this cosmology which dominates the visual discourse of this film : "the main characters are not just the people, but the yellow earth itself from which all Chinese emerge" a commentator remarked.[296] The narrative strands prove hence inedaquate to explain the film's meaning -- as it is embedded in visual images of sky and sun (male) and earth and water (female) which surround and determine the human stories within a hidden Taoist framework.

As sugested in the first part of our discussion on Chinese epistemology, the two key principles of its cosmology are *yang* (the male principle) and *yin* (the female principle). The relatively superficial storyline, which so well fits traditional Communist literary clichés, in fact disguises the forceful interplay between these principles. The army officer represents the possibilities of revolution and action -- and so belongs to the world of *yang* (traditionally associated with heaven, light, fire, masculinity, life and movement). The film however soon unwraps and reveals the hidden world of *yin* realized in earth, darkness, water, death and stillness. The dominant images are earth and water, the dominant yellow earth from which the narrative holds its title and the turbulent waters of the Yellow River -- which nurtures, destroys and indeed symbolises the fate of the Chinese people according to Chen. The film ends with death by drowning of the only female character and crop failure through drought. The symbolic world of *yin* challenges the bright world of *yang* and by inference proclaims cosmological disharmony.

This is particularly striking because of the use of folksongs, both as a parody and a symbol of the Chinese fate. The collection and re-writing of folksongs was always central to Chinese Communist literary theory. Called "new wine in old bottles", its purpose was to re-structure traditional popular literature so that the concealed tradition of rural China could be made at once articulate and revolutionary. Chinese audiences would be fully aware of this context as revolutionary literature was a core

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295. *Ibid* p.71
296. M.A. Farquhar, *The Hidden Gender in Yellow Earth*, in <u>Screen</u>, 33.2, Summer 1992, p.155.

issue of Mao's Yan'an Talks mentioned earlier in our discussion. One of the final songs used in Chen's film is significantly not traditional, but a revolutionary song that Gu Qing had taught Ciu Qiao. The latter indeed realises in the course of events that "folksongs will save noone, not even me" and it is the suggestive use of a Party song as she glides towards death, that most profoundly choked the viewers :

> With sickle, axe and hoe,
> We open a road for peasants to go,
> Upon the wall the spotted rooster flies
> Only the Communist Party can save the people's lives.

She disppears in the middle of the word "Communist" -- the male world of revolutionary ideology having brought only disappointment and death to Ciu Qiao.

Both opening and closing sequences in *Yellow Earth* are overwhelmingly empty, 'blank' -- a celebration of the nothingness from which being may emerge. The emptiness of certain shots and the silence that seems to fracture the soundtrack are as many signifiers Chen employs to give meaning to his narrative. They indeed sharpen, by virtue of a stark contrast, the crowded images of the people's lives and the stridences of dialogues and songs. Quoting from the *Dao De Jing* that so influenced Chen and Zhang, the Tao is "hidden and nameless, yet ... supports all things and brings them to fulfillment".[297]

> It is the chasm between the things *per se* and discourse, between the world of reality and ideology that is so startling. In other words, *Yellow Earth* reveals that the truth of historical existence [...] has been excluded from the field of discourse, and placed outside of ideology. But at the same tiime [this film] attempts to redeem this banished history. It reveals the continued existence of the unspoken, helpless, silent... thing-in-itself which has been hidden by discourse, and completes the objectivation of the world of 'things' by means of silent images, static camera position, and incomplete passage over the river. It makes of our unconscious history an object for contemplation, producing a complex, multi-layered allegorical meaning.[298]

Without this specifically 'Chinese' decoding the film would make only little sense beyond its visual appeal. Revealing the complex layering of meanings hidden beneath the suprisingly plain semantic flow of the story, this reading perfectly illustrates some of the points Section I highlighted. This is not to suggest that a Taoist reading of

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297. For an in-depth account of the influence of Taoism on Chinese cinematographical principles, read Ni Zhen, *Classical Chinese Painting and Cinematographic Signification*, in L.Ehrlich and D. Desser (eds), Cinematic Landscapes, observations on the Visual Arts of China and Japan, University of Texas Press, 1994, especially pp.65-66.
298. Meng Yue quoted in Ehrlich and Desser, *op.cit.*, p.74.

Yellow Earth is the only viable way to apprehend its difference. Rey Chow and others have suggested that historicism as model of interpretation could also highlight some of Chen's implications.[299] Rather this reiterates the need to devise approaches to the Other that borrow from his / her own socio-cultural environment -- and this is what we have sought, perhaps briefly but suggestively, to illustrate above.

b) The case of *Farewell my Concubine* (1993).

Almost a decade separates *Yellow Earth* from *Farewell My Concubine.* This decade witnessed the unprecedented development of the Chinese film industry as well as dramatic changes in China's political climate. The "Open Door Policy" launched in 1986-87 towards Taiwan and largely supported by the Taiwanese government re-established contact between the 'two Chinas' after four decades of rivalry. Though official relations were still tense, a more cooperative and cordial relationship between film-makers on either side of the Strait developed rapidly. During the course of the mid-eighties financial and artistic collaboration among Hong Kong, Taiwanese and mainland filmmakers outpaced political exchange within the region. Taiwan and Hong Kong proved crucial in the production and post-production phases of most Fifth Generation films, and for a while their international success was even saluted with moderate if cautious praise by the ideological gatekeepers of China's representational self, the Central Film Bureau. Yet whilst films such as Zhang Yimou's *Red Sorghum* were internationally and nationally fêted, Deng began to initiate a nationwide crackdown on intellectuals, removing the relatively liberal Hu Yaobang as Party Leader, imposing new restrictions on study abroad and national bans on the release of subversive films. The most frequently cited instance of a Sino-Taiwanese collaboration denounced as subversive was Zhang's *Ju Dou* which was banned on mailand China after the Tienanmen repression. Central censorship became henceforth increasingly stricter. Zhang was subsequently denied a visa to the United States when *Raise the Red Lantern* -- financed by both Hong Kong and Taiwan -- was awarded the Best Foreign Film nomination at the Academy. Relations over the Strait deteriorated rapidly at this time. Most of the Fifth Generation has since attempted to emigrate, or to adjust to the economical and ideological realpolitik of the Film Bureau -- which has since resumed its watch-dog function with a correctness that leaves little space for alternatives.

It was in such a tense climate that Chen Kaige's *Farewell My Concubine* was produced (financed by Taiwanese and American funds) and released, *in the West.*. When it shared the Golden Palm at the 1993 Cannes Film Festival no Chinese official

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299. see R. Chow, *Silent is the ancient plain : music, filmmaking and reform in China' New Cinema* in Discourse, Vol.12, No.2, 1990.

had seen it. To most of its detractors this is a Chinese story told exclusively *for* a Western audience. Yet again, it is specifically this will to converse that enforces the need to decipher its narrative -- for it is not told easily to its western audience.

The film depicts four decades of the life and love of two central characters, (Shitou) Xialou and (Douzi) Dieyi, from their childhood in the ruthless atmosphere of a Peking Opera training school in the mid 1920's to their final and tragic encounter on an empty stage in 1977 -- via the Japanese invasion, Mao's Long March and the Cultural Revolution. This historical layer intermingles restlessly with the personal drama undergone by Douzi as he rejects his masculinity on stage in order to impersonate the Concubine Yu and is unable to rid himself of his sentiments 'off-stage' for his best friend, fellow actor and 'King Chu', Shitou -- establishing a parallel between the 'real' lives of the actors and those of the fictional characters Chu and Yu. Every viewer *a priori* will understand *these* elements - and to the non-Chinese audience, such elements will have confirmed their sense of difference *vis à vis* the Other, in this case this particular fragment of 'Chineseness' and the alienating historical and cultural context the story puts forth. In this sense, and in this sense only, it could be argued that 'cinema's grammar' can universalise a perception of the 'Other'.

> The scopic economy [of this film] has been appealing to Western viewers precisely because the alienation at issue stands in for the inadequacy for their own subject position *vis-à-vis* China as Other.[300]

However, who is the 'Other' in Chen's film ?

• To a non-Chinese audience it might be the archaic Chineseness it portrays, the vestige of the Confuician patriarchal system and its ruthless application at every level of Chinese socio-political life -- both before and throughout the Cultural Revolution, both within the private spheres of the heroes' lives and throughout their education as singers. The technical aspect of Chen's camera work may also stress the strangeness of the 'other's' aesthetic : 170 minutes shot in 16mm, mostly in steady-cam with very little 'action' consistency -- extremely remote from Hollywood-type shooting techniques (where 35mm film and three-act-script development seem to determine the quality of the story told). Such readings loose any relevance as 'universals' if we locate the discourse within China itself. Here the narrative splits onto several micro-levels, each intensifying the presence of another 'other', re-structuring the rhetoric into at least three distinct oppositions.

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300. P. Hitchcock,*The Aesthetic of Alienation, or China's 'Fifth Generation'*, in <u>Cultural Studies</u>, Vol.16, # 1, January 1992, p.135.

• To a member or partisan of the People's Republic political system, the 'other' will be located at the level of the ambiguity the film sustains as a text of dissent against the shortcomings of the Cultural Revolution, the on-going debate of pro-/anti- neo-Confucianism (as a founding philosophy and spiritual guide for the Great Leap and today's Socialism) -- i.e. a critique of repression and the latent remnants of feudalism. The film will disturb and displease by its acknowledged appropriation of a westernised grammar in its depiction of Self. It is a 'depiction' aimed at exportation (to Hong Kong and Taiwan mainly, but also noticeably to Europe and the US), subverting in its sway Maoist film construct and delivering a clear political message to the post-Beijing Spring audiences. The Fifth Generation film, in this case, sits awkwardly straddling two worlds : too 'occidentalised' for those amongst the Chinese intelligentia still clinging on a notion of national identity as impermeable to extraneous influence -- and still opaque to a Western public ignorant of its socio-cultural context and epistemological underpinings.

• To a 'traditionalist', the 'other' will be firstly located within the very portrayal of prostitutes and actors - the archetypal 'outcasts' of Chinese society. Furthermore, the aesthetics of Gu Changwai's photographic work will also seem out of place, far from the Taoist earth and water-borne aesthetics of earlier Fifth Generation work (see *Yellow Earth* 's typical taoist aesthetic) . Most of the action is also shot indoors, with a very peculiar contradictory use of warm colours, such as red. Red, China's symbol for happiness, good fortune and spontaneity, must here be translated as a sign for violence, oppression and passion - i.e. red seems redefined for Western - 'other' - eyes -- or for Chinese eyes in a particularly offensive 'yin-yang' reversal. Finally, traditional Chinese cinema was historically born out of traditional Opera - yet never had a director 'mixed' the story 'on stage', with this 'off-stage' and dealt with both the cruelty of traditional education and 'modern' reforms as perceived from the standpoint of an homosexual central character. To our Chinese traditionalist, the other is thus also the new heretic cultural views of the younger generation of film-directors within their own country.

• To a clear majority of young Chinese movie-goers such a film, if they could see it and in spite of the many cuts that the censors imposed, would undeniably present the infiltration of 'otherness' as the mirror of 'western' modernity : a) Such a film underlines that China, as an important actor in the world's market economy no longer operates in an 'ideological context' that is uniquely Chinese -- but as the technology of the image suggests, this modernisation and cultural interdependence with the neighbouring states of Hong-Kong and Taiwan is fuelled by the Western experiments of director Chen Kaige in the United States a few months prior to the shooting, and this

disempowers all claims of appropriating the 'text' as purely Chinese, purely about one's 'self'. b) The main actors, chosen for their popularity amongst the youth, pop-singer Leslie Cheung and world famous actress Gong Li, as articulators of homosexuality and feminism, introduce sexual and gender discourses into cultural narrative - hitherto themes of alienation in Chinese filmography. c) On the level of the plot itself, the 'other' can be perceived almost in each scene being also - as for the non-Chinese onlooker - the patriarchal *milieu* of the Beijing Opera and the discovery of the historical heritage from an artist's and/or a prostitute's point of view.

One of the most thought-provoking insights this film offers into the fabric of our analysis is its use of the same text in different contexts. The lyrics of the final scene of the opera from which the film borrows its title are thus voiced three or four times in the course of the narrative, each time bearing a different meaning to an increasingly involved reader. The more we engage in the process of opening to the Different, the more we face the contingency of any truth we sought to excavate. It is therefore the instance of a constantly elusive truth, or one that indeed exists but in different ways, at different times, for different actors, that illustrates the frailty of our own relation to self / other knowledge best.

Implications of these two 'readings' : paving the road ahead

To write, to speak, to be, always invokes the act of repudiation : in opting for this insciption, direction, movement , we simulateously forgo another. The world is marked by language, not engulfed by it. While continually translated into the text we read, watch, listen to, write, interpret and live by, the world stubbornly resists closure. The alchemy of language is not so powerful. It is through this rift, this opening, that our bodies, our gestures and our language are constantly renewed...[301]

In a double movement *Yellow Earth* as well as *Farewell my Concubine* challenge their readers to move beyond the initial alienation they face as the film narrative unfolds. In the case of the two texts used in this part of Section II, an interdisciplinary reading enables us to relate the films' textual strategies to the specific political and cultural context, while at the same time exhibiting some of these texts' idyosyncratic symptoms as presenting 'signs' rather than always 'symbols'. This analytical practice applies univocally to all films produced by the Fifth Generation. This is not to say, however, that there is a stylistic equivalence between each film, but that a series of equivocations disrupt in all of them the simple oppositions between reality and representation, collective desire and individualism, revolution and reaction. What is

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301. I.Chambers, *op.cit.,* 1994, p.133.

ironically 'Chinese' about these equivocations (the subtle injection and reformulation of tradition, the self-referential use of taoist aesthetics, the conscientiously embraced influence of Chinese texts and thoughts in the writing of film-script) precisely undermines Western appropriations of the same at the very moment when they are celebrated as somehow anti-Chinese (i.e. anti-CCP).

Each film in its own way suggests that the revolution, far from having failed, may not have gone far enough. As Hitchcock suggests :

> The aesthetic and political solutions to these (unanswered) questions remain deffered (and thus, by definition, so is 'China' in the eyes of the West) and such problems in and of themselves resist the orientalist desire to answer them. [302]

As Chen Kaige pleaded, "if you want to build something, if you want to create something new, you have to put something on fire first". The 'self' had to blast into a plethora of 'others' before it can gain the assurance necessary to construct its identity - through a reconfiguration of history, politics and form both in Chinese thought and Chinese film.

To return to some of the points established in Section I, we empirically demonstrated that we may only form our knowledge of the unknown on that of the known, and that our mental construct may only be based on such acquired knowledge. Both China and the West have a long tradition of film-making, yet because of the political circumstances that beset China, very little Western infiltration has taken place. The radical break with traditional film-making films such as *Yellow Earth* or *Farewell* promote, impose a new syntax that can be extremely difficult for more rigid viewers -- whether 'at home' or abroad -- to decipher. As the theorist Chen Xihe emphasises, China has had a hundred years of autonomous and strictly Chinese film making to re-evaluate in the face of the Fifth Generation's plea for a less hermetically sealed, unidimensional view of 'modernisation'.

> The cultural spirit of the West, using science as its model, treats film aesthetics with epistemological consideration; the cultural spirit of the Chinese, using ethics as their model, treats it with an axiological consideration. It leads the Chinese, in their approach to film, to place particular stress on the social and instrumental values of film, and the West to emphasise the natural and noninstrumental values. [...] the

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302. Hitchcock, *op.cit,*, p.121.

fundamental nature of [Chinese] film as a whole was
always that of an educational tool, first and foremost.[303]

One might therefore accept, to a careful extent, Rey Chow's contention that it is
hermeneutics that occupies the space of the critic's gaze at Chen's films since *"what is
supposedly 'Chinese' difference remain caught in the logic of a cultural symbolic to
which it exists as the 'Other', the Unconscious, the Beautiful"*.[304] This might lend to
suggest that it is this 'universal' differentiation along an I / Other axis that produces in
the West the 'Othering' ideology towards the developing world.

Conventional categories of identity may indeed turn both films studied above
into a primal scene of exoticism for the Western 'gaze' while (re)constituting a
disturbing objectification within a national cultural symbolic.[305] Indeed, in the case of
China - and one might suggest that this case is far from being exceptional - the
confrontation between the Self and the Other is no longer merely an engagement in a
bilateral context involving two cultures : it has become a war within the Self. As Wang
notes : *"the actual cultural Other in the form of both Western and the more pre-industrial
-- or now historically marginal -- version of the Self, is deployed to enact a role to affect
dialogic imagination"*.[306]

Conversing over the Other's visual narrative thus inescapably brings the reader
to a fundamental and essential re-consideration of the Self. 'Taking a holiday'[307] from
the habitual languages that position us ultimately enable us to reach beyond our/Selves
and in a double movement of discovery and apprehension of alterity, disturbs each
assumption of stability surrounding our own symbolic order. Take Roland Barthes
Empire of Signs.[308] It attested most sensitively that encountering this particular Other
not merely presented a geographic rupture from the everyday, the taken for granted, the
natural -- and hence assumed 'universal' -- signifiers that make up the topology of our
mindscapes. Looking at Japan through *Bunraku* theater forms, *Haiku* poetry and
Tokyo's many signs, indeed permitted a complete displacement of authority, for
language and signs to float unharnessed in one particular system of thought / culture /
historical site and gain unforeseen -- and perhaps to Us uncomprehensible -- moorings
in another... Against all nihilisms, or the apocalyptic prophesis of a postmodernism that
claims all meaning defunct in the face of such encounters with the Other, Barthes' study

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303. Chen Xihe, *Shadowplay : Chinese Film Aesthetics and their Philosophical and Cultural Fundamentals*,
In Semsel, Xia and Hou (eds.) Chinese Film Theory, N.Y., 1990, p.200-1
304. Chow quoted in Peter Hitchcock, *op.cit.* p.130
305. *Ibid*, p.124.
306. Wang quoted in Hitchcock, *ibid.*, p.135-6.
307. I am here borrowing Chambers image, (1994), p.100.
308. Roland Barthes, Empire of Signs, Hill & Wang, New York, 1982.

of Japan or our brief rendez-vous with China's cinema, hope on the contrary to have supplemented, extended, complicated the notion of significance to such an extent as to provoke rather than discourage further conversations, dialogues to follow.

And indeed, these semiotic movements or exegetic odysseys that recast identities, are illuminated in the most sophisticated way by Bakhtin's overarching notion of dialogism evoked in Section I. "To be", he writes in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* , "means to communicate dialogically. When dialogue ends, everything ends".[309] Bakhtinian dialogism, Dona Polan suggested, can be understood as a 're-writing' of the Saussurean view of language as the critical play of difference, this time recast as the play of difference between text and *all its others* : author(s), intertext, real and imagined addresses and the larger communicative context. Entire genres, languages and cultures are thus susceptible to "mutual illumination". Such hindsight takes on a special relevance when viewed in the light of this chapter -- as it celebrates a world in which comunication is increasingly 'global', where cultural circulation (even if still assymetrical) is increasingly multivoiced and where it is becoming more and more difficult to corral human diversity into the old categories of indepedent cultures and nations. We have seen, in reading *Farewell My Concubine*, that even China can no longer escape the definition of a multivoiced field of intercultural discourse. Here too the voices of film-makers, women, minorities, the Party, Confucius and/or the infiltration of Otherness in general challenge any pre-established vision of a unified Difference by shattering it.

Perhaps it is only in the eyes of another culture, as Bakhtin writes, "that a foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoudly".[310] But this dialogical encounter of two cultures does not automatically result in the loss of identity of each culture. Instead "each retains its won unity and open totality, but they are mutually enriched" -- simultaneaously operating the reciprocal familiarization and mutual de-familiarization of the two conversing cultures.

Having gestured towards bridging the abyss Rainer Maria Rilke evoked in one of our epigraphs, we will now move even deeper into the unfamiliar terrain of dialogism and its representations, in a fourth chapter devoted to the Other Within : the subaltern, the hybrid, the heteroglossic voices fissuring and permeating the 'other side' of our Selves, the internal territories of our metropolis.

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309. Quoted in Stam (1989) *op.cit*, p.187.
310. *Ibid*. p.195

Chapter Four

Shifting and Resisting

At the centre of Fedora, a metropolis of grey stone, there is a metal building with a glass sphere in each of its rooms. Looking into each sphere one sees a blue city that is the model of another Fedora. They represent the form the city might have taken if, for one reason or another, it had not become the object we see today. In every epoch, someone seeing Fedora as it was, had imagined transforming it into an ideal city, but while he constructed his model in miniature Fedora had already changed, and what until yesterday had been a possible future was now only a toy in a glass sphere.

- Italo Calvino, Invisible Cities, 1972.

Introduction

> ...there is no radical and plural democracy without renouncing the discourse of the universal and its implicit assumption of a privileged point of access to 'truth'.[311]

Chapter Three has attempted to draw an emancipatory approach to textual analyses of the Different through a reading of China that neither dwelt on universalist nor incommensurable assumptions. The voyage undertaken took the guise of a communicative process, attempting to 'reach beyond' both the optimism and ethnocentricism offered by positivists on the one hand and the irony and hermeneutic nihilism so often proposed by the post-positivists on the other. Of course both offer seemingly tenable readings of the moment of encounter with the Other, yet both sets of interpretation realise only partial and hence thwarted visions of a social reality that unavoidably runs in more complex and diffuse fashions than theoretically anticipated.

Groping beyond an either/or framework of analysis -- each side riddled by an overabundance of critique and paralysed by a near-lack of even prophylactic alternatives -- proved theoretically and methodologically frustrating. After a long march (sic.) on the thorny path of linguistics and critical anthropology, the object / subject of our reading

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311. Laclau and Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. London, Verso, 1985, p191-2.

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turned simultaneously (and paradoxically) less hermetical and less transparent. The Self of China only became apprehensible by means of engaging it in open-ended *conversation*. -- which revealed, yet again, how indispensable it is for international relations theory to accomodate and appropriate the methods and imagination of the many disciplines that strech through the spectrum of humanities -- including the visual narratives of cinema. Engaging a dialogue with the hitherto Exotic also opens up the possibility of i.r.'s epistemological expansion -- an expansion which, in the face of an increasingly complex and multicultural configuration of the international, seems now long due.

Andrew Linklater's review of James Rosenau's *Global Voices* (1993) stresses that :

> ... dialogue comes in different shapes and sizes and has more or less authentic forms. Dialogue can be governed by the urge to defeat the adversary; it may come in post-modern guise [...] with dizzying formulations which do violence [...] to reality; but true dialogue begins when conversation is open to all and governed by the principle of equality, when participants strive for clarity and seek to take the best from different perspectives. True dialogue resembles Habermas' conception of undistorted communication where equals strive to identify the force of the better argument.[312]

Linklater herein usefully illustrates the distinctions made by referring to Richard Bernstein's comments on pluralism. Bernstein's conceptualisation indeed deconstructed 'pluralism' into five specific shapes : 1) *fragmenting pluralism* ; 2) *flabby pluralism* ; 3) *polemical pluralism* ; 4) *defensive pluralism* and 5) *engaged fallibilistic pluralism*. In 1) communication is only engaged within the premises of the Same; in 2) borrowing from the Other occurs but no critique is attempted; 3) is too ironic in its approach whilst 4) gestures towards other perspectives only to later discard them as irrelevant. 5) on the other hand encompasses exactly the same attempt fêted by Linklater as 'true dialogue' (see here-above), a variety of pluralism central to the Habermasian 'ideal speech situation' in which "dialogue has the dialectical aim of understanding the strength and weaknesses of different positions and of ensuring that the stress on differences does not eliminate the quest for actual or potential points of convergence".[313] Though neither this matrix nor Habermas' precepts will undergo more thorough exploration in the course of our Odyssey, they must be borne in mind as devising enlightening attempts towards a refreshingly imaginative and tolerant approach to Otherness. They echo the

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312. A. Linklater, *Dialogue, Dialectic and Emancipation in International Relations at the End of the Post-War Age*, in Millennium, Vol.23, No.1, 1994, p127.
313. *Ibid*, p.127-8

work of Mikhail Bakhtin. Chapter Three concluded on his fertile notion of dialogism. It is Bakhtin who now illuminates this work further.

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Though sporadically referred to throughout the thesis, it is the excavation about to unfold that grants Bakhtin his most resonant *lettres de noblesse*.

Robert Stam's masterful tribute to Bakhtin's oeuvre and modernity[314] correctly begins by marvelling at the degree of revivalism the Russian thinker enjoyed some forty years after his first publications. Disseminated accross the globe after the ebbing of the Stalinist era, his controversial and enlightened approach to language and intertextuality has invited scholars such as Julia Kristeva, Robert Young or Todorov to call him a precursor amongst post-structuralists.[315] His concern with the dialogical interplay between Self and Other can be found in the thought of Heidegger, Sartre, Lacan and the like... Bakhtin was addressing these in the twenties, long before the Third Debate of our international relations discipline even began to gestate.

Much in the vein of the post-positivists to come, Bakhtin's primary concern was to underline the infinite spiral of possible interpretations any given text could raise; to deny meaning as univocal; to deny -- or at the very least undermine -- the originary presence in speech; denigrating the sign's identity as unstable; the nature of inside/outside oppositions as untenable, subject-positioning as contingent and discourse-variable; and the presence of intertextuality as pervasive. As his *Formal Method in Literary Scholarship* (1928) further emphasised, every utterance is fundamentally and inescapably a social and historical 'event', one which resonates not only within its own time and context, but with the reverberations of all past usage. His *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1929) went beyond utterance to qualify language as "the ideological phenomenon par excellence", "the purest and most sensitive medium of social intercourse".[316] His affinity with Marxism led him to believe that all cultural processes intertwine with social relations and that culture is ultimately the favoured battle ground of social struggle. His contribution, however, was to incorporate the *linguistic* dimension into this struggle. Rejecting passivist theories which see human beings as simply born into language as a master-code, Bakhtin on the

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314. R. Stam, <u>Subversive Pleasures</u>, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1989.
315. See Kristeva's *Word, Dialogue and Novel*, in <u>Desire in Language : A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art</u>, Columbia Univeristy Press, New York, 1980, or Young's *Back to Bakhtin* in <u>Cultural Critique</u>, No.2, Winter 1985-6.
316. M. Bakhtin, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, (1929), University of Minnesota Press, 1985.

contrary professed that we grow into it, help shape it, as woman or man, peasant or landowner, colonizer or colonized.

> Every apparently unified linguistic or social community is characterized by heteroglossia, whereby language becomes the space of confrontation of differently orientated social accents [...] While the dominant class strives to make the sign "uniaccentual" and to endow it with an eternal... character, the oppressed, especially when ... conscious..., strive to deploy language for their own liberation [...] Language is thus everywhere imbricated within assymetries of power.[317]

Bakhtin's *oeuvre* is extensive. What interests us here is rather to stress the wealth of its applicability to our quest into representational practices and identity formations. His categories of 'heteroglossia', 'polyphony' and 'the carnavalesque', as developed in his later *Rabelais and his World* (1940), though not overtly exploited in a sense similar to our own, indeed display an intrinsic affinity with all concepts of alterity. They espouse the causes of the marginalized periphery, a feature that turns them into some of the most appropriate tools for any analysis of resistance practices, be it of women, the Third World or the ethnic minorities that make up our daily urban scapes. Bakhtin never addressed the topographies of oppression specifically but praised the carnavalesque in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* because such parodic moment suspended "hierarchical structure and all the forms of terror ... connected with it" and by implication "everything resulting from sociohierarchical inequality or any other form of inequality among people".[318] This explicitly broad formulation stakes out a conceptual gap yearning to be filled : even if not directly refering to minoritarian concerns, or indeed bespeaking the subject of Postcolonial studies, the very formulation of 'heteroglossia' and 'polyohony' offers a corrective to ethnocentric models of the same and imply *an alternative logic of nonexclusive opposites and permanent contradictions that transgresses the monologic true-or-false thinking typical of Western Enlightenment rationalism.*[319]

His notion of heteroglossia is akin to his of polyphony -- "I hear voices everywhere"[320] -- and defines the diverse perspectival languages generated by sexual, racial or economic differences. It combats most accurately indeed, when extrapolated to representational practices, the 'myth of the single spectator' in favour of a multiplicity of viewing and interpretative positions -- frequently coexistent within the same

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317. Stam, *op. cit*,p. 8.
318. M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoievsky's Poetics*, (1929), University of Minnesota Press, Mineapolis, 1984, p.122-3
319. Stam, *op.cit.*, p.22
320. Bakhtin, *op.cit.*.

(necessarily syncretic) Self. The negotiation of any given text becomes contingent. There is no monolithic text / context, no unitary author nor spectator. *Each category is traversed by the centripetal and the centrifugal, the hegemonic and the oppositional* .[321] And yet, however post-structuralist this latter statement might appear, the Bakhtinian methodology, as described below, goes against postmodern theory's march to the subject.

It seems indeed ironic, as our introductory chapter noticed, that certain metropolitan writers should chose to announce the death of the author and/or mock peripheral nationalism as atavistic just as peripheral authors begin to win international attention. The proclamation of the 'end of margins' cannot -- and indeed does not -- short-circuit the mechanisms that effectively disappropriate peoples of their culture or nations of their power.[322] Neither do theoretical collapsing of boundaries guarantee *in practice* peripheral voices the international hearing enjoyed by the centre. Bakthin's formulation sees the centre still operating as centre, even though in a more dispersed and diffused way. He speaks of centrifugal and centripetal forces colliding and interwining within the social whole, yet not so as to erase the differences between centre and margin : rather to dynamize and dialectize them (aware that the same processes give birth to *both* centre and margin). Pointing the way to a transcendence of sterile dichotomies and exhausted paradigms[323] Bakhtin's conceptualisations most appropriately call for a radical cultural critique -- one that not merely re-enters the marginalised author into our debased anthologies and evokes and celebrates the play of ethnic and cultural polyphony expressed in daily sites of resistance, *but also* one that reveals the political obstacles to genuine equality. This would hence counter political liberalism's failure to truthfully locate ways in which hegemonic power still conditions and contrives dialogue.

Bakhtin's relevance to our excavation of the Self / Other problematique gains full flavour through what he termed 'mutual illumination'. Set against the backdrop of a world in which communication is global, where cultural circulation (asymmetrical as may be) is already multi-vocal, and where it is becoming increasingly inappropriate to corral human diversity into the confining categories of discrete cultures and independent nation-states, a Bakhtinian methodology would unquestionably emphasise the entanglement of identity processes, the 'mutual illumination' of this which lies *within* and *between* cultures. This calls for a juxtaposition of whole constellations of representational practices within larger, cross-cultural contexts. It also calls for a re-

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321. Stam, *op.cit*, p.221.
322. *Ibid*, p.236.
323. *Ibid* p.239.

evaluation of the 'macro' in light of lessons learnt from the 'micro' : a multiplicity of cultures may dwell within the confines of a same territory, a multiplicity of voices (sometimes defying orchestration) may, when induced into dialogue, have much of relevance to say about the processes of international identity construction. The explanatory concept of "otherness" that henceforth prevailed -- in a double movement distancing and particularising the national or ethnic Other by mapping it far away into the distant contours of the Orient or the South -- is thus urgently called to be supplemented by a far more proximate reality.

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Modes of representations that legitimated a international arena of strict cultural separation, collective identities and rigid boundaries seem hopelessly outdated as domestic landscapes -- and urban sites -- are being redrawn within new and shifting borders of ethnic / racial and sexual identities. What this chapter will attempt, is to illuminate the unfamiliar *within* the familiar, the sites of contestation within the very walls of the citadel of Self. Chapter Three had stepped out of it. Now seems the right moment to return within the intriguing Western Self, evaluate the fractures and fissures of its ramparts, or, to shamelessly paraphrase Derek Walcott, to sniff and smell the 'leprosy of Empire'. By 'decentring' discourse and giving center stage to those that international theory marginalised, this chapter is a logical outgrowth of the preceding, in its effort to show how it is possible to create a more democratic form of socio-political dialogue, by taking up the camera like others took up arms.

• **Section I** will look at the Body as a pervasive marker of difference and power in the international political realm. Looking at ways of inscription on- and encroachment upon the body will lead us to an exploration of the dissident theories proposed and enacted by the Postcolonial Subject, the West's all-too visible Other.

• **Section II** will concentrate on one case-study : Black America's mobilisation and visual resistance. Such empirical means hopes to deepen the theoretical parametres unravelled in Section I whilst choosing a presumably and almost paradigmatically 'Western' nation as its setting. Touching upon the ambivalent realities of multiculturalism and urban heteroglossia, we will wonder to what extent a more fragmented vision of the nation's Self -- as in the post-LA riots era -- could dislodge a 'Western' world view of i.r. Most importantly, Section II will dwell upon the counter-hegemonic films that have emerged within the African-American community over the past decades and their unmatched impact on the way the West now apprehends its Others within.

Section I - Audible Voices, Visible Bodies : retaliation from within.

Peter Greenaway's 1996 work, *The Pillow Book* , provides an ideal launching point for our next journey. The film derives from the classic Japanese text *The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon* and may be defined on a primary level as a multi-faceted tribute to the beauty of the Oriental calligraphic hieroglyph. This film acts as a crucible to our analysis of texts, politics and images of difference past and future, as it uses Japan "as a Western thing of the imagination"[324] (see Chapter Two) yet also conscentiously strives to replicate and magnify the national idealism present in Ozu or Oshima's works and engage audiences towards an open-ended dialogue with such radical Otherness (see Chapter Three). In the director's own words :

> The overall visual metaphor for *The Pillow Book* is the oriental hieroglyph as a template for a cinematic practice. (...) Image and text are one. The text is read through the image, and the image is seen in the text -- very possibly an ideal model for cinema, considering the uneasy marriage of text and image that it tries to cement. With the Japanese hieroglyph predominently in mind as a model -- more sinuous, more painterly perhaps than in any other in the Orient -- the subject of such a film would most naturally be Japanese.[325]

Image and text are seen simultaneously on the screen : images are read 'through' the text whilst a voice-over translates the Japanese text into English, explaining the author's ambiguity at 'reading' or indeed 'understanding' those very images. Layers of meaning and interpretations mingle and fuse whilst the complex frame-construction used as a technical backdrop to the narrative also gains a role of its own. The hitherto dominant Western tradition of the Renaissance viewing-frame and that of the largely unframed Oriental pictures space confront each other beyond mere intertextuality, as if to negotiate ways to resolve the conflicting Western left-to-right and Eastern right-to-left readings in one single shot. Suggestively, Greenaway says :

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324. Greenaway, in Sight and Sound, Vol.6, November 1996, p.14.
325. *Ibid*, p.15.

The Western left-to-right reading indicates positive action, spelling confusion to any true reading of Japanese text and image combinations, while the Eastern right-to-left readings seems unbalanced to a Western sensibility, uncorrectable in a mirror and even morally confusing (especially if we believe that, in the West, evil enters stage-right).[326]

On a deeper, and arguably more political level, *The Pillow Book* is also about the Body as the most poignant metaphor of the confrontation between Self and Other though the parameters of the visible. In fact, the entire film revolves around the body as a parchemin to be inscribed and read. The young female protagonist, Nagiko is shown as a child, having her face calligraphed with a birthday greeting by her father. The greeting confirms her name, her sex, the paternity of her parents and of God -- evoking the old legend of the celestial procreator baking the clay just the right time to make the yellow man/woman -- neither black nor white, neither over nor undercooked. A mirror is then held up to her, reflecting the multiple layers of her identity : her name, her sex, her skin-colour, her cultural heritage. Image and words, picture in the mirror and text on the screen -- screen as mirror and mirror as screen of identification. "Derrida said : 'the image always has the last word', but did he go far enough ? Did the delight of his wit spoil the continuation of his logic ? The word is after all an image. Here is a complexity hovering that makes separate texts and separate image... redundant."[327]

Nagiko's story is one of obsession. She becomes haunted with the need to write on the body, with the body and its skin as immediate marker of difference -- as barrier or gate-way to conciliation, privilege and power. This section will carry this metaphor to its full meaning, revealing the importance of the 'body' in international relations -- as..."the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a mass in perpetual disintegration".[328]

I - Shedding skins.

To Fill a Gap --
Insert the Thing that caused it --
Block it up
With Other -- and 'twill yawn the more --
You cannot solder an Abyss
With Air.
                    -- Emily Dickinson, *Poem # 546, 1929.*

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326. *Ibid.*, p.17.
327. *Ibid*, p.16.
328. Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, genealogy, history' in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice,* Cornell University Press, 1977, p.148.

The same caveats issued about universalist approaches in the preceding chapter apply to the scholarship of a field seemingly unconcerned with the 'body' as a paradigm of difference and resistance. The past two decades have indeed witnessed the recognition -- and subsequent extension -- of a considerable number of social protagonists on the playground of international relations whose identity was no longer assessed and assumed on the basis of geographical provenance but on physical inscription. Beside the dire realities of pollution and ecology, those of feminism and sexual politics, ethnic / racial identity and culture, etc. -- have thus dramatically increased the pressure on expanding the existing limits of political representation, and with them the very definition of the 'political' itself.[329]

These bore signs that were primarily organised accross and through the body. As Chambers points out :

> It is our bodies -- dressed, undressed, disguised, accentuated, in movement, in pose -- that not only provide a ready map, a body map, on which to observe how the different histories of society, fashion, sexuality and race traverse and compose a surface in common, but which in turn are moulded and transformed by such an investment.[330]

Reading the body not only reveals how the white, male sex continues to represent the abstract measure of the world -- the universal 'he' of political (and positivist) thought -- but also highlights the complexity of physical attributes as many texts and languages directly inscribed on our limbs and skins. Such irrevocable physical differences cement the roots of the most ancient forms of political distinction. To paraphrase Ian Chambers, it is has therefore become essential that we start illuminating international relations theory with an ethics that fully recognises the body and its languages, "written across its surfaces in the alphabets of sexuality, gender and ethnicity [...] its rites and rights, its multiple and differenciated histories."[331]

Central to our highly visible and visualised culture are hence the construction and presentation of 'woman', but also of the 'coloured' as marker of corporeal-cultural hierarchies. Taking the 'skin' and 'face' as parametres of alienation, the West has lamentably excelled in presenting 'black' and 'Jew' and 'Beur' as its unconditional internal Other -- where the Jew and the North African were / are primarily distinguished

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329. I. Chambers, Border Dialogues, Routledge, London, 1990, p.71.
330. *Ibid.*
331. *Ibid.*, p.113.

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though physical attributes *in contrast to*, rather then by virtue of cultural / religious difference alone.

I - 1 - "The problem of the colour-line" (W.E.B. Dubois)

Culturally, the internationalisation of race has proceeded apace. Phenomena such as the rise of so-called 'diasporic' models of blackness, the creation of 'panethnic' communities of Latinos and Asians (especially in the US and UK), and the slow breakdown of borders in both Europe and North America, all seem to be hybridizing and, by implication, racializing previous national polities, cultures and identities. South central Los Angeles, 1992; Mantes-la-Jolie, 1993; Brixton, 1994; Lübeck 1995 and / or the attacks perpetrated on China's African students or Fiji's Indian population... all point towards race-related violence as a stark, and increasingly visible issue on the global playing fields... All should theredore allow for a legitimate inclusion of 'race' within a global political context -- as "the unravelled sign of the contemporary age"[332] with ramifications that reach beyond the domestic well into the international, turning yet again, the inside out and the outside in.

Most forms of Western racism are inconceivable without an *à priori* understanding of how 'Western' identities -- and those of its 'Others' -- have continually been moulded by actual and imagined encounters with the non-Western Others of modernity.[333] The preceding chapters have illustrated moments of such encounters and suggested the impossibility of all epistemological closures. These chapters have nonetheless also underlined the ongoing binarisms inherent to all political analyses : that difference is still perceived as a threat, a mirror, a wall of incomprensibility ... -- as many tautological positions against which to frame and assert the hegemonic premises of our current international relations theories.

Temporality and spaciality have been crucially imbricated in these processes. Spatially, "these 'other' spaces of Western modernity became *extensions* as well as the *outside* of Western identities, [and] they had profound effects on identities inside the geographical boundaries of the West".[334] In temporal terms the coloured 'Other' could be denied *coevalness* (as Fabian terms it[335]) and be reduced to a state of unredeemable primitivity. These matrices already made up the logic behind the scientific racisms of the 19th and early 20th century. Two characteristics endured : 1) a biological

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332. N.K. Denzin, Images of Postmodern Society. Sage, London, 1991, p.135,
333. As William Connolly pointed out in The Augustinian Imperative.
334. A. Rattansi & S. Westwood (eds.), Racism, Modernity and Industry on the Western Front. Polity Press, Cambridge, p.38.
335. See J. Fabian's critique of Western Anthropology in his Time and the Other. Columbia University Press, New York, 1983.

definition of race and 2) attempts to create a *hierarchy* of races which, despite representing some 'white' races as racially inferior to others, have consistently consigned 'non-white' populations as racially inferior to the lowest ranks of the social ladder. Although there are great difficulties in simply extrapolating from 'scientific racism' to contemporary forms of inferiorization, discrimination and exclusion, it is interesting to observe the parallels between that 'older' form of racism and the speeches of, let's say, Jean-Marie Le Pen, head of French National Front -- who nonchalantly declared in July 1996 that somes races where simply more equal than others. Did he not merely serve as a mouthpiece to all the unresolved, muted and simply ignored beliefs engrained around the 'positivism' still gestating in Western epistemology ?

It is the argument of this paper, that the evolution of DuBois's "problem of the colour line" during the course of this century was inextricably connected to the political dynamics of conflict resolution or avoidance framed by the ideal of the nation-state. Since the state remains the principal player in our field, it is within its confines that our next step within the expression of sameness and difference must continue.

I - 2 - Race : salience of the concept in nation-state formation and conflict resolution.

> Race does not denote a substantive being, but a relative point of convergence among culturally and historically specific sets of relations. This implies a radically different understanding of identity itself and has implications for how we study race in International Relations.[336]

Race figures prominently in the definition and consolidation of the nation-state. Historical, physical differences and economic development may have reinforced categorical domination based on racial differenciation over the course of our century -- but it is not they who preordain it nor determine the form it will take. Race is 'made' and used -- and it is <u>state</u> policy which *ultimately* categorizes people as black, white or mulatto. It is the state who has the official capacity to enforce legal discrimination. In the astute observations of John Marshall Harlan : "What can more certainly arouse race-hate, what can more certainly create and perpetuate a feeling of distrust between these races, than state enactments ?"[337] And indeed most recent scholarship points to the state as the central actor in race-making -- even if it remains to specify the situations that may or may not lead the state to exercise its power in this way. It makes therefore sense to extrapolate and argue that race figures prominently in the definition of present and imminent international relations.

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336. Doty, *op.cit.*, p.453.
337. Quoted in Burke Marshall, *Federalism and Civil Rights*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1964, p.85.

• Contrasting and comparing the idiosyncratic nationalisms of Brazil and the United States, we encounter two very distinct ways of consolidating the nation-state : in the former through a politics of miscegenation and in the latter, through an initially stark segregation. In both cases racial dialectics were crucial for national cohesion and stability. In both cases pervasive inequality and images of inferiority were inherited from slavery but were encoded in very different forms after abolition. In the US, it is widely recognised that "all hatred that the whites after the Civil War had for each other gradually concentrated itself on[blacks]"[338]-- whereas Brazilians were eager to avoid the sort of conflict over slavery and race that they had seen nearly tear apart the US. The post-abolition Brazilian state indeed eshewed legal discrimination and encouraged unity amongst Brazilians of any colour (ostensibly including native 'Indians') -- eagerly submerging potential racial conflict under the heralded myth of 'racial democracy' and images of an inclusive nation. In the United States, on the other hand, linkages between racial formation processes and hegemonic ones remain starkingly central. Demographic shifts, political alignments and economic pressures -- both global and domestic -- all have profoundly affected the nature of racial identity in this most paradigmatic of Western settings, continously shifting its basis and the parameters of its representational strategies against these Others within.

• What emerges most consistently is the idiosyncratic pattern of efforts at conflict resolution and coalition building as a central component of racial dynamics on a national and international level. As pointed out above, it made sense for the United States and South Africa, for instance -- though in different ways -- to resolve conflicts amongst whites by building a coalition of domination against and over their black population. This in turn diminished the most visible threats to the state and its economy. As Antony Marx observes :

> Boundaries of racial category and enforced discrimination were constructed and historical legacies interpreted accordingly. The nation emerged as an 'imagined community'. Who was included or excluded did not emerge spontaneously, however, but rather was reinforced by official policy. The unintended result was heightened mobilisation by blacks unified by their exclusion.[339]

I - 3 - Mobilisation.

These national disparities may be extrapolated on an international level. They adequately explain variations in resulting mobilisation and conflict "from below"

338. DuBois, quoted by Toni Morisson, interview BBC Radio 4, 1992.
339. A. Marx, *Race -making and the Nation State,* in <u>World Politics,</u> Vol.48, January 1996, p.207-8

according to policies of domination imposed "from above". Institutionalised domination setting legal boundaries of race -- by implication -- also consolidates subordinated racial identity as a potential basis for resistance. Taking the case of the African Atlantic diaspora as our paradigmatic instance, we may agree that :

> State policy helped forge ... group self-consciousness amongst blacks, establishing the " who" that then interpreted and responded to structural conditions accordingly.[340]

Institutions of domination always reinforced assertions of racial identity -- inducing, in turn, a reconfiguration of institutions and positionalities within *as well as beyond* the borders of the nation-state. This is not to claim that race as "imposed identity" leads invariably to concerted mobilisation : the form and make-up of hegemonic resistance varies greatly according to the setting and preconditions of the conflict. The uncertainty and fluid character of such responses are intimately connected to variations in racial subjugation -- and must constantly adapt to what Stuart Hall called "dominant regimes of representation" and their fluctuation over time.

The racial self is for ever in mutation, for ever escaping any attempt to fix it -- since racial domination, categories and conflict appear to be as relative as the dynamics of coalition-building that shaped them. A proliferation of very diversely competing discourses have emerged from the margins in recent years, challenging older vocabularies of race as well as expanding "the sites from which notions of whiteness and blackness, among others, are made visible, rewritten and circulated".[341] The constancy of domestic differentiation based on skin hierarchy has led to what Hall called 'the end of the innocent black subject'.[342] At stake is the recognition that colours are essentially political and culturally constructed categories with no guarantees in Nature and no gounding in a set of fixed trans-cultural categories. The end of racial essentialism came forth most prominently as the margins recognised that the relationship between identity and being 'coloured' could be eroded and rearticulated if the centre's politics of representation were appropriated and critically deconstructed in historical and relational terms. Most successful amongst these re-interpretations of identity discourses were the voices raised from the many standpoints of the marginalised South. The subjects of 'post-coloniality' pointed the way to effective retaliation against the partisans of Western epistemological dominance. It is they who inspired most vividly the many 'others within' the West to come to the fore and denounce the climate of discrimination. It is they who most poignantly challenge the

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340. *Ibid*, p.200
341. Giroux, <u>Disturbing Pleasures</u>, Routledge, New York, p.76.
342. S. Hall, *Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation*, in <u>Framework 36</u>, 1989, pp. 68-81.

bases of international relations theory in an age of supranational allegiance and multicultural creed. It is to their stepping out of silence that we now turn.

II - Talking back : from without and from within.

II - 1 - What is post-coloniality ?

In post-coloniality, every metropolitan definition is dislodged. The general mode for the post-colonial is citation, re-inscription, re-routing the historical.
> - Gayatri Spivak, *Reading the "Satanic Verses"*, 1990.

As most scholars have come to admit, the very concept of *post-coloniality* is not exempt from contention. Its definition varies from site to site, whether positioned in -- or from -- the United-States or India, or when referring to the particular experience of Britain. The 'post-' may not invariably mark an 'after', but rather the "space of ongoing contestation enabled by decolonization struggles both globally and locally".[343] As such, little comfort is provided as to whether the discursive aspects of colonization smoothly follow the transformations undergone by the economics and politics of domination -- neatly changing from colonial into 'post-colonial'. The after-life of such colonial rhetoric is in fact inescapably contingent upon the particular story/ies of the colonized or colonizer... The ambiguity of the "post" in 'post-colonial' operates therefore on an decidedly unstable and dynamic basis, one to be kept in sight as much as the twin processes evoked by the very term : colonization or decolonization.[344]

Post-colonial studies refer more generally to a myriad of context-related struggles that deal with the re-inscription of the hitherto silenced into the political sphere:

• The engagement of colonization / decolonization hereby assumes dimensions that are inescapably transnational, "its local expressions multiply inflected by regional and global affinities and considerations, in turn crosscut by class, race, gender, sexuality, etc...".[345]

• Colonial / postcolonial relations are everywhere co-constructed with other axes of domination / resistance, intersecting with other unfolding relations.

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343. R. Frankenberg and L. Mani, *Crosscurrents, Crosstalk : Race, 'Postcoloniality' and the Politics of Location*, in <u>Cultural Studies</u>, Vol.7, No.2, May 1993, p.294.
344. Hence it may argued that "'Post-colonial' marks a descisive, though not definitive shift that stages contemporary encounters bewteen India and Britain [for instance] and between white Britons and their non-white Others, though not always in the same way or to the same degree" (ibid, p301) -- a shift in cross-racial, cross-gendered... encounters determined almost exclusively by spacio-temporal location.
345. *Ibid*, p.302.

• And according to Theresa de Laurentis, what emerges is :

> the concept of multiple, shifting, and often self-contradictory identity [...] An identity made up of heterogeneous and heteronomous representations of gender, race and class, and often indeed across languages and cultures; an identity that one decides to reclaim from a history of multiple assimilations, and that one insists on as a strategy.[346]

Borrowing Homi Babha's own thoughts on post-colonial theory :

> The post-colonial perspective forces us to rethink the profound limitations of a consensual and collusive 'liberal' sense of cultural community. It insists that cultural and political identity are constructed through a process of alterity. Questions of race and cultural difference overlay issues of sexuality and gender and overdetermine the social alliances of class and democratic socialism. The time for 'assimilating' minorities to holistic and organic notions of cultural value has dramatically passed. The very language of cultural community needs to be rethought from a postcolonial perspective, in a move similar to the profound shift in the language of sexuality, the self and cultural community, effected by feminists in the 1970's and the gay community in the 1980's.[347]

A post-colonial perspective would univocally call for a re-thinking of international relations in terms of the many unexcavated stories that have yet to be inserted in its curriculum. This was nowhere as nicely transcribed as through Christine Sylvester's notion of 'relations international'. This views our field as...

> ... about the myriad positions that groups assume towards one another across the many boundaries and identities that defy field-invented parametres... [it] puts the emphasis on varieties of connection, including politics, across the lines, fences, wires, imaginations... and immigration and customs guardhouses of the world.
> [...] Now we are in the throes of a third debate that could have emerged differently as an ongoing conversation had the field begun considering the voices of not-"men" (and others) and places like not-nation (like households) earlier in its history.[348]

One cannot tackle the identity / difference *problématique* without investigating 'positionality'.

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346. *Ibid*, p 304.
347. H. Bhabha, *The Postcolonial and the Postmodern : the question of agency*, in The Location of Culture, Routledge, London, 1994, p. 171.
348. C.Sylvester, Feminist Theory in International Relations, 1992, p223-5

Addressing issues of ethnicity, gender or class need always be considered as articulating a politics of location, positionality or enunciation.[349] With the Other seen as a primarily historical and cultural construct, the post-colonial critique claims the necessity for re-thinking multiculturalism and difference in a way that moves beyond the 'either-or' logic of assimilation and resistance. To avoid both the 'tyranny of the whole' *and* the 'dictatorship of the fragment'.[350] Terese Ebert for instance, argues that what is needed is a reassertion of the concept of totality : 'as both a system of relations and *overdetermined structure of difference*".[351] This regards difference as social contradiction, as difference in relation rather than dislocated, free-floating difference.[352] *We need to concern ourselves therefore with economies of relations of difference within historically specific totalities that are always open to contestation and transformation.*

II - 2 - Yes, but can the silenced be heard ?

• The idea of an 'hybrid' culture, and/or an hybridized subjectivity -- already evoked in Chapter One -- is thus the most accurate concept any evaluation of the disparities that make up the tissue of the West could use. Such an approach implicitly insist upon the formulation and exploitation of a critical thought that concentrates on searching for all the unhomogeneities, differences and antagonisms that the dominant voices could not quite cover. Only when these fault-lines are rendered visible can their gaps be questioned. Then, and only then, may strategies of resistance and response emerge from the cultural margins, allowing their move to the centre and their conversation with each other to unfold. As Foucault suggests : "to make visible the unseen can also mean a change of level; addressing oneself to a layer of material which had hitherto no pertinence for history and which had not been recognised as having any moral, aesthetic or historical value".[353]

Yes, but once the 'others within' are made visible, does it guarantee them a place to speak up ? Is our so called discovery of the subaltern and its 'enabling empowerment' in our courses and text-books -- or on our screens -- nothing but yet another disguised form of further disempowerement ? Do 'we' really let 'them' *speak*

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349. This is the direction undergone by what others have coined 'resistance postmodernism', with writers such as Stuart Hall striving to "honor the hidden stories from which people come" and give way to the cultural recovery of 'emerging ethnicities'. See P. McLaren, *Multiculturalism and the Postmodern Critique : Towards a Pedagogy of Resistance and Transformation*, in <u>Cultural Studies</u>, Vol, 7, No.1, January 1993, p128.
350. *Ibid, p* 132.
351. *Ibid.*.
352. *Ibid.*
353. Foucault, quoted in G.Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak ?*, in <u>Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture,</u> Grossberg (ed) MacMillan Education, Basingstoke, 1988.

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in our 'special issues', 'special conferences' or is their speech merely kept behind the bars of a curiosity-shop zoo made up for the entertainment or guilt-relief of the superordinate ? All these questions, underline the very problem of tokenism : that a voice or two in academia or on screen can possibly *speak for* an entire community of interests merely reinforces the perceived secondariness and reducibility of that community.

Gayatry Spivak firmly believes that the subaltern cannot speak, whilst Trinh Minh-ha at times doubts the benefit of attending these specialised, ghetto-ised lectures on 'third world women' and the like. And yet they speak, and write, since "without other silences (their own) silence goes unheard, unnoticed; it is simply one voice less, one more point given to the silencers".[354] But more prominently because not to speak at all only further encourages paranoia and witch-hunts:

> Crossed fears continue to breed wars, for they feed endlessly
> on each other until no conversation can possibly be carried
> out without heaping up misunderstandings . It is indeed
> much easier to dismiss or eliminate on the pretext of
> difference (destroy the other in our minds, in our world) than
> to live fearlessly with and within difference(s).[355]

....

• This paper agrees with Trinh's sense of urgency -- eradicating the fears the silenced Other may engender and establishing the conditions for a genuine conversation to develop (see Chapter Three). It equally believes that these small acts of 'speaking up for oneself' can *eventually* shift the balance at least to a certain equilibrium. The provocation, the unavoidable visibility of the Other eventually forces fixities to be reconsidered. No surroundings, no co-ordinates are ever immutable. As James Scott pertinently remarked:

> Everyday forms of resistance make no headlines. Just as
> thousands of anthozan polyps create, willy-nilly, a coral
> reef, so do thousands of individual acts of insubordination
> and evasion create a political and economic barrier reef of
> their own.[356]

Today's Western citadel indeed daily awakens to the possibility of what Felix Gattari call its "process of heterogenesis".[357] We have begun increasingly to

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354. Trinh Min-ha, *Difference, a special Third World Women Issue*, in <u>Feminist Review</u>, No.25, March 1987. p.8.
355. *Ibid.*
356. J.Scott, *Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, <u>Journal of Peasant Studies</u>, Vol 13, No.2, January 1986.
357. F. Gattari, *The Three Ecologies*, in <u>New Formations</u>, 8, Summer 1989, p.139.

acknowledge the presence and wealth of many cultural underwolds whose experiences and narratives are inextricably interwoven in the very texture of our own. The streets of Barbès or those of the Bronx, tell us stories of what it means to be Muslim or black in Paris or New York with a resonnance that is already inescapably 'ours' even though they are undeniably those of 'others'. Distances demarcating the territories of Others within the Self are constantly eroded as the tide of communication and cultural intercourse pours in. Ben Jalloun, Naipaul, Gurnah, Walcott, Okri (and the list keeps growing) have all engaged in the slow, yet irrevocable cultural rewriting of the 'North'.

That those many 'post-colonial' identities clash and intersect simultaneously at every corner of the Transatlantic cage raises few eyebrows : on Sunday 28th January 1996, The Observer's *Life Magazine* focused its lead article on "*What does it mean to be British in the 1990's* ". The cover photo represented a black woman as a token to this turn-of-Millennium Britishness and the article celebrated the seeming assimilation of non-indigenous ethnic communities at every strata of political, economic and social life. In a Britain where the most common male name 'John' has now been supplanted by 'Mohamed' it indeed does appear that the 'subaltern' has somehow pervaded the barriers of binarisms and been fully accepted as part and parcel of the hosting subject's new Self.

....

• Yet beware of surfaces.

There are as many dangers with this integrationist sense of belief as there are in the pessimism of a stance that conceives the subaltern as irremediably muted. The relativisation of differences and the celebration it entails make us lazy. This apathy is at the root of the political correctness movement -- unwittingly burdening the Other with a pseudo-inclusion that borders on condescension. Melting-pot theories have merely forced the margins to shed their particularities in order to fit in : only when 'transparent' do you really belong, can you really talk.

One master-narrative is simply substituted for another. Old racism would have only been contested and conquered so as to be choked and dislodged by its newest form, one that ends up supporting domination, by re-affirming cultural uniformity. It would do so by displaying racial difference as a significant aspect of a nation's life ("we are one happy hybrid family"), but doing so only to pose such hybridity as a threat -- to national unity and international stability -- that must by all means be overcome. David Lloyd refers to this 'cultural stripping' practice as the formation of the "Subject without

properties"[358] : As the dominated are invited to shed their positive identities -- as woman, as coloured, as Basque or gay -- the dominators unknowingly serve as the regulating principle of identity itself by virtue of their very difference. We are back to the Square One of universalist assumptions and all the closures involved. Within a regime of representation that considers all differences in the West to have been eradicated, the perennially restricted economy of ethnic / gendered enunciation takes us back to the political problems of Self / Other enunciation overviewed in Chapter Two.[359]

The only feasible way out of this vicious circle -- in which the identity / difference dichotomy is paradoxically constantly reinforced under the pretence of erosion -- is to keep the terms of the dialogue feebly begun in Chapter Three open : not reducing the Other to the wor(l)d of the Same but keeping the narrative *both* continous and interrupted, historical and fragmentary. This is why this Chapter is still a reflection on the Other, where it could so easily have been about the Self.

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* *

To generalise about the 'Other' -- as Euro-American post-structuralism so readily does -- can be perceived by those concerned as reifying their subjectivity in an all-to easy abstract category that itself "promotes a pluralist ideology that readily maintains the mainstream canonical tradition...in place".[360] It is this awareness that is at the basis of the 'oppositional ethnography' of the Chicano movement, the critical representational politics defended by Asian-Americans such as Trinh Minh-ha, the counter-historical re-writing(s) of America from a Native or the Black point of view. For these, taking up the pen, the camera or the stage are discursive acts, but they are also more than that : they are political acts of re-invention, of emancipation -- endlessly waged "wars of position" as Gramsci would put it.[361] These 'others within' -- those who exemplify in the telling words of Stuart Hall "the dynamic vectors of similarity and continuity and difference"[362] -- do not cease to emerge from the silence that had hither

358. McLaren, *op.cit.*, p.127.
359. See Introduction to <u>Screen</u> , Special Issue on 'Race', p.4: 1) individual subjectivities are denied : one black woman is supposed to act as a ventriloquist for all black women, foreclosing the *diversity* of black or/and female experience;
2) where minority subjects are framed and contained by the monologic terms of the 'majority discourse', the fixity of boundary relations between centre / margin, universal / particular returns the speaking subject to the ideologically appointed place of the stereotype that "all black people" (or all women) "are the same"...
360. *Ibid.*
361. I am refering more particularly to Chantal Mouffe's reading of Gramsci's 'hegemony and war of position' in her <u>Gramsci and Marxist Theory</u>, Routledge, London, 1979, p.196.
362. quoted in R. L. Fregoso and A. Chabram, *Chicana/o Cultural Representations : Reframing Alternative Critical Discourses*, in <u>Cultural Studies</u>, Vol.4, No.3, October 1990, p.207.

surrounded their memory, their vision of conquest and travel. In such a light, this seems a good time for international relations theory to account for its political responsibility.

In the face of such a diversity of voices, positionalities and political identities, a difficult methodological choice arises. It seems legitimate and necessary at this point in our discussion to turn our scrutinizing gaze towards the particular experience of one race -- one (his/her)story, one 'other' -- so as to best grasp the implication such resistance has on the particular development of one nation's sense of 'Self' and its leakage into the international realm. We have chosen to dwell more particularly on the experience and impact of the African-American subject -- with emphasis given on the salient role of cinema in their political reconfiguration within the United-States and beyond.[363]

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363. By chosing to concentrate on the already much studied voice of African-America, we of course risk obliterating the ways in which, for instance, Chicano cultural representation has been reframed in the past decade, or the means by which the many different voices of Native Americans, be they Navajo, Hopi, Sioux... -- have been meaningfully inserted into the master-narrative of American / Western epistemology. On a more transnational basis, we also risk assuming that the biography of black resistance we will devise can safely be extrapolated to fit the cases of heterogeneous Britain or Brazil, in the ways they would the US. We are aware of the impossibility of devising an enquiry that would fit all 'others' within. This, however, seemed the most striking example of counter-hegemonic practice, and hence the most inspiring to our engagment.

Section II - Fade to Black

> Or maybe we didn't remember; we just knew. We had defended ourselves since memory against everything and everybody, considered all speech a code to be broken by us, and all gestures subject to careful analysis; we had become headstrong, devious and arrogant. Nobody paid us any attention, so we paid very good attention to ourselves.
>
> -- Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, 1970.

I - Epiphanies.

Of the many oxymorons that make up the American dream, the most ironically fitting is : 'Venice, California'.

Venice, Italy... Venice, California : both places diffuse a very different sense of 'history', of the 'West', and of what 'culture' is about. Both are situated on shores other than the reassuring North Atlantic pond : seas on which it is impossible to travel without moving 'East' or 'South'. As two symbolic points at the imaginary edge of the transatlantic citadel, Venice and Venice also evoke the porous nature of the walls hitherto circling the Self of West. Europe's oldest *Mardi Gras* is repeated a million fold every instant on the crazed walks along Santa Monica's Venice Beach -- and urge an open, plural outlook on the concept of 'identity'.

Chosing California's Venice and more generally Los Angeles as a backdrop to our case-study is not a random indulgence. Los Angeles seemed to best examplify the changing nature of the metropolitan terrain and the cultural politics that besiege it. Its hybridized topography has been turned into myth through Dennis Hopper's depiction of gang life in *Colours* (1988) or into a testing frontier upon which humans and aliens could rewrite the meaning of identity and difference -- as in Ridley Scott's *Bladerunner* (1982). Even more haunting is the metropolitan tale-telling to be found in *Boyz N The Hood* (1991), John Singleton's prophetic tribute to the complex racial relations at play in South Central, a 'hood' on the verge of implosion. Difference in these texts is never innocently portrayed, never fully removed from wider social and political articulations. Each one of these directors has accepted this complex urban setting as the most fitting metaphor to represent the realities of intra-group relations in the West. American

culture, placed under the microscope in LA, embodies indeed *par excellence* Guattari's notion of *heterogenesis* and Bakhtin's views of the carnavalesque, the heteroglossia of our inescapably multicultural modernity.

I - 1 - Leaking out of the system.

> ...the current mission in ethnic (culture) is to reinstate the memories of an ancestral tradition and to unburden those tribal 'ghosts' whose lives and stories lack recognition.[364]

"Post-Civil Rights" may be to the United States what 'post-colonial' is to the rest of the world. "A name", as Mani and Frankenberg remark, "for a decisive though hardly definitive shift that implicitly or explicitly structures, whether through affirmation, negation, denial, repression or evasion, relations of race in this country".[365] Thus any truthfully engaged 're-writing' of history would have, in the case of the US, to start in the period that followed the emancipatory movements of the fifties and sixties. This new history follows the narratives of domination and counter-hegemony from the points of view of the Native Americans, African Americans, Latino/Chicano, Asian-Americans. To this must be added the particularly novel voices of the newly settled : the immigrants and refugees that dwell on the margins both literally and figuratively of the centre. All negotiate in their own way, and beyond this day, a 'post-civil rights' American mindscape -- from the de-centred perspective of 'the Other', by choice or by lack thereof. The freshly arrived also inflict new dimensions to what it means to be 'Chicano' or 'Asian-American' -- depending on whether the circumstances of their arrival were greeted by the fulfillment of the American Dream or the invisible walls of Tijuana, whether the flight was political or economic. Relations between those just arrived, those already there, those white and those coloured -- are all constituted through discourses heavily embedded in racial / colonial rhetoric, histories of neglect and submission and representational practices that have only recently begun their visible contestatory and revisionsit plight.

The myth of the blending -- or melting -- pot faded from America's collective imagination many years ago. The 'salad-bowl'-concept supplanting the old metaphor, may be more fitting but no more apt at forgoing the fact that America in particular and the West in general will never rid itself entirely of racial upheaval and intra-group strife. Stepping out of silence, leaking out of the system -- the necessary 'epiphany' that precedes the carnavalesque -- was in this case particularly violent. America's Other(s)

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364. P. Melling, in I. Bell, *The Construction of American Culture : An Overview*, in J.Mitchell and R. Maidment (eds.), <u>The United States in the Twentieth Century</u>. Hodder & Stoughton, Milton Keynes, 1994, p.5
365. Mani and Frankenberg, *op.cit.*, p. 302.

came indeed most notoriously to the forefront of international attention amidts the ashes of Watts, and more recently, amongst the flames of South-Central.

I - 2 - The LA 'riots' : some global implications.

Many theorecians attempted to explain the course of the May 1992 events : some saw it as a nihilistic riot for mere sake of 'fun and profit' even though the video-taped beating demonstrated that there were far more reasons than mere self-entertainment to defy order. Others saw it as yet another black protest against police brutality. It was however the Hispanics, who had *prima facie* little link with the Rodney King affair, who made up most of the riot participants. Some viewed the events as a 'Rainbow Coalition' of the ethnically marginalised and economically deprived to loot the top-dogs. The rioters' primary target was not -- despite idyosyncratic exceptions -- the insitutions or property under white control, but Korean retail shops, and though this could suggest a class struggle theory, it invalidates a 'rainbow' theory based on 'coloured' (of indeed very diverse and even conflicting political backgrounds) rioting against non-coloured (equally divided)...

Interestingly for our own thesis, a *Bladerunner* scenario was put forth -- using this film's cybernetic underpinnings as a fitting metaphor for the 'blame it on the power of the image' variant of the eruptions. The fact that the beating had been recorded by a mechanical eye-witness and aired all over the globe, not only proved the ongoing degradation of ethnic relations -- but most crucially could be held to have suggested a the potential breakdown of American civil society and political system at large. This relatively apocalyptic approach should not be too steadily dismissed : the changing directions of representational practices on a popular level, the enomous impact of the video on all strata of the population and the powerful zoom-lensed apparatuses deployed by the international journalists flying from a safe distance above the covered riot, all indicate the proportions taken and role assumed by image technology in this *quasi* 'post-modernist' strife. Last amongst this tentative chain of theories, was one declaring it as 'a new form of violent inter-minority confrontation', the 'first multi-ethnic riot'; 'the first urban unrest of the 21st Century' in a demographic situation further 'ripe for unrest'. Most of these views drew a parallel between the intensive fightings between blacks, Hispanics and Koreans and the ethnic conflicts erupting in post-Cold War former Eastern Europe -- with the megalopolis replacing the nation as a territorial enclave under contest.

Clearly no single theory can adequately fit this riot -- rather many theories fit many overlapping riots within the riot, differing in degrees and emphasis. The

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complexity of these events demonstrated the implausibility of the 'West' as a coherent ontological and epistemological entity at the dawn of the next *millennium* as much as it pointed to the insufficient space given to 'inter-racial dialogue' within the modern nation state. Whereas this might not ring true for the attention given to ethnical grievances and nationalist pleads in general -- the L.A. events, and their global repercussions, proved that racial differences and the bitter legacy of colonial hierarchy within the imperial core remain to be encompassed as a crucial component of i.r.'s theoretical framework.

This lack of dialogical effort constitutes indeed not merely a crucial threat to the principles of democracy but poses also a number of doubts on the new foundations of international security. America's marginalised others no longer accepted to be the silent witnesses of history, but rather to stand up by diminishing the centrality of the *nation* as a focus upon their political allegiance. This refusal to accept and submit has the double potential to create space for the claims of ethnicity *and* to make room for a supranational challenge to the exclusive sovereignty of the nation-state within present borders.[366]

The boundaries that this deterioration of minority relations strains and contests are arguably not those of the nation-state, and yet, "while the imperial metropolis tends to understand itself as determining the periphery...it habitually blinds itself to the ways in which their periphery determines the metropolis"[367] -- ways which may inadvertantly lead the West to crumble upon its fissured founding stone. Although Recent databases[368] pointed out that a large segment of the public conceived American identity as a balanced nationalism that incorporates both a revitalized melting-pot / assimilationist creed and a more explicit commitment to cultural pluralism, the anxiety of new immigration tides may well fuel the resurgence of nativist thought. Some polls suggest a future that accomodates and mutually reinforces these antithetic trends : invigilating urban policies that support the multicultural creed of the black and Hispanic communities whilst also attempting to draw a line in immigration quotas that would support nativist claims amongst the whites. Of course the problem remains how to concretely forge a consensual approach on a national basis that would redress ethnic and racial inequalities without this redressment to impinge on the gains made by the subordinates (or indeed the middle-class segments of the subaltern community) -- and trigger discontent on their side...

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366. Haas *et al., op.cit.,* p.29.
367. M. L. Pratt, Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturalism, Routledge, London, 1992, p.6.
368. See those compiled by Haas *et al,* in *op.cit.*

The events that occured in Los Angeles and their impact on global awareness surrounding inter-racial relations should be included at the basis of any theoretical analysis of foreign policy in our field. It would be a mistake to discount the public's opinion as too volatile and unstructured a guide to affect and constrain elite action and remain indifferent to what goes on in the ghettoes of modern metropolises as irrelevant to the greater spheres of i.r.. LA's acts of resistance exemplify how any radical politics of representation must be situated within what is called 'a contemporary politics of citizenship'. Such politics would take into account the quality of normative stances (and plausibly the nationalist belief in interest) critical social movements may bring to the State. Coming to terms with inner difference would be accompanied by the slow eradication of the domestic / foreign binarisms in international policy, with issues such as trade, immigration and investment crowding the national agendas of most nations in the post-Cold War era. Competing ideologies of what the nation is about and the extent to which multiculturalism or integrationism should direct the nation's ethnic complexion would unavoidably change the course of most nations' foreign policy preferences in the years to come.[369]

I - 3 - Close up : the African-American situation.

Du Bois once stated that "the concrete test of underlying principles of the great republic [was] the Negro Problem".[370] The L.A. uprisings, which were ignited by white -on-black violence, have shown the permanence of 'the Negro problem' as a test to Western principles, even decades after its official incursion. The history of Blacks in our hemisphere shows...

> ...how the understanding of identity has itself been reconfigured at various times in the service of the inescapably political desires to be free, to be a citizen, and to be oneself which have shaped sucessive phases in the movements towards racial emancipation, liberation, and autonomy.[371]

369.The emergence and consolidation of the multicultural creed within the United States points towards a plausible change of trajectory in the nations' foreign policy in the decade to come. Multiculturalists' first loyalty being sub-national units, it is highly possible that foreign policy in conflict or aid situations will be tailored to assist one's ethnic kin. Priorities derived from ethnic loyalties are likely to divide America's foreign involvement as well as it might instrumentally dictate, to a certain extent, the nation's multilateral institutionalism. A continuation of internationalism is the most probable direction US foreign policy will take, despite warning signals to a return to isolationism should the domestic policy fail to recover, racial tensions continue to deteriorate and jeopardise American credibility at home and abroad.

370. The recurrent theme in W.E. Du Bois, Black Reconstruction in America - 1860-1880, Athenaeum, New York, 1992.

371. P. Gilroy, *Roots and Routes : Black Identity as an Outernational Project* in Harris, H.W., Blue, H.C. & E.H. Griffith's Racial and Ethnic identity : Psychological Development and Creative Expression, Routledge, New York, 1995, p.18.

It is impossible to disentangle the story of African-American identity with the changing strategies of emancipation they used. Although this is not the place to dwell on such movements and tactics, it is important to understand the fluid nature of this specifically racial identity, where the concepts of 'Negro', 'coloured', 'Black' and 'African' have all been constructed and tested during and not prior to political action. This places the entire notion of a unitary, fixed 'black community'[372] into crisis, since their racial identity has never been essentialist : it was and remains the *product* of racialised politics rather than its precondition. Self-discovery always involved in this case an act of refusal. Refusal to accept the inequality of the terms of encounter bewteen two different epistemologies : that of the European Enlightement and enslaved Africa. Torn between the dialectics of radical sameness and otherness, the African-American Self has therefore always been in a position of negotiation -- re-inscribing its routes and roots (to paraphrase Paul Gilroy) as exterior dynamics enabled this 'identity' to shift and leave behind the zones of silence slavery and colonialism had forced it into.

> Re-reading the political culture of Blacks in modernity with hybridity and creolisation in mind, and sifting its history for theories of identity, generates a discomforting sense of the embeddedness of Western Blacks in the metaphysical assumptions and conceptual schemes that derive from the forms of political and cultural nationalism produced by Kant and Herder, the notions of authenticity, citizenship, and masculinity that follow in Rousseau's wake and the characteristic language of inwardness that begins with Descartes' identification of radical doubt as the path to epistemological certainty and ontological security.[373]

Generations of African-American intellectuals have attempted -- and often succeeded -- in initiating a powerful political language of agency congruent with the pressing demands of racial emancipation and autonomy. They paved the way for counter-hegemonic representational practices to emerge elsewhere and it is in tribute to the perseverence of that aspiration, that *The New Yorker* devoted a first issue entirely written from a black perspective. The issue's editorial was titled *The African American*

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372. Of course, the very term 'black community' itself is contentious, with the *African Americans in the 1990s Population Reference Report* signaling on the one hand that the average income of African-Americans is only 56% that of white income (against 63% in 1973), whilst there are "two separate worlds" within the community itself, "inhabited by poor and middle-class children"(quoted in Marable, *op.cit* p.20). The report in fact foresees that "the African-American population will become more polarized as these children mature. Deep divisions in culture, religious values and social relations also accentuate an intergenerational clash between those born before 1964 and those born after the seeming legislative victory of the civil-rights movement. Whereas the former were relatively optimistic in their struggle for equality and change, and indeed saw that a certain cohesion could indeed bring about tangible political actions in their favour, the latter was brought up amidst a climate of black-on-black violence and social defeat. High rates of unemployment, homelessness and the endless anguish of alienation bestow this younger generation with a sense of defeatism further detrimental to the eradication of racism.

373. Gilroy, *op.cit.*, p.19. see also, on the concept of 'inwardness', Charles Taylor's Sources of the Self : The Making of Modern Identity, Part II, Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Century .[374] The authors therein denounced that even though our era was marked by the growing centrality of the African-American experience to the maturing national culture of the United States, "the most striking irony has been the degree to which blacks, despite that centrality, have remained... marginal".[375] There may be a notable increase of their involvement in the political arena (whether as voters, lobbyists, or higher functionaries) which contributed to a narrowing of the gap henceforth separating them from their white fellow citizens. Despite this amelioration, however, blacks remain underrepresented within the electoral structure of power and decision-making : only 2% of all elected and appointed officials throughout the nation are black. Amongst these 2%, many have what some termed 'responsibility without authority'. The immediate aftermath of the LA uprisings demonstrated that challenges facing the black population in the early '90s were the same as those they had faced during the Civil Rights battles of the Sixties. Once again, as we will now show, it is popular culture in general and cinema in particular which proved the most poignant as a weapon for this 'Other within' to strike back.

II - Taking up the reel power : a brief (his)tory of African-American resistance through cinema.

> The under- or non-representation of blacks or other minorities, like Hispanics and Asian-Americans points to the way the 'free market' of entertainment, like that of employment, tends to favour those with power. "Equal opportuinity" simply means unequal reality, if "freedom" is the structuring rule of the social system.[376]
>
> Presently in America a war is being fought. Forget about guns, planes and bombs, the weapons from now on will be the newpapers... radio and films. [...] It's war on the battleground of culture... At stake is the way to control the way think or do not think... Which brings us back to Malcom X. In this war, it's gonna come down to the artist.[377]

In the United States, black, Navajo and Chicano cinema have often been cited as predating the European counter-hegemonic trend against Hollywod. Small fringe production companies -- such as the Indian-American Apple Productions in New York, for instance -- deal specifically with the trajectory of newly arrived immigrants in their

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374. Written by Hendrik Hertzberg and Henry Louis Gates Jr.
375. *ibid*, p.2.
376. Ryan and Kellner, <u>Camera Politica : The Politics and Ideology of Contemporary Hollywood Films</u>, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1988, p.128
377. S. Lee and R. Wiley, <u>By any means necessary : the Trials and Tribulations of the Making of Malcolm X</u>, Hyperion, New York, 1992, p.xiii.

apprehension of the West and the American Dream. The financial pressures of the competing major system, however, more often than not re-direct some marginalised voices into adopting mainstream narratives in order to 'sell out' : the young Mexican-American director Rodriguez, whose low-budget débuts with *El Mariachi* was garlanded in triumph, now plays by the rules of the studio-system game with films such as *Desperado* or *Four Rooms* accentuating the more stereotypical images of Mexico his first text tentatively evaded. Others have nonetheless with irony and persistence succeeded in financing films that consciously attempt to liberate the 'image' from the constraints of "both dominant codes as well as the constraints of what some would brand as the 'correct' mode for political cinema".[378]

If we look at the experience of African-American cinema as one particular mode to evaluate the above, we see that black cultural projection today permeates almost every fibre of American life -- be it through the educational channel or that of public celebrations, or perhaps more significantly, through the entertainment industry. Afro-American presence on television and film is now almost taken for granted internationally -- providing an ever increasing inspiration for the 'Empire' to film back. There are also an increasing number of magazines inspired by *Ebony* and *Essence* and some cable television channels that cater specifically for the demands of African-American audiences, and the very fact that even a decade ago 16% of TV advertising in the US contained black characters against only a mere 0.5% in 1946 marks something of a victory for counter-assimilationist representational practices, both on a local and global scale. Yet this seeming success is still tainted by the ghost of a struggling history -- one which merely three decades ago would have been systematically obstructed by the projection of such representations.

II - 1 - Freeing Black imaginary from above : Hollywood's rewriting of African-America.

Every spectator is a coward or a traitor ...
- Franz Fanon as quoted in *The Hour of the Furnaces*, 1968.

Hollywood's political stance on the 'Negro problem' was clearly established in 1915, with the national -- and later international -- release of *The Birth of a Nation*. D.W. Griffith's film showed an obsession with miscegenation and the desire to fix its black characters within the confines of certain spaces and roles. Whites occupy the centre whilst Blacks exist only in relation to whiteness -- a relation where power and humiliation are omnipresent. Africa, the black man/woman's place of origin, is

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378. *Ibid*, p.274.

presented as the reason for his/her inherent cruelty and the impossibility of his/her integration within the 'Self' of America. As a master text it knowingly paved the way to half a century of 'official' representational practice, wherein the real contours of African-American history and culture were systematically suppressed or altogether denied.

The racial conflict depicted in *The Birth of a Nation* overdetermined the stance the major motion picture companies of America would take throughout the next fifty years : films in which Blacks only came into existence for the White gaze, as their ultimate Other, whose story had no purpose outside the limits of racial relations stories as overdetermined by Griffith's text.

Oscar Micheaux and King's work in the 1920's and 30's stand out as embodying Hollywood's first official gesture towards black recognistion. Upon seeing Vidor's *Hallelujah !* in 1929, for instance, the lone black congressman of the day, Oscar DePriest grasped the event as a hopeful sign of an American medium on the threshhold of finding a place for his race's ambition. Yet here again, and despite the hopes of cultural emancipation such official financing stirred, representations were contrived, lighter skin actors predominant, political and economical realities subdued for an unequal public, unprepared to bridge this racial gulf.

It was the civil rights movement of the mid-sixties that 'decolonised', in theory if not always in practice, American racial minorities, and gave Black America the impetus to continue 'fighting the power'. It put pressure on the federal and state governments to provide welfare for minorities and coerced Hollywood into inserting a more consistently positive image of Blacks within its world view. This trend was less about 'realism' than about a new version of intergroup relations in America, one that was itself just as far removed from the 'facts' as its 1920's predecessor had been.

The late sixties and early seventies hence witnessed the burgeoning of what one might call 'post-civil rights' cinema, with a relatively large array of productions conducted on subjects such as the struggles of black families in small town America or mythical black heroes starring in the traditionally 'white genres' of the detective or western movie. In 1971, Melvin Van Peebles' provocative *Sweet Sweetback Baadasssss Song* demonstrated that there was a huge market for Black films. Although the Black community was ambivalent in its reaction, hailing and denouncing it in equal measure for its sexual rawness and depiction of coloured identity as irretrievably repressed and in need of rescue -- *Sweetback* made millions at the box-office. The low budget detective film *Shaft* (Gordon Parks, Sr.), released that same year, was equally

successful and soon turned into a cult-movie of its genre. By 1972, headlines in the press strangely echoed those from the twenties : "H'wood Promises the Negro a Better Break" -- and ironically enough it seems that despite the drastic changes that had recently occurred in America's domestic policy, Hollywood's 'promise' had kept all the stereotypes and racially flawed undertones of the Vidor and Micheaux's era.

If Pam Grier, the dark female protagonist of *Coffy, Foxy Brown* and *Friday Foster* seems strong, efficient and professionally competent, most black women were still severely ill-portrayed during that era's film productions, turning the predatory Black male gaze upon their contours as a mere replacement to the pervasive white eye of the *Birth of the Nation* age. One Other is merely supplanted by another. In *Shaft* and *Superfly* (Gordon Parks, Jr.,1972) blacks triumph over corrupt whites -- yet it is a triumph born out of extreme forms of violence, over women, over their own people and over whites. Shaft is a tough detective respected by his white boss, yet ambivalent in his power relationship to a Harlem crime boss who hires him to find his daughter's kidnappers. Shaft eventually dismantles the kidnappers network with the help of a black radical group -- acting as a mediator between the white and black worlds, but also, and most significantly as a one-man peace negotiator amongst his own people, arguing for a more moderate position of the radicals in the face of white policies. Shaft is thus perversely used as a pawn to transcode the discourses of black emancipatory movements for more cooperation with the pre-established powers. This assimilationsist subversion through Hollywood's imagery is also blatant in *Superfly*. Here Blacks clean up their houses, get rid of some drugs but rape women, sniff coke and carry guns. What does this say of America's newly emcompassed citizens ? What does this indeed say about the realities of black power ? In the mid-seventies there were growing signs of an emerging parallel representational discourse from within a Black community. These, as we will see later, believed to have been unwittingly trapped in the structural logic of a conspiracy theory which repeatedly fixed African-Americans on the margins of political participation through the thwarted iconologies surrounding and constructing the worlds of their black anti-heroes.

Ironically, the films that Hollywood continued to produce well into later half of the eighties all undescore the very same, dual and contraditctory character of cultural oppression. All point to the accuracy of Clyde Taylor's observation :

> In these ... interventions upon a classical narrative precedent
> one can read the difficulty of repressed discourse in turning
> the tables into a liberative ironic relation to the master text.
> Or, conversely, one can see the power of the grand narrative

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tradition, upheld from the crystal palace, to circumscribe
meanings issued from the silenced sectors.[379]

The gradual shift towards excessively positive images of Blacks into the early eighties
is hence symptomatic of yet another variety of superordinate narrative and visual
strategy of containment. Looking at the eighties' "buddy movies" (the then trendy
biracial friendship formula) the only role for blacks in white culture seems to be that of
comedians (e.g. : Murphy and Cosby roles) or sidekicks (Danny Glover in the *Lethal
Weapon* series). The Black characters continue to be situated essentially for the
pleasure of the White gaze -- a gaze turned uncritical through the repeated portrayal of
this Other as unthreatening, domesticated, bearer of a deracinated and isolated culture --
by virtue of storylines in which they are depicted as willing to play by the rules of
White society. These films demonstrate a double-standard practice that was able to
attract the largest audience possible (all races and sexes confounded) whilst tritely
negotiating, containing and pretending to resolve the most tangled and socially
burdened issue of race relations on the screen.

Eddie Murphy's impersonations are interesting in so far as they exemplify *par
excellence* the 'identification' *problématique* between the Black (male) spectator and
the symbolic image of the Black (male) character. A direct descendent of Superfly, the
streetwise, homophobic, apolitical persona he projects suited the active forgetfulness of
current social issues and illustrates the reductionism to which his race continuously falls
prey. In *Trading Places* (1983), *48 Hours* (1982) and the two *Beverly Hills Cop*
(1984, 1987), Murphy's character gets deterritorialised from an African-American
milieu and transferred to a White world -- forever subject to a White meta-narrative The
racial tensions that these displacements inevitably induce are trivialised and thus
preempt a true engagement for Black and White spectators alike with the Murphy's
transgressions. All his films are driven by his character's irreverent and disruptive
"Blackness" upon the dominant White social order -- where Whiteness pervades as the
norm and Blackness as its absolute 'other'. The source of energy of these films may be
race, but the challenge against white supremacy is never carried to its full extent, and
fades in a luke-warm gesture of ironic denunciation. Murphy may be the star of the
farce but he is not the hero of these stories.

The same marginalisation rings true in *Lethal Weapon I, II* and *III*, where the
Murphy-Nolte is replaced by the Glover-Gibson tandem, equally presented as
antagonistic (the black Murphy and white Gibson roles being surprisingly identical, if

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379. C. Taylor, *The Ironies of Palace-Subaltern Discourse*, in <u>Black American Cinema</u>, ed. by M. Diawara,
Routledge, New York, 1993.

diametrically reversing each other's racial configuration) -- and in each case the African-American is still expected to complement the white character as a figure of central identification. Glover's character may have a depth that reaches beyond usual Hollywood conventions, yet in the end the audience 'cares' more for Gibson-Martin Riggs' exploits : the norms of Self / Other subordination are upheld and controlled. Gibson is iconic, Glover not. And it is Gibson, and not Glover, who acts through and throughout as the reliable point of identification structured into the diegesis of the dominant spectator.

All so-called 'popular' films of the eighties that adopted that bi-racial formula partook in the same basic rhetoric of latent power and subordination that had prevailed in white America's collective imagination. Some variations on the same theme include *Cry Freedom* (1987), in which the tribulations of reporter Donald Woods marginalise the historical struggle of 'buddy' Steve Biko; *Mississipi Burning* (1989) -- in which Blacks are once again the passive objects of America's racist history whilst two white protagonists relate their fate; and Steven Spielberg's adaptation of Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple* (1985) -- a white-produced film and thus a dominant reading that rather disturbingly regurgitates and re-vamps the demonic images of the black male depicted by Griffith in *The Birth of a Nation..* Nowhere does Spielberg's simplistic portrayal deal with the complex, non-manichean issue of Black male / female relationships, sexuality, racism and religion originally addressed by the African American author.

To sum our findings up, ...

> ... it seems that in a decade most easily identitified with the tenure of the Reagan Presidency, the rise of an ideologically conservative cycle of Hollywood films variously known as the 'cinema of recuperation' or 'Reaganite Entertainment', and the return of the big budget film of 'blockbuster' economics, Hollywood has put what is left of the Black presence on screen in the protective custody, so to speak, of a White lead, or co-star, and therefore in conformity with dominant White sensibilities and expectations of what Blacks should be like.[380]

The US -- our paradigmatic Western icon -- will be inhabited by a majority of non-European descendants by the year 2000. Given that the film industry is primarily driven by profit and given the future realities of America's racial make-up, it makes sense to hope that the conventions of identity and racial representation under the "White" patriarchal norm enunciated above will inevitably erode from within and open

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380. E. Guerrero, *The Black Image in Protective Custody*, in M. Diawara, (Ed), *op.cit*, p.239.

Hollywood to the possibilities of a much needed 'paradigmatic shift'. However, as our next paragraphs will attempt to stress, the pressures against the flawed hegemonic norm started their subversive process long ago, through the channels of independent, parallel cinematic practices -- offering a culturally complex, self-fashioned image of people of colour in the stead of mainstream's diluted voices. It is to the permanency of this emergence, and to the ability of this 'other' cinema's capacity to infiltrate and pervert the Hollywood canon that we turn next.

II - 2 - Freeing the Black imaginary from below : the 'empire' films b(l)ack.

> The role of being active subverts the reactive role. Because you react first, you don't act upon something. Part of the reason is that you are pushed into reacting. But you have to stop this. You have to locate yourself. If you are constantly reacting, you are not locating youself. You are getting bounced about.[381]

The point at stake for all projects of liberatory self-expression -- especially through cinema -- is the outcome of the negotiations imposed on repressed subaltern stories by unequal levels of expressive possibility. The communitarian Black Arts Movement stood out in the early stages of its people's 'decolonisation' for its financial and cultural involvement in the projects that emancipated black representation from Hollywood's tentacular grip. Its members were amongst the first virulent detractors of *Superfly* and all its likes. It irrevocably denounced the implicit 'exploitation' of Black actors for the profit of a system that did not ultimately believe in their equal political integration and merely reflected the double-standard political correctness of white liberal patronage through the federal welfare system. Films like *Shaft*, were also vehemently criticised for their simple subsitution of black heroes into the actantial slot normally filled by white ones, in order only to flatter the fantasies of a certain, largely male sector of the black audience. Positive images can be as detrimental to racist eradication as negative images. This same Black Arts Movement ultimately led James Baldwin to refuse an invitation from Hollywood to write a screenplay based on the life of Malcolm X. He declared that in an era of Blaxploitation adapting the symbol of African-American identity on the screen would be participating "in the second assassination of Malcom X".[382]

381.Perminder Dhillon-Kashyap, *Interview with filmmaker Shyam Bengal* in Bazaar, September 1988.
382. quoted in N. Masilena, *The Los Angeles School*, in Diawara, (ed.), p.108.

The critical evaluation of the sudden flow of positive black achievement as well as a swelling excavation of their African cultural roots evidenced the pressures of an increasing desire to forge a separate Black identity. Nowhere would the debate over *Sweetback* etc. prove more fruitful to the development of the black independent sphere than at the UCLA film school. The Black Arts Movement evoked above was formed there in an early attempt to decentre and upstage Hollywood. Cinema was instantly recognised as a primary site of struggle. If *Shaft* and/or *Sweetback* were accepted in technical or procedural terms, their politics simply could not.

The arrival of Charles Burnett at UCLA in 1967 (two years after Malcolm X's assassination and the Watts uprisings) and the matriculation of the Ethiopian cinematographer Haile Gerima in 1968 (the year of Martin Luther King's assassination and the launching of the Tet Offensive in Vietnam) were generative in the formation of the first Black independent filmmaking movement. The intellectual and cultural coordinates of this school of cinema were inescapably interwoven in the political commitments and social convulsions of the 60's. Though the Civil-Rights struggle proved salient in the movement's proponents' political consciousness, its greatest inspirations came from the drastic changes in that era's international relations : they were fuelled by the Women's Rights Movement, the anti-war movement and the myriad activities in support of national liberation struggles in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The process of de-colonisation in the Third World proved indeed vital to African-America's emancipatory cinematic struggle. There, new Marxist theories paved the way, under the guise of Maoism in Asia, Che Guevarism in Latin America and the teachings of Cabral and Fanon in Africa. All advocated that only through revolutionary ideology could the oppressed move forward. Fidel Castro's seemingly tautological maxim : "the duty of a revolutionary is to make a revolution" prompted African-American filmmakers in their attempt to establish a new pattern of representational politics that would be true to their community's cultural roots and consistent in their condemnation of mainstream portrayals. The greatest challenge facing them was to find a film form unique to their historical and cultural situation, one that Hollywood could not readily appropriate.

If the film-work of Oscar Micheaux was drawn upon in the beginings (his middle-class characterisations replaced with a more accurate description of black working class lives), it is international political thought that most significantly influenced this generation of independent African-American filmmakers. Haile Gerima -- an Ethiopian who received a scholarship to train at UCLA -- for instance demonstrated how what was happening in Europe's then crumbling empire was

relevant to the domestic experience of America's others -- and drew heavily on Frantz Fanon's *Towards the African Revolution* and Cabral's theories to forge his cinematographic language. Fanon's work had indeed voiced concern with Africa's lack of concerted ideology and urged it to adopt one in order to move forward. Amilcar Cabral similarly critisised Africans for not having faith in 'national culture' and argued for the continent's re-appraisal of its historical roots and imagery as the most effective means to counter imperialistic dogma. Gerima's films all sought to contribute to such a process of cultural rediscovery, mingling art form and intellectual trajectory in a open dialogue with political currents abroad. His intent was soon echoed by most of his Black UCLA film-studies peers -- though never in a concerted manner.

The strength of the movement lay exactly in that lack of a single, hegemonic ideology : the cultural nationalism of the Black Arts Movement, the revolutionary nationalism of the Black Panther Party, the African Marxism of Fanon (with its stress on peasantry) and that of Cabral (with its celebration of working-class) all coexisted and clashed in dialectical tensions that made up this new cinema's strength. Robust dialogue between proponents of these different ideologies was highly valued and cemented the movement. Some texts proved decisive to all as the basis of their political consciousness, clarifying the historical and political momentum in which these filmmakers found themselves such as Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* , Ngugi wa Thiongos' *Homecoming*, Richard Wright's *American Hunger* and the canonical *Autobiography of Malcom X* . All pointed to the necessary international character any cinema of domestic resistance would have take, with issues such as the revolutionary possibilities of language, the indissolvability of Pan-Africanism and Marxism etc. as a central axis of belief. In cinematic terms the movement was most influenced by Cuban national cinema -- and more generally by Third World productions at large. Tomas Guitterez Alea's *Memories of Underdevelopment* (1967) and *Last Supper* (1977), or Humberto Solas' *Lucia* (1968) were the most influencial 'texts' amongst the Cuban school of national film -- most exemplary for its ability to incorporate elements of other film movements (Soviet, Italian and French) into its intertextual rendition of a 'Cuban national film language'. It was this appropriation and re-interpretation that led Gerima, Burnett, Ntongela Masilena, Caldwell and others to organise the Third World Film Club at UCLA in 1974. The screening of a wide range of progressive Central and Latin American filmmakers -- from Miguel Littin in Chile, Sanjines in Bolivia, Glauber Rocha's *Black God White Devil* from Brazil's 'Cinema Novo' or Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanes' *The Hour of the Furnaces* from Argentina -- were amongst "the premier examples of the interaction of film form and ideology in the Third World cinema (...) and compelled the Black filmmakers... to ask themselves truly challenging

questions. What was an African-American film or an authentic African-American cinema ?"[383]

The works of African filmmakers, such as Sembene Ousmane's *Black Girl* (1968) -- an astute study of the impact of imperialism's residues on Africans dwelling in France -- were the fledging movement's favourite references. The first African film festival in North America, held in 1970, guaranteed a space of encounter for black filmmakers on both sides of the Atlantic and a forum of debate on issues that all focused around the structural violence faced by African filmmakers (lack of laboratories, funding and often, sense of ideological direction), here and there. The event most prominently bridged the spacio-temporal gap between post-colonial Africans and post-civil rights Afro-Americans as they both struggled through cinema's channels for the recognition and assertion of their political self-imagery. Symptomatic of this influence was the release of Gerima's *Bush Mama* in 1974, in which the epynomous protagonist understands the situation of Black Americans as internal colonialism -- a form of oppression that could only be overcome by assisting in the political and cultural emancipation of the African continent iself. This cosmopolitarian spirit suffused Gerima's next work, *Harvest : 3000 years,* shot in Ethiopia, a year after its revolution and drawing upon the interpenetration of this state's cultural heritage and the historical reappraisal fuelling the then influencial Pan African and Marcus Gavey Movements in the US. As with *Bush Mama, Harvest* dealt with the moment of intersection of three forms of oppression : class, gender, race, and is to be considered as amongst the finest illustration of the L.A. school's internationalism and its successful narrative, visual and theoretical distanciation from Hollywood.

To resist Hollywood and develop a countering practice of self-representation were thus the most firmly held goals of this first generation of independent African-American filmmakers. Yet into the '80s and '90s, 'opposing Hollywood' no longer meant doing so from the 'outside' nor from 'below'. For a younger generation of black filmmakers, establishing the UCLA's school's continuity meant re-entering the mainstream through the backdoor, so as to make African-America's iconology and political consciousness accessible to far wider multi-cultural / multi-racial audiences through a direct subversion of the studio-system. This strategy of couter-representation 'from within' Hollywood, was tried and secured through the very successful Black narratives of directors such as Spike Lee and John Singleton -- and to a more subtle degree through the commercial experiments of Melvin van Peebles' son, Mario.

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383. *ibid.* p.111.

II - 3 - Trojan Horses : Van Peebles, Singleton, Lee... conquer Hollywood.

The current generation of African-American filmmakers represents the synthesis between the hegemonic thesis examined in section II - 1 and the counter-hegemonic anti-thesis discussed in section II -2. Ironically, however, these can again be subdivided into three stratagems of subversions : one based on an ironic replicate of hegemonic practices, the other on unmistakenly counter-hegemony and the third, middle way of 'syncretic representation', the most dialogic form of all.

• **Hegemony :**

A few decades of resistant Black American cinema had revealed that the more counter-hegemonic the content of a film, the more virulent in its denunciation of suprematist racism, the more whites avoided or distorted its message in their favour. And indeed, the more ambitious the scope of independent black cultural projection, the less penetrative or more polarizing may be its effects on the superordinate.[384] By contrast, Hollywood's unchallenging portrayals of black anti-heroes, from Roundtree's *Shaft*, to Murphy's *Cop* and beyond, proved ironically more apt at opening the dominant white audience to the 'realities' of the Other -- as identification with the jocular character of Murphy, for instance, proved easier and the simple narrative more amenable to unquestioned attention.[385]

Aware of the dilemmas of Black cultural projection, the late-eighties and nineties brought to the fore an altogether new school of politically engaged African-American filmmakers. All focused upon racial issues and displayed a concertedly critical stance against Hollywood's paradigmatic characterisation of coloured people. All varied nonetheless in the strategies opted to counter further Black disempowerement.

Director Bill Duke's *A Rage in Harlem,* for instance makes a point out of narrating the story of a few friends, a chase, a happy end surrounding the blooming of a romance, with means that are not *a priori* counter-hegemonic or racially polarizing : using the hegemonic devices of Hollywood's familiar simple formulas, it tells the seemingly traditional story of baddies and goodies eventually reconciled. If it does not overtly challenge the mainstream's conceptions of race-relations, it nonetheless very firmly asserts the feasibilty of a coexistent and equal Black cinema within traditional

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384. Merelman, R., <u>Representing Black Culture.</u> Routledge, New York, 1995, p.98.
385. This too can be said of the contervailing-iconic figure of Denzel Washington as a pawn for white subversion through pleasurable identification.

narrative frameworks. At first glance, Mario van Peebles' *New Jack City* appears to have opted for an entirely different stratagem since its release inspired riots by black teenagers in a number of American cities. Yet interestingly, this film *does never* present Blacks' own challenging, virulently counter-hegemonic treatment of the racial question. *New Jack City* only *pretends* to turn the American Dream upside down. It is in fact a perfect replicate of a Hollywood action film, depicting three standard themes -- rivalry between gangs, police efforts to punish the outlaws and the rise and fall of a criminal megalomaniac. We have here the unoriginal ingredients of Chicago mobster films mingled with *Citizen Kane* 's characterisation. In this light van Peebles' narrative is never overtly resistant -- and may be criticised for hegemonic complacency. Merelman, for instance[386] criticizes the superficiality of the film's message, never overtly connecting the black criminal's motives or behavior to white domination, never conducting a productive racial resistance whilst seeming to imply that Blacks, once free and empowered, turn only to crack, violence and corruption. Yet again, as a direct, albeit imperfect, descendent of Blaxploitation (in more than one sense), Mario van Peebles's choice went toward an ironic appropriation of traditional white narrative tools to make up a fully Black story. Even if undermined for its lack of positive imagery and condemned for seeming nonchalance in catering whites with yet new reasons for ignoring or repressing blacks, *New Jack City* provides a prime example of the (arguably difficult) possibilities of ironic subversion. In disagreement with Merelman, and others, who see Mario van Peebles as merely playing down to the established language of domination, this paper's author contends that van Peebles' filmography simply presents another form of contest and refusal : this to adopt and adapt a language already there to cater for the needs of one's own audience. These are films that do not dwell in hypocritical positive imagery, nor in lengthy political preachery. They very simply play with the games of hegemonic film-industry's market structure, redistributing capital and pure entertainment within their own community.

This sort of irony may be lost upon many African-Americans[387] -- who understand such subtlety as incapable of meaningfully inducing structural change -- radical counter-hegemonic practices continued to flow well into our decade.

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386. See *Ibib*, p.107.
387. See Peter Gidal's critique of replicates of hegemonic practices for the sole sake of inducing 'identitification' in the white audience. He writes : " 'identification with' structurally eludes a political solidarity because it substitutes the self and the ego for, and in the place of, any other political identification". *Some Condensed Notes on Aesthetics and Politics*, in <u>Undercut - Special Issue on Cultural Identities</u>, No.17, Spring 1988, p.34.

• Counter-Hegemony :

John Singleton's *Boyz N the Hood*, for instance, illustrates the vehemence with which younger directors carried on the retaliatory work initiated by Gerima, Burnett and their likes. This film is very explicit in its self-critique (how Whites have succeded in directing Black rage inward, preventing the unity necessary for successful resistance) yet revealing some ways through which African-Americans can still emancipate themselves and strive towards socio-economic, cultural and political fulfillment. *Boyz* tells the coming-of-age story of Tre, a black boy from South Central LA, who matures amongst the gang violence, alcholism, predatory sex and the semblance of martial law of his 'hood'. Tre's father denounces white oppression as the root of black criminality and societal dysfunction. Though Whites are physically absent from the screen, they are ubiquiously present in the speeches, rap-soudtrack, and posited as the cause of inner-city violence. Most importantly, *Boyz N the Hood* is about the dispute over agency and control of this particular community -- a dispute over control that is ultimately also a dispute over images and the subversive power of representational technology, as the media is omnipresent 'on the hunt' for further clues of Black inability to 'integrate'. According to Diawara,

> [This film] is one of the most didactic Black films. The other contenders are *Deep Cover*, and perhaps some rap videos which espouse a politics of identification with lawbreakers against the police. The didacticism of *Boyz N the Hood* emanates from the film's attempt to teach Tre not to accept the police and the media's sterotype of him and other young Black males as worthless; and to teach him to care for his community and reclaim it from both the gangs and the police.[388]

Countering the fixed identities given to Blaxploitation characters, *Boyz N the Hood* is symbolic of a certain type of nineties Black filmmaking coined as 'New Realism' -- along works such as *Straight Out of Brooklyn* or *Deep Cover*. These overtly polarizing narratives all posit their specificity by challenging the construction of time and space in Hollywood films. Because classical spatial narration is inevitably linked to power and powerlessness -- centre and often invisible periphery or the conquest of the 'West' as a conquest of Otherness through space -- and time (once upon a time...) usually marks the official (his)story of Whiteness in a locus which understands the unofficial story of the coloured as an obstacle, it is through a disarticulation of these essential narrative considerations that this latest generation of

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388. Diawara, *The New Realism*, in Diawara (ed.), *op.cit.*, p23.

resistant African-American cinema was able to forcefully pursue the efforts engendered by their UCLA forefathers.

> Spatial narration is a filming of cultural restoration, a way for Black filmmakers to reconstruct Black history, and to posit specific ways of being Black ... The emphasis on time, on the other hand, reveals the Black American as he/she engenders him/herself amid the material conditions of everyday life in the American society.[...] Whereas the space-based narratives are expressive and celebratory of Black culture, the time-based narratives are existentialist performances of Black people against policing, racism and genocide.[389]

In the face of what could have eventually turned out to be no more than a merely sterile -- because univocal -- film practice, a panel of British black filmmakers, led by Hall and Kobena Mercer contended that any counter-hegemonic approach be supplemented by a Bakhtinian theory of the carnavalesque, as well as draw from Braithwaite's concepts of 'interculturation' :

> Rather than refusing ideas from European artistic practices...(oppositional) cultural producers must direct their energies to evaluating how diasporic people are already inscribed within them, to discern and distinguish critical appropriation from imposition and/or assimilation.[390]

Chapter Two's concluding paragraphs pointed in that direction : the necessity to embrace an 'intercultural' strategy that circumverts a) tendencies towards monologism and b) thwarted calls for 'authenticity' as it appreciates the impossibility to severe the 'official history' of the Dominant from the Dominated stories still to be told. It is to re-state that purist cultural self-identity is impossible to truthfully portray -- and couter-hegemonic practices that resist 'orientalism' by sole virtue of a claim to 'authenticity' are unfaillingly prey to the traps of the ideological. Mercer and Hall's call would be one that denies the orthodoxy of couter-hegemonic representation and its oversimplifications of the issues at stake by pointing to the impossibility to subdivide the world into the 'foreign' and the 'familiar', the 'standard' and the 'exotic', the coloured and the non-coloured. As Fusco observes,

> ... this argument allows for an awareness of how relations of power and control are important factors in processes of cultural appropriation and assimilation. This is particularly crucial, since the shift from essentialist to political categories

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389. *Ibid*, p.13
390. Coco Fusco, *Fantasies of Oppositionality : Reflections on Recent Conferences in Boston and New York*, in <u>Screen. Last Special Issue on Race ?.</u> p.89.

> of race, coupled with poststructuralist scepticism with identity
> and deconstrutivist relativism, could easily appear to be an
> abdication...[391]

To accept cultural/racial 'specifity' cannot and should not be preserved at any cost, and that dialogue cannot be forged by answering exclusionary visions with others, is to accept that "communication across distances relies on a recognition not only of differences, but also of samenesses".[392] This dialogical, middle-way concensus -- interbreeding hegemonic narrative structures with a counter-hegemonic political stance -- forms the core of director Spike Lee's syncretic filmmography.

• Syncretism :

Lee's films, be it *School Daze, Mo' Betta Blues, Do the Right Thing, Jungle Fever, Malcolm X, Crooklyn, Clockers,* all convey a mixture of hegemonic and fervently counter-hegemonic elements -- thus avoiding the pitfalls of polarization and achieving, to the extent possible, a syncretic portrayal of racial reality. Merelman's thorough data-based analysis of Lee's syncreticm pointed to the combination of three structural ingredients in the make-up of this emancipatory strategy [393] :

1) The complex and often fraught relationship between blacks and whites is effectively depicted without confining its focus on black characters only, which could only have estranged a white audience.

2) The main characters portrayed are all individuals and psychologically well defined, in ways complicating the sympathetic identification of a multi-coloured audience with a particular group. This text is not an overtly 'pro-black' propaganda.

3) The main focus is on the normative debate undergone by his black protagonist -- usually a struggle between personal and communitarian allegiance(s). This dilemma bespeaks both 'Western' values (free choice, individual commitment to a cause) and the aspiration of racially subdued groups (racial identity triumphed over friendship with the top-dog).

Lee has no problems admitting that his films are written and shot primarily for white audiences. His are texts which hope to be both commercially lucrative internationally *and* provide an ethnographic depiction of African-American lives for home audiences. Within a decade, from *She's Gotta Have It* (1985) to the more contemporary *Get on the Bus* (1996), his are films that are engaged politically (the rap

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391. *Ibid.*

392 J. S. Peters, *Intercultural Performance...* in J. E. Gainor (ed.), Imperialism and Theatre - Essays on World Theatre, Routledge, London, 1995, p.207.

393. Merelman's experiment took place in Autumn 1992, amongst a group of high school students in Madison, Winsconsin. See *op.cit.* p121.

motive "fight the power" is a recurent theme) and opposed to white financing. Ironically, though Lee has his own production company,[394] he relies heavily on Hollywood's studio system, having black mainstream actors as his principal financial source. With artists such as Bill Cosby, Denzel Washington, Laurence Fishburne, Samuel L. Jackson etc. sponsoring his productions, Lee cleverly redirects Hollywood money earned by his community into his resistant cultural projections. His infiltration is therefore subversive on an array of levels.

School Daze, Lee's most audaciously personal text is a good case in point for the dialogical stance it takes on its identity problem. This is a film that primarily foregrounds tensions within the African-American community and uses stylisation to satyre the ambitions of 'wannabe whites' within an all-black school run under an 'Uplift the Race' motive. Although this film is entirely Black in characters and setting, it shows -- arguably more profoundly than any of the films discussed above -- the stark hererogeneity of this community and hence the implausibility of 'African-American' identity in the hitherto rigid, manichean ways portrayed by the hegemonic / counter-hegemonic discourses.

> Less important than a film's accuracy is that it relay the voices and the perspectives -- I emphasise the plural -- of the community or communities in question. If an identification with a community perspective occurs, the question of 'positive' images falls back into its rightful place as a subordinate issue.[395]

Lee's films thus excel in showing the contradictory, quasi schizophrenic nature of polaized identity and racism. In his influential *Do the Right Thing* (1989) Lee has the black-loathing Pino, who constantly uses the word 'nigger' as a humiliatory device, have celebrity African-Americans (Magic Johnson, Eddie Murphy, Prince) as his 'favourite people'. In other scenes, we face the perennial discussions between the Italo-American Pizzeria owner Sal and his employee, Mookie (played by Lee) highlighting both interethnic tensions and affinities. Readings such as these brings us back yet again to a Bakthinian perspective of identity, with characters traversed in equal meansure with racist and anti-racist affinities. This film implicitly calls attention to the ways in which members of immigrant communities have come to use Blacks as a pawn to affirm, through anti-black hostility, their own insecure sense of national identity. This aspect is

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394. His production company, *40 Acres and a Mule* , bears a historically and politically significant name: most American, and possibly some members of an international audince will recognise this name as referring to the former subservient status of blacks as slaves and tenant farmers, who were given forty acres and a mule as part of the reconstruction programme that followed the Civil War.
395. R. Stam, *Ethnic / Racial Representation* in Unspeakable Images, L. Friedman (ed), University of Illinois Press, 1991.

alluded to whilst Lee simultaneously highlights the more subtle interactions of the ordinary Black, Italian, Puerto Rican, Korean and Spanish-American men and women inside the heteroglossic urban enclaves of a Western metropolis. This carnival of cultures, ages and positions represents the many, often contradictory, political viewpoints within these communities -- though the focus is mainly on the African-Americans. Lee shows therein how interchangeable and porous these subjects are in a film in which "Italians act just a little black and the blacks just a little Italian".[396]

Although the text is careful to maintain a distinction between racial prejudice and institutional racism, it quite clearly contends that they are both intrinsically interdependent. Virtually no coherent and direct black activism is portrayed. Yet despite this absence, the 'castrating prowess of the white culture'[397] entraps the visual narrative in an atmosphere of claustrophobia loaded with expectancy. Police cars patrol menacingly; little contact is made with the outside world; and the description Pino, the Pizzeria owner's son, makes of the ghetto ("it's like *Planet of the Apes* ") highlights the very visible divides casting these sub-cultures off one another, with little prospect of change. A sense of racial positioning -- through language and signifying representational practices -- further permeates the world this film depicts : each group is cast away behind the mental borderlands that stereotype the Other. The prejudiced labels of mockery and denigration safely stamp the Other as an unapproachable outsider -- thus positioning the in-group collectively high up on the racial hierarchical ladder of the neighborhood. Naming and names act respectively as political statements and economic signifiers, apparent in the fight between Buggin' Out and Sal over which popular heroes should go on the walls of the latter's pizzaria. Only Sinatra, de Niro and other icons of Italian America are represented on the walls of a site located in a primarily African-American ghetto, primarily visited and therefore financed by African-Americans. When the black character demands Mike Jordan, Malcom X and Nelson Mandela be included in this Hall of Fame, Sal picks up a baseball bat and kicks the young man out. These figures embody the 'extended Self' of an entire ethnic subculture.

Lee assertively connnects talk and interaction with social structure, demonstrating the viability of dialogue -- or lack thereof -- as the most potent means to forge inter-group, as well as intra-group understanding and co-operation. Yet fleeting moments of kind contact between the races are in this story swiftly overshadowed by

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396. *Ibid.* p.267.
397. E. Hirshman, *The Semiotics of Ethnicity : using consumption imagery to decode Spike Lee's* Do the Right Thing, in <u>Semiotica 98</u>, Vol.1 / 2, 1994, p121.

ethnic suspicion, paranoia and anger. Each time individuals attempt to 'cross over' to the Other and foster dialogue, the pressures of the larger group force them to retreat.

And indeed, the conflict situation perpetrated by this lack of communication in a structurally unequal environment is the main focus of the narrative. While the film's soundtrack centres around the "Fight the Power" theme, its title argues for the conflicting stance facing young African-Americans in the absence of the guidance received in the sixties. Whilst violence is never credited as a practical means to a better end, nor as a moral, cleansing force (since in the words of Luther King 'an eye for an eye can leave everybody blind', creating 'bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyer') -- it may be the only intelligent 'thing' to do when self-defence and dignity are at stake (Malcolm X). Smiley, the retarded young African-American -- who attempts throughout the narrative to hawk pamphlets discussing the philosophies of Malcolm and Martin to his 'brothers and sisters', represents the filmmaker's own views on today's black ideology : immature, slightly retarded, and poorly understood. In any case this fledging ideology fails to arrive at a *mediating position,* both literally and figuratively, in the narrative. The antagonisation of black and white stances in their demands for structural dominance increases rather than dwindles, despite the possibilities for individual mediation and / or negotiation (e.g. Sal's stubborn refusal to place black icons on his walls; Mookie's 'stepping over' to the polar stance of his community; and the unrequited *demands* rather than dialogues initiated between the groups and so on). The vivid failure of compromise in a ripe situation instructs us that such hardening of positions is only amenable to violence -- and inevitable losses for both parties in a zero-sum game.

It is not televisual representational practices that trigger the ethnic 'heat' of the street, but the technological might of the radio. The jambox itself - which is destroyed at the end of the film -- is symbolic of the urban situation of ethnic minorities : its loud blasts defy the white order in public spaces, the music it plays is privately coded carrying meaning to specialised ears only, and acts as a coercive weapon in situations of inter-ethnic street confrontation -- as displayed during Lee's film in the encounter between Radio Raheem and the Puerto Ricans, who demand an ungranted decrease in volume. The black man's refusal to silence this voice provokes this 'other' to increase the volume of its own jambox, and

> ... the music of the two ethnic and racial worlds collide, meet
> in mid air and create a violent cacophony that nobody can
> understand.[398]

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398. Denzin, *op.cit,* p.130.

Though triggered by the lethal confrontation bewteen the police and Radio Raheem, the riot is primarily propelled by the battling representational practices of each camp : a radio, a song, a picture -- all tightly tied into the larger power structure that divides these communities. When Sal 'kills' Raheem's radio, the silence that ensues is perceived by all as an act of political, rather than merely personal violence : destroying the radio symbolically stands in for a will to annihilate the subversive power of rap music. The subsequent murder of the radio's owner is almost a logical extension of the silencing of his mechanical 'voice'. Mookie, the man between two camps, chooses his community's dignity over his personal status as Sal's employee, and aligns himself eventually with Malcolm X's vision of 'the right thing' : he not only choses community loyalty over personal friendship, but initiates the riot. As Sal's place is set afire, the pictures of King and X are stuck to the burning walls : two approaches to the dilemmas of resistance set aside at the pinnacle of racial destruction -- highlighting the unanswered question on how to coexist, how to dialogue amidst the precarities of difference.

Lee's meticulous excavations of the plural, shifting and complex character of Black identity -- so well conducted through Sal and Mookie's dialogical relationship -- remains unfortunately inept at portraying difference within gender perspectives. *She's Gotta Have It* (1985), represents Lee's self-acknowledged patriarchal positionality. His representation of Nola replicates all the phallocentric patterns of mainstream's cinematic practices. As bell hooks observes,

> [Lee's] work mimics the cinematic construction of White womanhood as object, replacing her body as text on which to write male desire with the Black female body. It is transference without transformation.[399]

The same 'transference without transformation' rings true for Lee's *Crooklyn* (1995). Here again, the protagonists are black and Black nationalist thinking shapes their politics. Yet again, the black family portrayed lives in a multicultural, multi-ethnic world -- Italians, Latinos, gays and straight, young and old, the haves and have-nots are all meticulously represented. *Crooklyn* 's world is in that sense similar to the Backtinian world of *Do the Right Thing* : an environment of cultural hybridity and border crossing introduced by an opening scene in which play and pleasure act as a counter-typical phototext -- the joys of Black living as opposed to the representational norms of racial dehumanisation and deprivation. Unfortunately however -- and in spite

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399. bell hooks, *The Oppositional Gaze : Black Female Specatorship*, in Diawara (ed.) *Op.Cit.*, p.298.

of his consistant intention to rectify the image of his race's Self -- Lee's use of a ten-year old girl, Troy, as his protagonist, once again reveals his inability to counter hegemonic notions of black *female* identity. Sexist / racist stereotypes of gendered Selves in black experience are evident in the construction of Troy's parents : the hard working, mother as a threatening and manipulative character set against the abusive, yet 'victimised' father. When Troy's mother dies, the little girl merely fills in the matricrachal void -- without any fatherly / brotherly compassion -- thus submitting to become a passive spectator of life within the 'hood'. Troy's story falls miserably into the hegemonic trap Lee's 'male' films attempted to counter -- merely constructing a redemptive narrative for black life where the subjugation of the female body is celebrated as a rite of passage which insures family / group survival. Though applauded by some as a fine tribute to stoicism, heroism and continuity, it falls short to supply an efficient portrayal of what it means to be a an African-American woman today.

Here, as in Nola's story, oppositional representation of blackness has simply deflected attention away from the sexist politics that surfaces when race and gender converge. Lee's syncretism is only apt to unsettle and reconfigure the politics of power that relate to purely racial binarisms. The fact that amongst Black fimmakers internationally most are male (and heterosexual), accounts even further for the complexity and shifting scope of the notion of political identity. By shedding one skin towards emancipation, Lee *et al.* have only revealed the many conflicting layers of marginalisation yet to emerge and assert their 'Selves'.

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In conclusion to this section, we must draw critical attention to the distinction that must be made between oppositional representations and romantically glorifying images of the West's coloured Other. Visibility *per se* never means that images are inherently radical or progressive -- nor that international theory will eventually include the voices of the oppressed within its parameters. Cultural critic Saidiya Hartman urges us to interrogate that distinction, ask necessary questions whenever confronted to a cinema of the Other for Self :

> ...how are redemptive narratives of blackness shaped and informed by romantic racialism, the pastoral and sentimental representation of black life ? How is the discourse of black cultural authenticity and Afrocenrtrism shaped and informed

by this construction of Africanism and do they too maintain
and nomalise white cultural hegemony ?[400]

Our overview of these very diverse schools of African-American writers and directors hopes to have demonstrated both the influence of the core's 'master narrative' on the cultural projection of the oppressed and the latter's surreptitious infiltration of film industry -- an infiltration that ultimately changes the complexion of hegemonic representational politics in the process. It was equally important to stress the discourses of irony and appropriation inherent to Black cinema in particular, and to the narratives of the repressed in general. This cannot, in turn, be divorced from the 'receptive side' of cultural / political projection. In the case of cinema, how indeed it is ultimately the recipient / spectator who works with and upon each image and narration of process.

Each one of our case-studied Black filmmakers had been an interrogating and critical spectator of white, Western cinema before taking up the camera. Through all their texts and the reactions that ensued, they have proven how and why, amid the worse curcumstances of subservience, "the ability to manipulate one's gaze in the face of structures of domination that would contain it, opens up the possibility of agency".[401] The 'gaze' has been and continues to remain the most potent site of resistance for colonized and marginalised people globally. The power of the dominated lies therefore in their ability to assert their agency as they relentlessly claim and cultivate 'awareness' by politicising looking relations.

Exit

> ... I want all this marked on my body. We are the real
> countries, not the boundaries drawn down on maps with the
> names of powerful men...
>
> - Katherine in *The English Patient*, A. Minghella, 1996.

As the dominant cultural discourse of the occident negotiates openings for the Other's speech, it becomes clear that it is the contiguity of the heterogeneous maze that will shape and determine the new cultural bridge to be erected into the 21st Century. It implicitly urges us to listen to the Other within, to free access to- and usage of representational practices and to move from a passive politics of 'universalist' assumptions, to a multi-cultural, multi-layered one -- that always questions, includes and reflects upon the international even if it concentrates on the domestic and

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400. Hartmann, in <u>Sight and Sound</u>, August 1995, p12.
401. bell hooks, in Diawara (ed).*op. cit.*, p289.

idiosyncratic. The interaction between the inside and the oustide is indeed infinite, only separated by the shallow depth of an eyelid :

> Marco Polo describes a bridge, stone by stone.
> "But which is the stone that supports the bridge ?" Kublai Khan asks.
> "The bridge is not supported by one stone or another," Marco answers, "but by the line of the arch that they form."
> Kublai Khan remains silent, reflecting. Then he adds : "Why do you speak to me of the stones ? It is only the arch that matters to me."
> Polo answers : "Without stones there is no arch." [402]

This chapter hopes to have initiated a way of re-thinking both Western and broader international cultural and political identity in terms of a system of norms against which other positions are always in the process of being measured. A system which creates difference according to a hierarchy of normative socio-economic values, acceptability or legitimacy -- while this hierarchy itself remains all too often hidden behind the myth of a whole, unified national or cultural identity. There is no denying that other fields, other 'disciplines', and countless other minds, have too, over the past decade, initiated such re-thinking in ways far more complex than our own. Yet this is a starting point in international relations. One which -- even though struggling with the agency / structure dichotomy -- has come to pay more sensitive attention to the place of individuals within society, and more importantly to what those excluded from our textbooks and imaginations have to say about i.r. both in theory and practice. Here we examined -- even if restricted to the position of one race, one gender, one nation, one people, and only very few amongst 'guerrilla' filmmakers -- how the place of 'political identity' is composed from the versatile range of positions which we, as individuals, occupy. How identity and the possibilities of conflict and mediation are forever bound to the contigencies and dynamics of time and the restless politics of location within given or chosen categories, such as race, gender, class, sexual preferences etc.

Our identity as individuals within a certain 'we' group is so much more complex than straight 'i.r' would have it; forever eroding as it keeps a precarious balance within and *vis à vis* all these differing 'subject-positionings'. There are times in which the racial category to which we identify will conflict with this of class-allegiance, or national identity at large, placing 'us' as a 'they' to other 'us'. Taking apart those categories, we can start to grasp their constructed nature -- and by implication the relevance of such grassroot dissection for understanding how international politics works. In the process, we even more starkly disrupt the abstract and undermining

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402. I. Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, 1974, p.82.

universalism of Enlightenment thinkers as we cannot but aknowledge the validity of a theoretical framework embracing the relative and the particular.

These pages hence hope to have contributed a voice to the efforts made in launching a 'relations international' that goes beyong classical pluralism and the misleading, because too narrow, communitarian / cosmopolitan debate. One that revisits the heteroglossic metropolises of the West to gain deeper understanding of the irrevocably shifting grounds on which our epistemological and ontological knowledge of the international is forged : to speak of stones as much as of the archs they form, the bridges they support -- or the walls against which they are thrown and, little by little they corode.

After the carnivals of the lepered worlds we inhabit, our next chapter will tackle the ironic sense of Self of the migrant travelling restlessly as stranger - but also as native - within and without our imaginary enclaves. Is it indeed not the gaze of the Gipsy, the Berber or the Chicano, the nomad by intention or circumstances, that best interrogates our cultural authority and disturbs our faith in authenticity and uncontamination ? These are all the marginalised and (de)territorialised communities that dwell on memory and images only. Theirs is a border-tongue culture that permanently rejects the notion of closure whilst they themselves 'synthetise' the surrounding culture, through their moves. They are those who "opt to adopt, not to adapt [and] seem not to be governed by the idea of a physical home as much as by the mythical and spiritual home that they cherish in their belief systems and carry in their culture"[403]... and it is through their cinematic quest or denial of identity that we will take a step beyond the political voices of the Atlantic Diaspora studied above -- and a step further in articulating the demise of classical i.r. theory.

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403. T. Gabriel, *Thoughts on Nomadic Aesthetics and Black Independent Cinema : Traces of a Journey,* in Cham & Watkins (eds.), Black Frames : Critical Perpsectives on Black independent Cinema. Cambridge, Mass, 1988, p.62-79.

Chapter Five

Etchings on the Border

Nous resterons où nous sommes
Nous resterons où nous sommes arrivés

Pourtant nous ne resterons pas là où nous sommes
Nous ne resterons pas là où nous sommes arrivés

Là où nous sommes tantôt nous restons tantôt non.
Là où nous ne sommes pas arrivés tantôt nous restons
Tantôt nous ne restons pas (nous partons)

Là où nous sommes venus il se peut
Que nous restions il se peut que nous ne restions pas

Là où tu es venu resteras-tu ?
Ne cesseras-tu de partir ou bien d'arriver de rester ?
Ne finiras-tu pas d'arriver
Et tantôt de rester et tantôt de partir ?

Toi qui restes penses-tu ne jamais partir ?
Toi qui pars sauras-tu pourras-tu rester ou revenir ?
Est-il possible à la fois de rester de partir
De ne pas rester de ne pas partir ? [...]

- Jean Tardieu, "Conjugaisons et Interrogations II", in *Formeries*, 1976.

To treat international theory's epistemology as essentially contingent -- hence inherently contestable -- brings its scholar to the threshold of enabling differences to be, disrupts and dislodges the sedentary illusions of occidentalist world mastery. Chapter Four has witnessed and interrogated the dispersal of the centre, the increasing emergence at its metropolitan core of the so-called peripheral. Such irruptions interrupt previous eurocentric assumptions and orders of thought, turning cultural authority inside out, "re-routing", "re-inscribing" the historical and the political. To *also* bring to the fore the migrant's tale in international relations theory indeed lays bare the increasing inadequacy of modernity's overarching *thématique* : the nation-state and its texts; language (and the sense of identity its colonisation induced); the might of the Western metropolis; the concept of a 'centre' and any semblance of cultural / epistemological homogeneity. To underscore radical alterity, to listen to the heteroglossia of the 'Rest' within the West, brings the critical scholar of international

theory to borrow what Ashley and Walker have termed 'a language of exile': a language born out of the confrontation with intrinsically ambiguous sites, sites of struggle, sites that...

> ...resist knowing in the sense celebrated in modern culture, where to 'know' is to construct a coherent representation that excludes contesting interpretations and controls meaning from the standpoint of a sovereign subject whose word is the origin of truth beyond doubt.[404]

Sites which incessantly question identity in their dubious gaze towards all forms of universal narratives.

"Homelessness is coming to be the destiny of the world".[405] Heidegger was never so right : the road ahead is shelterless.

This thesis has from the onset borrowed the theme of travel within Self and Other -- from Self to Other in the political tales of contemporary world cinema -- as a metaphor enabling deconstruction and dialogue amongst agents and their structures. Rethinking the theorisation of global politics in terms of travel (to re-phrase James Clifford[406]) places its natural and essentialising bias under severe scrutiny : the image of an odyssey without the possibility of return thus becomes an increasingly fitting one. Political theory (and culture) as travel : this is equally to underscore the word's medieval Latin roots, *trepalium*, a three-pronged instrument of torture, from which sufferings there could be no 'homecoming'. Thought, if not the body, is thus unquestionably transformed by the movement outside and within the 'in-group' and towards the 'out-group'. It is challenged by the model of the city -- which in Chapter Four and in Raymond Williams' words becomes the model of the contemporary world -- unavoidably deprived of any absolute territory to call stable. Watching, literally, the migrant's resistant sense of Self, one that lives in between two, three, worlds, between a "lost past and non-integrated present"[407] asks for a re-assessment of margins, within our international relations 'discipline'.

If identity is founded, as this thesis purports, on trajectories of the mind between a 'here' and a 'there', an inside and an outside which Jacques Rancière sees as separated by a "narrow and vertiginous gap"[408] -- an I/eye and a not-I -- hence always

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404. Ashely and Walker, *op.cit.*, p.261.
405. M. Heidegger, *Letter on Humaninsm*, in M. Heidegger, <u>Basic Writtings,</u> Harper and Row, New York, 1977, p.219.
406. Clifford, *Travelling Cultures*, in Grossberg et al., p.103.
407. I. Chambers, <u>Migrancy, Culture, Identity,</u> 1994, p.27.
408. Quoted in Robertson *et al.* <u>Traveller's Tales : Narratives of Home and Displacement,</u> Routledge, London, 1994, Introduction, p.2.

on metaphors of movement and location -- it makes sense, at this point, to travel to the imaginary sites that delineate space and difference, to the borderlands.

It is revealing to note how the international relations discipline lacks in a genuine, i.e. substantive, literature on the theme of 'borders'. This is a field obsessed with territoriality and national frontiers (and disciplinary limits); obsessed with compartmentalisations, the 'we' and the 'them', alliances and treason; obsessed with (even if now reluctantly dubious of) paradigmatic shifts and neo-realist claims; very well versed in refugee studies, nation-state-boundary contestations and negotiations and the many fibres that permeate conflict analysis : in sum all the impassioned zones of political disputes which have the 'border' beating in place of their conceptual heart. Over the last few decades, international relations scholars and practitioners have drawn many charts and databases, observed, intervened in and regulated many international and inter-ethnic contentions -- yet have had little of significance to say about the 'border' itself, other than stress its dichotomising principle. This may at first seem an intriguing oddity, but mirrors a general sterility on the subject -- and this, despite recent efforts made in anthropology, history and psychology to analyse cultural constructions in terms of the international and domestic frontiers that have come to map our geopolicy. This relative absence is however due to a large number of practical factors. Developing 'border studies' in international relations has indeed been impeded by an interrelated array of official suspicion, lack of linguistic skills on one 'side' or the other, scarcity of models with real impact on the discipline's theory itself : empirical factors augmented by the dual movement of 'border acceptability' on the one hand (an invisibility that defies questioning) and 'border sensitivity' (a violent contestation that no positivist theory could approach without great terminological difficulty) on the other. As before, minding the 'in-between', as the last two chapters have attempted, is never an easy task : the gap will remain as long as the vertigo repels.

This chapter wishes to further challenge this vertigo not least because of very personal quibbles with this discipline's approach. I have resisted speaking about my own sense of Self since the very beginnings of this thesis, but beg to succumb to such temptation here and now -- as I believe that my 'story' could reveal the tip of an iceberg that craves exploration and theoretical inclusion.

I was born in the suburbs of Nairobi to a man who was posted in this city, and many more, as East Africa's first Brazilian Ambassador. His own great grand-father was a Portuguese immigrant who had established his fame in the gum trade between Manaus and Belèm do Parà in the Amazonas region -- yet my father, born and raised in southern France, never celebrated *these* national loyalties. He often felt French,

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sometimes Spanish, always South-American. Irony would have him meet my mother during a carnival in Germany. She, on the other hand, was Austrian, from Slovenian, Croatian and Italian descent and bore a Russian maiden-name. I was immediately granted a Brazilian and a Kenyan passport and was placed in the hands of a Zulu 'ayah' during the first years of my life -- a woman who had fled South-Africa's apartheid by means of a rudimentary 'dao', moved from Dar Es-Salaam to Arusha, from Arusha to Nairobi. Travel and million departures were always part of the exotic tales surrounding me. At age four I spoke English, German and Swahili, but we moved to Belgrade : I there traded Swahili for Serbo-Croatian. My father soon retired and, since my mother would not move to South America and my father not to Central Europe, we quite logically settled somewhere in the middle, in the more provincial parts of the French Basque Country. The school friends I met on these borderlands spoke French, a little Spanish and 'Euskara' whilst I 'forgot' Serbo-Croatian and most of my English, for we now 'only' spoke French and German at 'home'. I chose Scotland when it came to a first University. Again an impassionately complex location in terms of its 'national identity'. There, in the strangely 'old English' surroundings of St. Andrews, I read what at first seemed an obvious and unproblematic choice : international relations. Each year, however, the first seminar gathering was spent in introductions that bore a terrifying air of inquisition : "Tell us who you are and where you come from." Despite the relative 'international' character of our class, it seemed that only I stuttered and trembled, and eventually failed to answer such simple query. Where was I from ? A Brazilian name, yet very little sense of what it means to be Brazilian (and indeed is Brazilian identity not a chimera in itself ?). A French accent and a French home, yet at school I had always been known as *l'étrangère* . Could I *now* claim that I was "from France" ? Since age sixteen, my Kenyan passport had been relinquished in favour of an Austrian one. Yet I had never lived in Austria, and felt little attachment to this nation-state. And here again, my surname would have raised legitimate suspicions. And of course, I was not "from Kenya", either (had I ever been Kikuyu anyway ?). I resolved this identity problem by developing a chameleon syndrome : I was sometimes Brazilian, sometimes French or Austrian, sometimes a mixture of all these and more -- depending on my interlocutors and my mood.

It is first and foremost because of and through this hybrid standpoint that this post-graduate thesis is and was written : an act of playful revenge, perhaps, against the exclusionary practices such seminars and the theories feeding them entailed. To develop an international theory that did not concentrate on identity but on the dynamics of difference : a theory of Self that would no longer question in terms of "who" and "where from", but travel to the "other side", transit back home and rest on the borders, where to best interrogate the tales of the migrant, the exiled and the nomad, as much, if

not more than it could then look back upon the ever so contingent narratives of those who claim to know, at a specific site and time, the answer to such questions.

Three sections will divide this chapter :

The first two will investigate the concepts of 'borderlands' and 'displaced communities' respectively -- and assess the contribution of such epistemologies of uprootedness to a re-articulation of identity in i.r.'s theory.
The third section will observe the ways in which such miscegenated senses of Self / Other have been translated onto the cinematic screen, and how these texts have come to bear their weight in terms of the "revolutionary cosmopolitanism" they embody. We will see that how some of these films stand in as representational emblems of a "decentred international culture of 'dis-patriation'"[409] -- and how / why 'home' is precisely found in the imaginative act of writing / filming, rather than in the utopic hope of return to the lost, abandoned, *Heimat*.

• Our conclusion, finally, will assess what lessons can be learnt from a post-national perspective of Same / Different, and indeed what lessons a genuinely pluralist democracy might gain through such articulation. More importantly, we shall sketch out the terms of a possible reply to Chantal Mouffe's hypotheses.[410] That far from becoming obsolete, studying and deciphering the discourses of identity has never assumed greater a role in enriching and enlightening a more imaginative i.r. That the *political* has never been so ubiquitous, so pervasive and so necessary in our painfully slow progress towards understanding the Other under all its guises. That the insights of the nomad, the increasingly intercultural subject, will bring tangible results to Connolly's plea to "convert an antagonism of identity into the agonism of difference".[411]

I - Borders

I - 1 - Defining terms

"Borders", "borderlines", "frontiers", three of the most topical of terms, have come increasingly to preoccupy the social sciences. Such interest was in large part

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409. *Ibid.* p.5
410. C. Mouffe, The Return of the Political, Verso, London, 1993.
411. W.E. Connolly, Identity / Difference, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1991, p.178.

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prompted by the emergence and fledging consolidation of supranational entities such as the European Union and the North American Free Trade Agreement -- as much as by the disruption of previous patterns of geopolitical equilibrium, induced by the collapse of the central and eastern European state socialist empires. The mushrooming of nationalistic claims, the resurgence of irredentist and separatist demands and the resultant conflicts with their accompanying tidal wave of refugees, have left theoretical frameworks lingering behind. "Borders", in their formation and formulation, remained much of a categorical morass. The condition of contiguity that such terms express bred a confusion characteristic of their ordinary usage rather than of science. It seemed therefore essential to devise a definitional framework, even if it is accepted that such schema is by no means rigidly exhaustive.

• We shall call 'borders' those zones that always extend across borderlines, but are also therefore the 'borderlines' themselves.

• The imaginary line that we shall call 'the borderline' marks the legal spatial delimitation of nations. It thus not merely closes nations in on themselves, but, in a simultaneous movement opens them up to an 'out there', to others. Thus the 'borderline' is at once closure, barrier, and site of exchange -- or, in the fitting words of Geoffrey Bennington, a place of "separation and articulation (acts or modes of joining)".[412] Ratzel, a founding father of political geography noted in 1897 that the reality of the borders was in fact the fringe that exists at each side of the 'borderline', whilst the line itself is its mere abstraction : an historical, and in Benedict Anderson's sense, an imagined construct, continuously prey to re-interpretation and negotiation by those that live in the 'border area', those who cross the lines and those who feel under threat from the 'other' side.

• The 'border cultures' we shall refer to will be explicated in more detail later on in this chapter. One could however briefly say that these are on a superficial level illustrative of the dialectical relation that develops between a myriad social groups, and "between them and larger and more powerful levels of socio-political integration, including the state".[413] These cultures play as salient a role (if not in some cases a greater one) than their so called capital / core-zones in the process leading to and enforcing the creation of new borderlines -- and hence new nation-states. But the constraints of time will not allow us to investigate them in more detail here. 'Their' particular story will, I hope, unfold elsewhere.

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412. quoted by M. Sarup, *Home and Identity*, in Robertson *et.al.*, *op.cit*, p.98.
413. Donnan H. & T. Wilson, (eds.), *An Anthopology of Frontiers*, in <u>Border Approaches</u>. U.of America Press, New York, 1994, p.10.

Our approach will focus specifically on the border as a specific place of "hybridity and struggle, policing and transgression"[414] in which the Self is irrevocably transformed and new possibilities of conversational practices set in motion. Looking upon the fissuring Western metropolis taught us the many 'relations' that challenge the international, from the inside out. A border approach directs us back and beyond the 'international' in all relations, arresting our gaze on the subversions of 'crossing'. In other words, we shall attempt to tackle the specific problem of representation of this 'border' community in an era in which such representation is relentlessly facing the corresponding decomposition of what can be described as the 'classic' epistemological relationship between the 'writing' Self and the 'written about' Other.

I - 2 - On Borders and the field of i.r..

That a field founded on the commerce of states and nations would have granted such benign theoretical space for the discussion of 'identity at the borders', makes sense. With the social-scientific silence symptomatic of ambiguous and highly volatile issues, "the cultural constructions which symbolise the boundaries between communities, and between nations, are lost in the midst of the 'big picture' of national and international relations".[415] Ironically it is also this very concept that has long come to symbolise the binary character of i.r.'s theoretical framework. Gupta is correct in contending that :

> Our concepts of space have always fundamentally rested on... images of break, rupture, and disjunction. The recognition of cultures, societies, nations all in the *plural* , is unproblematic exactly because there appears an unquestionable division, an intrinsic discontinuity, *between* cultures, *between* societies, etc.[416]

The concept of border / boundary thus assumes a fundamental position within our discipline -- and has, needless to say, never ceased to determine the very nature of the general enquiry of this thesis. Absolute borderlines, to be defended and pushed back, were as necessary for construction of the modern nation-state as they are for nationalism. To re-appropriate Anderson, nationalism is unimaginable without a border for- or to conquest, and indeed every single dichotomising principle -- self / other, text / praxis, North / South -- implies an unquestioned sense of 'borderline', of closure and disclosure.

414. Clifford, *op.cit*, p.109.
415. Donnan & Wilson, *op.cit.*, p.10.
416. Gupta is also quoted in Malkki, *National Geographic*, Cultural Anthropology, 7.1, 1992, p.28.

Realism, pluralism and structuralism, the so-called paradigmatic articulation of our field are all based on relativism, balances of power and trans-nationalisms -- definite expressions of territorialisation and hence delineation : boundary-maintaining values, posited essences.[417] Yet where there is closure claustrophobia may also exist, and where there is claustrophobia, there may be fierce denial... or mutiny. The anthropologist Liisa Malkki, in her discussion of arborescent symbolism in the formation of nationalistic loyalties, borrows one of Gellner's art-historical comparisons to contrast and compare views on mapping and international compartamentalities : the map of the modern world according to Gellner, resembles...

> ...not Kokoschka, but, say Modigliani. There is very little shading; neat flat surfaces are clearly separated from each other, it is generally plain where one begins and another ends, and there is little if any ambiguity or overlap.[418]

Here we find the fixity of Classicism once again contrasted with the fuzzy instability of the Baroque, the modern with the monstrous irony of the post-modern. Any ethnography of the Border Area is however bound to reveal the undefined contours of a Kokoschka canvas. Forever prone to de-naturalisation, up-rootedness, crossings.

The U.S. / Mexican frontier is perhaps the first in a series of many such 'blurred spaces' to have gained theoretical status. The perseverance through which Chicana/o writers, cinematographers and scholars -- such as Anzladùa, McKenna, Rosaldo, Gomes-Peña amongst others -- have fought in order that their 'fragmented identity' be granted acknowledgement, has finally borne conceptual fruits. Theirs is a story somewhat different to those told by the many former colonial subjects that now 'peripheralize the core' -- the Algerians in France, the Turks in Germany, the Guatemalans in Spain, the heteroglossic characters that make up Chapter Four's metropolis. Having resisted and dwelt specifically on this space that delimits the so-called Third World and the First, their identity is forever corroded and dissolved in the incongruity of this political line. Theirs is a story of resistance against the assumption that the state carries the monopoly in assigning or withholding identities to those that trespass into its territory. Theirs is often a story of unstamped or dispossession of passports. Hence...

> ...every day thousands of 'undocumented' persons successfully defy the state's power to control their movement

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417. Johannes Fabian in Malkki, *ibid.*
418. *Ibid*, p.26.

into and through this space and in doing so contest not only
space but also control of their identity.[419]

This escape from the apparatus of receiving states and its controling assignment of notions of Self and Otherness on its immigrants begs for a reconsideration of the dialectic between culture and nation. The two concepts, as was seen in the first half of this thesis -- were assumed to bear a near synonymous meaning, or at the very least, to be kindred concepts : both territorializing and spacializing, both incarcerating through their presupposed sedentary attributes. Such readily assumed segmentation of physical and metaphysical space has hitherto helped legitimise and support both narratives of cultural diversity and the "internationalist celebration of diversity in the 'family of nations'"[420]. Yet entering and dwelling within the Border Area, constantly 'crossing over' and 'returning', fundamentally negates such dialectic as it challenges the ability of either one of the nation-states involved to define and constrain the identities of those border-populations. It is to an outline of this very recent and powerfully established sense of Self at 'the border' that we now turn.

I - 3 - Borders and the reformulation(s) of identity .

An international theoretical approach to border identities would have to be devised from an administrative, political and social construction of states and nations through the 'bottom up' and from the 'outside in' : ways and means used throughout this thesis and underscoring in this case the extreme malleability and instability of border-zones and those highly complex socio-cultural groups that dwell in/on them. It is on these sites of regulated and subversive travel -- natural and social landscapes [421] -- that identity is most violently negotiated, and difference sometimes most virulently obliterated. The shaping of *inter-* national political processes that take up 'the border' as its inherent divisive principle involve agents and structures that are inescapably tied to 'other' agents and structures in a dynamic, dialectical relationship. These processes are as much inter-ethnic, as they are inter-national, trans-national and, dialogical.

For borders are first and foremost locations of intense cultural creolisation,

> places where criss-crossed identities are forged out of the
> debris of corroded, formerly (would-be) homogenous

419. Kearney, M., *Borders and Boundaries of State and Self at the End of Empire*, in Journal of Historical Sociology. Vol.4, No.1, March 1991, p.58
420. Makki, p28
421. Clifford, p.109.

identities, zones where the residents often refuse the geo-political univocality of the lines.[422]

There is sharing and also denial : exclusions operate there with perhaps more passion than within the core *communitas* of each side. These are the places where sovereignty undergoes constant testing and, paradoxically, where forces of universal social, political, cultural and economic transformations focus, threatening thus the future of the 'nation-state' as we have come to know it since Westphalia. Fusco has aptly described them as minefields[423] -- an image (also to be taken literally) befitting the perennial collision between the so-called 'Eurocentre' and its imposition of a 'fixity of culture' -- as well as the highly mobile, transient cultures that leak into its soil.

Taking up the example of the Mexico / U.S. border once more, it is clearly visible that the Third World, that Latin America, does not 'stop' right after Tijuana. A border-corridor extends well into unitedstatesian territory and pundits would usually muse that Los Angeles has been re-conquered by Mexico, turning it into the second largest city in this 'former colony'. This archipelago of Latin-American peoples however resists a fixity of Self 'on both sides' and the result of this defying dialexis, namely Chicana/o culture, has since become an icon of 'Border Identity' everywhere. The border *qua* theoretical concept always suggests the possibility of crossings, *from both sides.* Yet it is this very mutuality of movement that most social scientists have henceforth regarded as improper, even if the feasibility of such reciprocity was granted. But as with West and Non-West, South and North, this mutuality is fiercely unreciprocated. The border continues to assume a very different meaning depending on the side on which 'one' stands. Deep structural reasons taint the lens through which Mexicans look at Tijuana. Porosity is desirable, but not granted : assaulting the integrity of the border north of Tijuana is a symbolic assault on the unitedstatesian power, a power to order and differ.[424] Yet, the resistance is doubled edged, harming the 'other side', in the same sense, too. As Gomes-Peña notes, Tijuana is...

> ... a place where so-called Mexican identity breaks down -- challenging the very myth of national identity. The Mexican government has constructed this myth, which is that we have a univocal identity, one that is monolithical and static, and that all Mexicans from Cancun to Tijuana, from Matamoros to Oaxaca behave, act and think exactly the same. Of course this is a very comfortable myth for them to justify their power. By homogenising all Mexicans, and saying, for example, Mexicans have a hard time entering into modernity, the Mexican state can offer itself as a redemptor of Mexicans,

422. S. Lavie & T. Swedenburg, *Between and Among the Boundaries of Culture : Bridging text and lived experience in the Third Time-Space*, in Cultural Studies, Vo.10, No.1, 1996, p166.
423. See Fusco, C., *The Border Art Workshop* in Third Text, Vol.7, p.53-76, 1989.
424. Kearney, *op.cit.* p.69.

and the one who is going to guide them by the hand into modernity. So Tijuana is a kind of challenge to the Mexican government.[425]

For the North, this struggle to achieve a 'postnational' environment may be seen as an ironic backfiring of the interventionism of the United-States into affairs 'beyond its frontiers' and generally 'South' of it. The wave of migrants this induced coincided with the growing transnational character of capitalism, its urge to develop markets regionally : the result of which was an irretrievable undermining of national boundaries to a level unanticipated by all parties. As Kearney points out, "Imperial projects to differentiate the colonised other promote indigestible differences within the colonising Self"[426], and :

> Whereas the past history of immigration into the nation of the United States has been one of assimilation, the ethnography of the Border Area suggests that its future history will be one of indigestion as the unity of national totemism gives way to the multiplicity of transnational ethnicity.[427]

In that light, it makes sense that we should have come to witness the "emergence of new maps : borderland culture areas, populated by strong, diasporic ethnicities unevenly assimilated to dominant nation-states".[428]

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If the border is the no-man's land of identity, does its trespassing, the crossing of geopolitical frontiers, necessarily entail a ritual phase of re-aggregation ? The Self of diasporic communities is inevitably confronted by the urgency of adjustment, plausible translation and re-formulation. If borders are blurred sites of liminal confusion, a-temporal zones of self-centred reflection (who one is, which side one is crossing to, who those on the other side are), crossing could signify a re-entrance into the realm of political temporality, the subordination to a given society and the subjugation of Self to the power of the Other. But does it ?

We have seen in the previous chapter that consciousness of subjugation means mobilisation and resistance, the formulation of nationalistic, gender, class or race-related loyalties amongst the marginalised. Yet as was argued here-above, there exists another form of loyalty or cleavage : that developing from the possibility -- or at least

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425. Fusco,*op.cit.*, p70.
426. Kearney, *Ibid.*.
427. *Ibid*, p70.
428. Clifford, .110.

the hope -- of 'return'. This is the condition of exiles, refugees, travelling cultures and strangers : the borderland-identities that subvert and transcend binarism, whose sense of resistance is *simultaneously* one of remembrance as much as it is one against official spatial and legal bounds. This furthers and deepens the crisis of anti-dualistic epistemology and the dis-memberement of hither representational practices. It is to a re-assessment of these particular identities that we now turn.

II - Crossing over :   Displacement, 'Home' and Self.

And Polo answers, "Travelling, you realise that differences are lost : each city takes to resembling all cities, places exchange their form, order, distances, a shapeless dust cloud invades the continents. Your atlas preserves the differences intact : the assortment of qualities which are like letters in a name."
- Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, 1972.

"There are friends and enemies. And there are *strangers*." Zygmunt Bauman opens his essay on *Modernity and Ambivalence* [429] thus and sets the tone for our present investigation : the heavily obscured international (?) relations of 'strangers', the ambivalent travelling tales of the refugee, the diasporic community and / or the border-culture. What Self-imaginary is at play in the community of the uprooted -- or indeed those who simply refuse to belong ? We will first proceed by delineating the *problématique* surrounding the 'stranger' in international theory. We will then turn to the dynamic notion of 'travel' and to the identity-formulation of diasporic communities. Stories of exile and refugee-adaptability as well as contingent self-representation(s) will be surveyed here -- with particular attention given to the creation of antagonism in the imagination and construction of 'Palestine'. This and other case-studies will direct us back to the notion of 'roots' in constructions of Selfhood and we will reflect on the possibility of devising a theory of the 'international' that no longer takes arborescent forms. This suggestion will be tested throughout the cinematic grounds of Section III.

II -1 - L' étranger : tales of ambivalence.

Julia Kristeva's seminal composition, *Etrangers à Nous-Mêmes*,[430] traces the first outsiders in ancient Greek tragedy. The first 'strangers' were the descendants of Io, Zeus' doomed lover, condemned by the jealous wrath of Hera to move restlessly from one land to another. The form of this particular travel is almost diametrically

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429. Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, in Featherstone (ed.), Global Culture. p.143.
430. Ref. see biblio

opposed to this undergone by Ulysses : at the end of his voyage there was a return to the 'Self'. Io faces a state of perennial exile. Hers is the first characteristic migration, and, in the fitting words of Stuart Hall : "[it] is a one way trip. There is no 'home' to go back to"[431]. In the foreigness of Egypt Io bears a son, Epaphos, who would later become the ancestor of all Egyptian kings. His great-grand sons, Danaos and Egyptos would respectively bear fifty daughters and fifty sons. A fratricidal conflict demands that the fifty daughters be wedded to the fifty sons, so that Egyptos' sons may rule uncontested over this ancient soil. The Danaides refuse to submit and flee. Theirs is a double alienation : they chose to live as outcasts from their native land and outcasts to the rule of societal law. Yet two amongst these fierce warriors would later refuse to partake in the ritualistic murder of Egyptos' sons : Amymônè and Hypermestre, symbols of the Danaidian sense of ambivalence, symbols of the stranger's uncertain relationship with the dialectic of 'identity and difference'.

The legend loses itself in the murky waters of ethical story-telling. What happened to the murderous sisters ? The story stops at their condemnation : to eternally fill up a bucket full of holes -- forever leaking into the 'outside'. These revengeful and ambivalent strangers introduced a 'foreigness' into Greek notions of order that transcended at once the binarism of the 'Barbarian'. The Danaides were Greek yet were born 'outside' to later flee -- just like Io had once fled -- and challenge the authority of the Root.

According to another ancient text, Aeshylus' *Supplies*, the stranger is only acceptable if s/he begs, if s/he asks permission to belong. If not, s/he, and those alike, become, in Bauman's words, "that 'third element' which should not be. The true hybrids, the monsters : not just unclassified, but unclassifiable".[432]

Between and beyond the soothing symmetry of friend and foe, stands indeed the borderland entity articulated by the stranger. The 'undecidable' is neither friend nor foe, but may simultaneously and unpredictably be both, and hence "threatens the sociation itself -- the very possibility of sociation". [433] Derrida's own taxonomic survey of 'undecidability' makes references to : 1) Plato's concept of the *pharmakon* -- as developed in his *Pheadrus* -- both remedy and poison, powerful through ambivalence, ambivalent through power. "[...] neither good nor evil, neither the inside nor the outside"; 2) the *hymen*, the physical and allegorical point of rupture between 'outside' and 'inside' and "its violation by the fusion of self and other" and 3) the

431 . Hall, *Minimal Selves*, in Appignanesi, (ed.), Identity. The Real Me. Post-Modernism and the Question of Identity. ICA Documents 6, London, 1987, p.44.
432. Bauman, *op.cit.*, p.148.
433. *Ibid*, p.148.

supplement, which Derrida describes as "neither a plus nor a minus, neither an outside nor the complement of an inside, neither accident nor essence, etc.".[434] All these terms reveal the possibility of a process of thought based on paradox and relativity. Underdetermination becomes potency :

> Opposition enables knowledge and action; undecidables
> paralyse. They brutally expose the fragility of a most secure
> of separations. They bring the outside into the inside and
> poison the comfort of order with suspicion of chaos. This is
> exactly what strangers do.[435]

Liisa Malkki would attribute such paranoia to what she calls the " sedentarist metaphysics" typical of our societies : travelling strangers disturb because their very existence defies and undermines the orderly process of history, the territorialised -- *arborescent* -- 'self' of nations. The 'national order of things' is intrinsically imbedded in botanical analogies : culture / cultivation; soil / land / roots. The displaced, the stranger, the up-*rooted*, forces the orderliness of plantation and / or transplantation to disappear. "Instead, broken roots predominate -- roots that threatens to wither, along with the ordinary loyalty of citizenship in a homeland".[436] This paranoia is also ethical : can a stranger bear the same *moral* outlook towards the hosting nation as the rooted 'friend' ? The political process that led to the very condition of estrangement is often thus obliterated : one thinks of Camus' *L'Etranger* , whose very uprootedness made him susceptible of amorality and crime.

> Our sedentarist assumptions about attachment to place lead
> us to define displacement not as a fact about socio-political
> context, but rather as an inner, pathological condition of the
> displaced.[437]

The very externality of the refugee -- this 'matter out of place' in the national order of things, "the abstract nakedness of being nothing but human"[438] represents a constant threat to the world order. If the true "other" of the modern state is the no-man's or contested land -- under / over-definition, ambiguity -- then the stranger, the refugee, the transient traveller, *is* that 'other' that sets the limits to power, subverts... creates the chaos vital for the future installation of order, or its defeat. S/he blurs the borderline "vital to the construction of a particular social order / life-world"[439] making forever visible the permeability of the inside and the outside.

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434. see *Ibid,* p.146.
435. *Ibid.*
436. Malkki, p.32.
437. *Ibid.*
438. *Ibid,* Hannah Arrendt. p.33
439. Bauman, p.151.

We must proceed by seeking his / her identity, defining his / her traits, attempting to understand his / her narratives.

II - 2 - Defining diasporic identity.

> ...it becomes more than ever urgent to develop a framework of thinking that makes the migrant central, not ancillary, to historical processes. We need to disarm the genealogical rhetoric of blood, property and frontiers and to substitute for it a lateral account of social relations, one that stresses the contingency of all definitions of self and other, and the necessity to always tread lightly.[440]

Three types of migration are usually discussed in political science : 1) migration within the territorial confines of a nation, from rural areas to the/a metropolis; 2) extra-territorial migrancy, from one state to the other, subject to political or structural reasons and 3) so-called return migration, the 'home coming' of the migrant. However, as specified here above, such 'homecoming' may be purely illusory. The migrant that journies from any given 'there' to a 'here' remains a stranger as the 'idea' of home is unconditionally shattered at (and by) the very moment of re-entry. We will discuss the problems of remembrance and those involved with the visual representation of 'imaginary homelands' in this chapter's third section. We can, however already underline the difficulty of investigating the 'identity' and sense of 'difference' of these essentially translated individuals and groups in an i.r. theoretical context.

Those who make it legally or illegally across the borderline north of Tijuana are colloquially nick-named *pollos* or *pollitos* , 'chickens'. This avian terminology signifies both the vulnerability of these migrants and the rite of initiation undergone through the process of 'crossing over'. The Self is thus believed to be 'reborn', a new identity, no longer Mexican, never Unitedstatian, but already 'Mixtec', 'Chicano', is assumed. The tragedy of this re-formulation is its irrevocable ambivalence. Whereas the complex experience of Self and Other (both within and without) is fixed into modes that imply a sense of both 'home' and 'abroad' -- and cannot be without the naming, narrating process that such concepts entail -- the identities brought about through the process of travel not merely bring the over-there here and the over-here there. They forcefully challenge the home/abroad, dwelling/travelling dichotomies by unsettling and inverting identity. "Travellers tales", writes Trinh Minh-ha, "speak to the problem of the impossibility of packaging culture, or of defining an authentic cultural identity".[441]

440. Paul Carter, *Living in a New Country : History, Travelling and Language*, Faber and Faber, London, 1992, pp7-8
441. Trihn, *Other than Myself/ My Other Self*, in Robertson *et al.* p.22.

Safran defines diasporas as 'expatriate minority communities' 1) that are dispersed from an original 'centre' to at least two 'peripheral' places; 2) that maintain "a memory, vision or myth about their original homeland"; 3) that "believe they are not -- and perhaps cannot be -- fully accepted by their host country"; 4) that see the ancestral home as a place of eventual return; 5) that are committed to keep this homeland maintained or/and have it eventually restored; and 6) in which the group's consciousness and loyalty are "importantly defined" by its ongoing ties to this homeland.[442] We cannot place the Chicano under such definition. His motivations are less political, his story not one of forced dispersal, his ties to Mexico less passionately articulated. Yet what we argued about the thwarted sense of identity shared amongst 'border cultures' will, as we shall soon see, equally befit those peoples defined by Safran.

Some might raise a dubious eyebrow at the methodology employed in this chapter : what indeed connects the 'Border' and the 'Diaspora' ? The first presupposes the notion of geopolitical demarcation : two territories, two policed guards at the 'barrier'. Yet 'border' also implies the possibility of encounter, of illegal / legal practices of crossing, communication, dialogue. 'Diaspora' implies distance and bears the painful connotations of exile. Whereas border-cultures share perhaps 'universally' (we shall still be cautious about this terminology) an inadequacy of Self, diasporic communities often connect internationally *through* a powerful sense of Self-definition. However distinct in terms of bondage and implication, both terms 'bleed' into one another (to borrow Trinh Minh-ha's imagery) and it would be wrong to assume their difference insurmountable. Indeed and moreover,

> ... diasporic forms of longing, memory, and (dis)identification are shared by a broad spectrum of minority and migrant populations. And dispersed peoples, once separated from homelands by vast oceans and political barriers, increasingly find themselves in border relations with the old country thanks to a to-and-fro made possible by modern technologies of transport, communication, and labour migration.[443]

As James Clifford's own deconstruction of Safran's definition contends, there cannot be in this particular case, a 'type-definition' to which all diasporic-communities can equally be assimilated. Glen Bowman's investigation of the Palestinian diaspora underlines the *plurality* of displaced identities and self-imaginary even within an

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442. Safran, *Diasporas in Modern Societies : Myths of Homeland and Return*, in Diaspora, Vol.1, No.1, 1991, p.83-99.
443. Clifford, *Diaspora*, Cultural Anthropology, Vol.9, No.3, 1994, p.304.

idiosyncratic context. Bowman's analysis contrasts and compares the epistemologies constructed by 1) Fawaz Turki in *The Disinherited*; 2) Edward Said in *After the Last Sky* and 3) Raja Shehadeh in *The Third Way*. Although all three instances are built upon a similar basis of antagonism -- the loss of homeland, determinative marker of 'Palestinian' identity -- and are able to recognise that others, are like themselves, suffering that antagonism[444] none articulates their relation to this "Country of Words" (Mahmoud Darwish) in an identical manner. (1) takes the perspective of a man who grew to 'become' Palestinian in the squalor of a Lebanese refugee camp. His is an identity forged through the intolerance of an unwilling host, an identity of fierce determination to 'struggle for the homeland' in order to recover a now lost human integrity : "We lived on the edge of the desert. On the fringe of the world. We had little to risk... We made common cause with the oppressed. The oppressors made common cause against us".[445] (2) on the other hand expressed a sense of Self particular to the intellectual bourgeoisie exiled in the West. "Immersed in the anomie of the post-industrial world"[446] those particular 'Palestinians' centred their idea of Self around rituals of memory -- forever prey to the corrosion of time and misinformation. What is lost binds more than what is held in common with other Palestinians dispersed internationally. Said's nostalgic and romanticised celebration of a lost homeland is divergent from -- intangible in comparison to -- the "revolutionary internationalism" expressed by Turki. It is equally distant from (3). Shehadeh's is the tale of an 'internal' exile, dwelling in the West Bank. This location gives rise to very different perceptions of self, which lack both the 'indetermination' of Turki and the 'definitive' image of Said. Drawing upon the narratives of a wide range of Palestinians, this particular story strikes by an heterogeneity only unified momentarily by the recognition of a common antagonism. He speaks about the present and future of women, whose antagonist may well be Israel today but Palestinian men tomorrow. This insistence on the unfixity of identity defeats the essentialism of Said and Turki in a manner that "leaves the future, in effect, open to the formation of new identities"[447] unimaginable at the moment of writing. The fantasy of a rigid common denominator to all displaced thus loses itself in the relativity of time and place.

On yet another level, the Black-Atlantic -- underscored in a very different light in Chapter Four -- will have a sense of resistance-identity that has little to do with the Jewish or Palestinian Diaspora. It is therefore safe to contend that resistance and longing operate in a very contingent manner. Historical forces may at once wax or wane the diasporic features of a given group; obstacles, openings, shifting sets of

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444. Bowman, p153.
445. quoted in Bowman, p.150.
446. *Ibid.*
447. *Ibid*, p.157.

antagonisms may at once and for all shift group loyalty to a new dimension. In some cases it is not the teleology of origin/return that cements the dispersed, but the dispersal itself, with its trials of suffering, adaptation or lack thereof and -- as seen in the previous chapter -- a history of collective and cementing resistance to the host-nation. It might in that light be useful to turn to the discourse of Diaspora, rather than seek answers in terminological definitions any further.

II - 3 - The hermeneutics of 'diasporic identities'.

> Diasporic discourse articulates, or bends together, both roots *and* routes to construct... alternate public spheres, forms of community consciousness and solidarity that maintain identifications outside the national time/space in order to live inside, with a difference.[448]

Diasporic populations articulate their identity primarily by default : loss of home, un-assimilationist desires within the host state -- without necessarily giving in to the same resistance as other 'subaltern' communities dwelling within the host's metropolises. Said's *Reflection on Exile* -- and we understand exile as a particular form of the diasporic condition rather than a distinctive case altogether -- rightly insists on the inseparable master / slave dialectic operating between nationalistic fervour and this "condition of terminal loss"[449]. He correctly extrapolates that all forms of nationalism and the collective *ethos* it implies, originate from a primal 'condition of estrangement'. It is in this "perilous territory of not belonging"[450], this 'border area' between us and where the banished were secluded, that "in the modern era immense aggregates of humanity loiter as refugees and displaced persons".[451] Exile thus ferments a "fundamentally discontinuous state of being" -- urgently entertaining the memory of the lost nation and the triumphant ideology intrinsic to such remembrance to make this insecure state of limbo bearable.

The most distinctive feature remains the transient character of such peoples : they are simply 'not here to stay'. Even if contact with what once was 'home' is purely fictional, diasporic communities distinguish themselves from 'immigrants' in general through the strength of their belief in imminent (or distant but certain) mobility. Theirs is what Aihwa Ong[452] calls *flexible citizenship* . The often violent processes of displacement allow for a unconditionally stark ability to sustain political communities

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448. Clifford, 1994, p.307.
449. Said, *Reflections on Exile*, in Ferguson *et al.* (eds.), <u>Out There. Marginalization and Contemporary Culture</u>, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1991, p.357.
450. *Ibid*, p.359.
451. *Ibid.*
452. quoted by Clifford, (1994), p.312.

and cultures of resistance to integrationism. In the words of Said : "clutching difference like a weapon to be used with stiffened will, the exile jealously insists on his/her rights to refuse to belong".[453] And yet, though fervently attached to their nation of origin and cluttering within real or imaginary ghettos of exclusion in order to preserve or recreate a certain 'purity' of Selfhood, diasporic communities are never (perhaps because they cannot be) *exclusively* nationalist. Their deployment is irretrievably transnational and, despite resistance, there always remains an ambivalence towards accomodationism to the host-society and its rules. Diasporic affiliations thus obey highly contingent internal and external dynamics. Changing conditions of mass-communication, globalisation and/or post- and neo-colonialism constantly re-route and re-structure collective senses of identity and difference amongst the displaced. A firm, rigid guarantee of diasporic coalition or *post-colonial* solidarity is in all cases to be excluded. *Inter-diaspora politics proceeds by tactics of collective articulation* and *disarticulation.*.[454]

"Identifications not identities, acts of relationship rather than pre-given forms : this *tradition* is a network of partially connected histories, a persistently displaced and reinvented time/space of crossings".[455] Theirs is a cosmopolitan articulation that specifically and at once contradicts and challenges the hegemony of nation-states (home and host). Indeed it is often the case that the 'centre', the 'roots' are so ancient that they no longer except in the form of books, folklore, cinematic texts -- portable eschatologies and soteriologies. The interpretative ideology of return takes over in a way that involves a principled and simultaneous rejection of all forms of universalisms *and* sovereignty. To embrace the "arts of exile and co-existence"[456] thus means to always maintain a distinct sense of Self despite daily conversations with Other. If / when return to a 'centre' is made possible, the displaced sheds the skin of this old, resistant and remembering Self, by developing a new one relative to class, race, gender, i.e. constructed against the scaffoldings of new antagonisms. As the above comments of Palestinian self-imaginary taken from three different perspectives demonstrated, it is only in the momentum of absence and longing that the idea of "Palestine" can be sustained.

> [...] the ideal image of the 'Nation' is tarnished and diminished by the concessions and pragmatic sacrifices necessitated in building a state from the ground up [...] Many of [the Palestinians] will not recognise, in the subject positions it provides for its citizens a place in which they can

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453. Said, *op.cit*, p.363.
454. Clifford, (1994), p.315.
455. *Ibid*, p.312.
456. Clifford, *Ibid.*.

locate the identities their experiences have constituted for them. *That Palestine will not be their Palestine.*[457]

As Trinh Minh-ha put it : "the experience of exile is never simply binary. If it's hard to be a stranger, it is even more so to stop being one".[458]

The strongly craved 'homecoming' moreover occurs only too rarely. The trans-regional / trans-national networks established between self-imagining peoples -- in an age of modern telecommunications and processed information -- result in a condition of many paradoxes, in which disembodied presence and immateriality of place converge. This case of social proximity in spite of physical distance enables in turn the formulation of a non-totalising "globalisation from below" : a strategy of thought hitherto absent of i.r. discourse and opening the possibilities of conceptualising in terms of a radical new political vision : "worlds 'after' Jew and Arab, 'after' West and the Rest and 'after' natives and immigrants", models for a "cosmopolitan life, non-aligned transnationalities struggling within and against nation-states, global technologies and markets --- resources for a fraught existence".[459]

III - Writing in light : a Cinema of Remembrance.

The general emphasis of the present section is placed on the contention that the de- and re-centring of migrant and uprooted subjectivities is not staged as singular (albeit noteworthy) or ritually dramatic events (the crossing itself, for instance) -- but rather in ordinary narratives of dislocation and renewal.[460] We will hence proceed to forfeit the mechanisms of memory and what V.S. Naipaul poetically described as the "enigma of arrival" through the technological medium of cinema. How is cinema's technology of inscription used to counter the erosion of time ? How does it -- or is it belived to -- provide a crucial discursive terrain for re-consolidating selfhood and identity amongst the displaced ? Or rather, how does the technological conquest of images of the national 'there and then' captured in the 'here and now' of distant shores for ever erase the possibility of ever attaining 'home' ?

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457. Bowman, p.165, emphasis author's own.
458. Trihn, *op.cit.* p.13.
459. Clifford, (1994), p327-8.
460. Ganguly, p.27

III - 1 - Memory.

"Memory's images, once they are fixed in words, are erased", Polo said. "Perhaps I am afraid of losing Venice all at once, if I speak of it. Or perhaps, speaking of other cities, I have already lost it, little by little".

- Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, 1972.

The previous section briefly mentioned Mahmoud Darwish's colourful definition of Palestine, "a country of words". As Glenn Bowman rightly observes, such description could well be used for any nation, stolen, remembered or simply taken-for-granted.

> All communities are 'countries of words' in so far as the rituals of inscribing borders, picturing territories and populations, and thematising issues salient to those terrains and the communities believed to occupy them occur within discourse.[461]

That any association to a given community is essentially a way of articulating and sharing fashions of speech and thought, has been made clear throughout this thesis. Demographic contiguity alone does not form societal cohesion, neither is it a guarantee nor a guidance *per se* in identity formulation. The dynamism inherent to self / other perception is (if not solely) crucially dependant on the infiltration and fluctuations of means of communication -- that help distance or bring otherness into closer contact. Power, knowledge, dialogue by and through these means can at once be granted or withheld. In Benedict Anderson's argument, the particular systems of communication characteristic of societies possessing popular literacy allow the 'imagined population' of the 'imagined community' to be extended far beyond the ties of the face-to-face interaction of societies based merely on oral modes of communication. In that sense, the newspaper, the novel, and to an arguably even stronger extent, the movie -- all provide a ground for viewers / readers to construct a sense of selfhood through basic identification with the imagery / scenario set out in these texts. Such individual recognition and projection can then be extrapolated to a whole array of other social actors, whose concert of recognition will eventually constitute such 'imagined collectivity'.

Of course, all the various modes of textual-interpretation and translation have been set to the test throughout our investigation. It is however not simply a matter of pointing to the relationship between text and audience (with the text as prerequisite for fixing identity). This is only the tip of a greater iceberg which leads to reflection upon

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461. Bowman, p.141.

the means and ways employed to transcend the 'text' after its reading is completed and to draw the conclusion (real or fantasised) that all cultural artefacts are in fact social texts providing fields for identification. It is indeed an observed fact that the images bred through any act of cultural expression may be subsequently projected on the "generalising screen of the national imaginary as fetishes of the nation which *stand in* for the thing itself"[462] -- representational practices assuming thus, as ever, their central function as articulators of what is believed to be real.

In the case of those who no longer dwell in their nation / home of origin, these discursive constructs attain an even more salient function. We have briefly underscored the role enacted by 'memory' in the personal and collective (re-)construction of identity amongst the uprooted -- how indeed recollections and re-inventions of the past serve as the active ideological terrain upon which representations of the present are built and a sense of identity is sustained. This parallels Gramsci's contention that everyday subjectivity is structured on "sediments of understandings about the ways in which the past permanently marks the present".[463] Such sediments have at times been called 'collective subconscious' in psychoanalytical circles. We will not dwell on the intricacies of such complex interiorization of the past, but rather how the crucial -- albeit unreliable -- domain of memory generally exceeds its own categorisations and easily slips into other sites of experience and representation.

The (re-)figuration of this particular selfhood (as enabled by the written and / or visual representation of memory) never attains the apparently uncontaminated persuasiveness of the vision of those who stayed 'at home' (or remained secure within the ghettos of familiarity). To re-collect the past when one is transient is to dwell under the threat of acknowledging the transgressive logics operating in the production of its seeming unity.

> Here, Language is the site of return, the warm fabric of a memory, and the insisting call from afar, back home. But here also, there, and everywhere, language is a site of change, an ever shifting ground. It is constituted, to borrow a wise man's words, as an 'infinitely fertile family of species spreading or mysteriously declining overtime, shamelessly and endlessly hybridising, changing its own rules as it goes.[464]

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462. *Ibid*, p.142.
463. Ganguly, p.30.
464. Trihn, p.10

To borrow the sorrowful poetics of Moroccan-French writer Tahar Ben Jelloun[465] relapsing into memory is very much like relapsing into childhood : one only does so with defeat and damage. However and despite the pain and insecurity remembrance provides, the very expression of nostalgia is regarded as the sole abode and refuge in which repressed fantasies of longing and belonging may safely dwell. In the act of creation one hopes to understand -- even if the very instance of understanding urges re-creation -- and every re-creation dilutes 'home' even further.

III - 2 - Implications of 'remembrance' : the locus of images amongst the displaced.

> *How did Odysseus die ? A suicide, wasn't it ?*
>
> - Michael Ondaatje, *The English Patient,* 1992.

Recollecting memories of a real or fictitious past requires the imagining of it before writing is made possible. In Anderson's words, it is in the privacy of 'the lair of the skull' that such imagining is constructed, and there, it is the image -- and not the word -- that prevails.

Images -- as we have come to demonstrate throughout our voyage -- are never neutral reflections, but representations made from an essentially interested point of view. This is to adopt Bergson's view that all instances of perception are unfailingly partial and interested since they are situated in a specific perceiver and hence necessarily embodied, thus located and contingent. Cinema -- a medium dwelling upon and articulating both *movement* and *image* -- can thus be turned into a formidable perceptual weapon of remembrance and re-inscription for those whose 'homecoming' has been made impossible. Where 'words' fail to reach, images may often flood unrestricted.

The cinema of the border-culture, the diaspora and the circumstantial traveller without roots, is deeply immersed in a rhetoric of hybridity. It is perhaps its inherent tragedy : to-reanimate the ashes of loss of 'Home' and yet know that their condition is already one of eternal strangeness, a double exile. This rhetoric is very much akin to this evoked throughout Chapter Four -- the heteroglossia of the metropolis -- but with a difference. The double-voiced language characteristic of the hybrid is here at once more dramatic than that of the Western internal Other and more ironic. The hybridity of the displaced is capable of un-masking the formulations of both Self and Other within the

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465. Tahar Ben Jelloun, *Les Pierres du Temps*, in Traverses 40, 1987,p.159.

same utterance, merging at once the culture of the there with that of the 'here' and ironically flirting with both. Such hybridity is as politicised and contestatory as this of the racial / gendered Other -- yet is granted, by the paradoxical means of its externality, more freedom to interact and thereby set cultural differences against each other dialogically. Such hybridity evolves what Young calls "an antithetical movement of coalescence and antagonism, with the unconscious set against the intentional, the organic against the divisive, the generative against the undermining".[466]

The film production of communities in transition, or in the process of reconstructing selfhood, is thus earmarked by a typical fusion of autobiographical tone with fiction, documentary and experimental tale-telling. One defining characteristic of such genuinely hybrid cinematic style is its contentious relation to the dominant / hegemonic language of the hosting state. As with the cinematic expressions studied in Chapter Four, these are properly utterances of a *minority* whose experience of the violent spacio-temporal disjunctions symptomatic of all diasporan existence causes unavoidable ruptures in notions of truth. The conscientious appropriation of Western visual technology to speak for non-western (or at least marginalised) perspectives to a mixed audience performs such disjunction (between the verbal and visual) whereby different regimes of truth are posed against one another -- blurring the 'borderline' between official history, private recollection and simple fiction and refusing any one truth to fill the gap thus left yawning. Border narratives possess, because of such ambivalent positionality, the self-reflexivity and irony necessary to question the mechanisms of cross-fertilisation between language and speaker, the impact of travel on the 'it' and the 'I' of discourse : when is indeed the source 'here' and when is it 'there' ? How much 'authenticity' is irrevocably lost through the hazards of displacement, interaction and translation ? Their tales recognise that both language and speaker may equally contribute to shift the 'frontiers of reality and fantasy' -- and hence question the limits set on "what is known as common and 'ordinary' in daily existence, offering thereby the possibility of an elsewhere-within-here, or -there".[467]

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466. Young, *op.cit*, p.22
467. Trihn, p.11.   To this we must add yet another layer of complexity : the economic constraints of the film industry itself and the great difficulty, in that light, to make films from the vintage point of those who 'do not belong'. Technology is usually 'owned' by- and the rules of the game staked out through *national* institutions and it might take up to years (in the most fortunate of cases) for individual writers and directors to find complacent financial sponsors committed to produce what will ultimately be coined as a 'national' film *about* a foreign nation and the cravings to return 'home'. International co-productions -- of national or independent source -- have increasingly come to play a pivotal role in sustaining displaced directors in their attempt to voice their stories. UNESCO celebrated cinema's centenary, amongst others, by issuing a report on cross-cultural efforts to support exiled filmmakers and concluded that the trend towards financial cooperation was flourishing, especially amongst members of the (now *quasi* borderless) European Union. (Le Courrier de L'UNESCO, *Un Siècle de Cinema*, July-August 1995). The international film-festival circuit too is increasingly committed to act as a platform of intercultural exchange upon which political *as well as* artistic visions may ferment. Cannes, Berlin and Venice have come to signify such 'trading cities' in which 'international relations' is practiced in the most tangible manner : forums for aesthetic exchange, locations in which to pick up heteroglot dialogues and raise political awareness. All the films that this chapter will

Cinematographic writing from the position of exile is numerous. Some leave that fictional space called 'home' simply because the Western / Hollywoodian sign beckons (Louis Malle, Istvan Svabo, Milos Forman, Wayne Wang, Ang Lee, Roman Polanski...) -- others on the contrary escape the tantalising grip of the LA movie theme park in order to create anew (Stanley Kubrick amongst others). Some, however, write in light from the unchosen and transient premises of political refuge. Amongst the most poignant tales of remembrance and re-discovery are those expressed by the young Vietnamese director Tran Anh Hung, who fled Saigon with his parents and settled amongst the diasporic Indochinese community of Paris at age 16. His first film, *The Scent of the Green Papaya* (1993), placed South-East Asian domestic life under scrutiny whilst entirely written and shot in a French studio. His tale opted for a slow, serene pace, excavating the rapport of female submission and acceptance in an atmosphere permeated with stereotypical Asian iconography. The success of this first film prompted his return to the lost homeland of his forefathers. *Cyclo* followed (1995), the filmic expression of the violence and many paradoxes of a 'Vietnam' Tran never expected to encounter. This is the embittered illustration of the impossibility of a 'home-coming' that matches the 'country of images' created through the illusions of a Self in exile. Films such as the Israeli production *Under the Domin Tree* (1995), the Brazilian *Terra Estrangeira* (1994) or the Guanine *L'Enfant Africain* investigate the relation of identity, memory and longing from the various angles of internal migration (the African child who is forced to leave the traditional surroundings of his rural home to attend school in the city, a reflection on the art of griot story-telling and the influence of modern modes of communication on an unwilling young man), immigration (the Brazilian woman trying to make sense of her ties with Lisbon and the sense of loss -- what the Brazilians call *Saudade* -- this new home enforces), and the scars left by an historical turning point and the construction / consolidation of a fixed 'home' amongst Holocaust survivors in the early days of the Israeli nation. Most brutal in its cynicism and nostalgia is Bosnian director Emir Kusturica's polemical *Underground* (1995), aptly sub-titled *Once upon a time there was a country...* The tragic undertone of this epic that spans from World War II to the recent Bosnian conflict via the Cold War, stresses throughout that Yugoslavia has not yet died in the memories of those 'kept underground' -- in the labyrinth of exile and remembrance. His last sequence depicts an allegorical banquet between all the members of this doomed brotherhood : a marriage scene on a patch of land which breaks lose and floats amidst a sea of laughter. Kusturica's vision of the war and of that defunct country raised uproar amongst the

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mention -- or implicitely suggest -- are the fruits of the concerted will on the part of producers, distributers, and ultimately, viewers to transcend, in some form or other, the chimeric ramparts of the border, and open up to the call for remembrance of the exiled.

Sarajevan population : how could he, a Bosnian Muslim exiled in France, present a text produced in Belgrade and depicting the conflict in such farcical tone ? The film was resented as betrayal : Yugoslavia, now defunct, could not be represented and Kusturica, at once and for all, lost Home... About this loss he writes, "I no longer have a nationality, I have become invisible... *Underground* is not a nostalgic film, it is rather I, alone, who is nostalgic. My film is only a necrology".[468]

New York based director Milcho Machevski's vision of Macedonia in *Before the Rain* (1994) has been less criticised, but his attempt at 'returning' to a lost home was just as inconclusive. His film depicts three stories within the story, three angles from which to see Macedonia, "Words", "Images", "Faces" : through its fratricide conflict at the borders with Greece, intermingling the love-hate relationship that develops between the Greek orthodox community and the Macedonian Muslims in a small rural town; through the recollections / memory and longing of a Macedonian photographer looking back from a Londonian homestead, and finally through the very moment of return of this photographer, who realises that the Macedonia he had imagined has simply 'moved on' in his absence.

If identity is a product of articulation, and indeed cinema, an exploration of consciousness, then the theories of hybridity evoked here above inherently address the production as well as the suppression of consciousness in this privileged medium. Cinema is uniquely endowed with the ability to deterritorialise the representation of a historical event (expatriation, political exclusion, border crossing), to confront the layers with each other and strive to make sense of their entanglement. Diasporan cinema self-consciously digs between strata, using a mixture of filmic language to tell the unofficial tales of exile, emigrance, culturally mixed people. There where multicultural categorising kept difference at its place, hybrid vision is unpredictable and generative -- and may at any moment reveal the process of exclusion by which nations and identities are formed. If memory is truly a mere membrane 'a double becoming' that constitutes anew both filmmaker and community -- "the people who are missing and the I who is absent" -- its search through the act of individual storytelling creates a knowledge with repercussions that are intensely collective. Such cinema is indeed univocally concerned with the political resolution of the discrepancy between official and private memories. The films evoked here-above all express a crisis of identification through which collective processes of societal construction are forced to recognise that even the utmost individualistic of narratives can bear aspects of hegemonising fictions. *No* utterance is ever *solely* monological.

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468. E. Kusturica, *Souvenirs de Bord*, in <u>Les Cahiers du Cinéma</u>, No.496, p.44. Translation mine.

III - 3 - The lessons learnt from diasporan cinema.

For those who remain strangers in their homeland and foreigners in their new homes, feeling repeatedly out of place within every familiar world, it is vital to question settlement, as well as to make it easier for the diversely unsettled ones to bear the anxieties of unwonted seclusion. Home and language in such a context never become nature.

- Trinh Min-ha, *When the Moon Waxes Red,* 1991.

Those filming at and from the border undo, perhaps unwittingly, a double colonisation -- that of the master's stories, as well as their own. Theirs is the radical refusal to indulge in exile as a redemptive motif that would turn their gaze towards 'home' (here and there) uncritical.[469] This rings particularly true for Atom Egoyan, whose entire filmmography (from *Next of Kin* to the 1994-Cannes Award winning *Exotica*) speaks of his obsession with the 'image' as mediator of identity and unreliable guardian of memory. Egoyan, born in Cairo but raised in Canada by parents who did all they could to efface traces of their Armenian origins -- hoping that their children would become 'models of assimilation to the West'[470] -- hence admits to being haunted by the question of return, the trajedy of 'in-betweeness' and the all-important role played by the picture, the voyeuristic video-recorder, the cinema in all attempts to capture the fleeting fragments of Self moulded and eroded by Other's worlds. The photographer in his *Calendar* (1993), for instance, initially fails to maintain an ironic gaze *vis à vis* the illusions of 'home' : he buys into the dominant culture's image of what it means to be Armenian, slotting the photographs of churches into the known quantity of the western calendar format whilst repressing the efforts of his other images to 'speak'.

Egoyan's script is fundamentally structured around the losses that take place in any act of translation. The protagonist -- revealingly played by the director himself -- is a photographer whose mode of existence is to replace experiences with images. He returns to an Armenia he has never known (having dwelt all his life in the diasporan Armenia recreated in Canada) so as to produce photo snaps of country churches whose idyllic kitsch would then be marketed in the West. Afraid of the volatility of recollection, images and their ability to activate repressed pain, he rigorously controls the process of mental construction as though he could control his feelings of home-coming by virtualising them into snapshots. His wife is a Canadian who still identifies with the Armenian heritage of her parents. In the course of their visit she succeeds in recovering her Armenian identity and falls progressively in love with their Armenian

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469. Trinh, p.14
470. *Le Monde,* Thursday 8 May 1997, *"l'histoire banalement obsessionelle d'Atom Egoyan'.*

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guide. As though already in thrall to these images with which he is replacing his own presence, the photographer watches through the viewfinder as his wife disappears with the guide, knowing he is losing her to him. Flashbacks alternate with scenes in which the photographer, now back in his Toronto flat, pursues a perverted need to hire women who vaguely resemble his wife and who speak to him in the eroticized language of their lost 'home', in Macedonian, Turkish... As the woman-of-the-moment stands next to the Armenian Church-of-the-month, thus talking in the language of exile, they function as two virtual images, of the woman and the country he refused to -- or simply could not -- see. By their very inadequacy before the actual image, the virtual images of Armenia have set up unwilling circuits of memory and longing. This is the trap that eventually engulfs the image-maker, the image-taker. The less there is in the image -- pre-encoded, pre-enjoyed -- the more there is that can only be experienced by drawing upon one's memories as one engages with the image in the present act of perception.

The intense pain of recollection and return is dealt with in a very different manner in Theo Angelopoulos's homeric epic, *Ulysse's Gaze* (1995). This is yet another odyssey without return, which takes the viewer on an excursion through the Balkans -- exploring simultaneously the present, the past, and a journey of Self recovery of its cinéaste hero. The narrative unfolds obliquely in stylised long-takes, with elaborate camera movements and action within the frame at the place of editing. In the opening sequence, the camera thus pans from an elderly Greek movie-maker shooting his final film on the Salonika waterfront in 1954 to an unnamed director (Harvey Keitel) simply named 'A', at the same place 40 years later, seeing in his imagination the blue ship that the old man had once been filming. Having gained a controversial reputation during 36 years of exile, 'A' has returned to Greece in the centenary year of cinema to assist the National Film Archive on a documentary about the Menakis brothers, the region's first filmmakers. Between 1905 and 1939, when they parted routes, the Menakises documented the changing world of the Balkans -- and 'A' is now obsessed with three undeveloped reels of film they are said to have shot before their earliest known work, a scene of peasants weaving. Discovering this pristine film will, so A believes, renew his own vision, tarnished by decades of angry longing for 'home'.

The search is preceded by a riot at a retrospective screening of A's films in his home town of Ptolemais and takes him by car, boat, train through Albania, Romania and the former Yugoslavia. The final third of this three-hour travel is set in besieged Sarajevo, where A meets the elderly curator of the Bosnian Cinématèque who is preserving the nation's film heritage in a bunker beside a shattered cinema. The women A meets along his journey are all played by the same actress : he runs away from them,

they catch up and in the end, lost amidst the Bosnian fog, and having recovered the reels, he realises that the Self he had been seeking had been present, under various guises, all along.

"The author must not, writes Deleuze in a biblical tone, make himself into the ethnologist of his people, nor himself invent a fiction which would be one more private story".[471] Conventional documentary participates as much as fiction cinema in the instrumentality of the hegemonic language : it is the task of border identities, Deleuze would argue, to destroy myths from the outside. The uprooted are socialised in ways that force them to always see beyond their sole *Weltanschauung*. In the words of Said,

> Seeing "the entire world as foreign land" makes possible originality of vision. Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that -- to borrow a phrase from music -- is *contrapuntal*.[472]

They have indeed the transitional and schizophrenic rapport to the 'here' and 'there' that enables a privileged position through which to articulate an *alternative* vision of political configurations.

Hybrid cinema does not therefore present an audio-visual world made out of 'positive images' or corrective representations. That would mean resisting the established order by creating another one anew : one essentialist paradigm merely replaced, thus enforcing what it purported to destroy. The agents that make up diasporan cinema are what Deleuze calls 'intercessors' : not the docile informants of documentary, nor the revolutionary resistant characters who dispute the western filmmaker's narration of 'truth' at every turn -- rather storytellers whose perennial crossing and re-crossing of the divide between private longing and political inadequacy has elevated their knowledge to a different order from official information. The intercessors in an act of cinematic storytelling deterritorialize the image by taking and recombining from existing image-repertoires -- Chapter Two's mimetic capital -- in order to recover the memory which might grant them identity.

The hybrid film teaches the position to adopt in order to exert a quasi archaeological excavation -- a genealogy of Self in the Foucauldian sense, sorting out the chaos of cultural dislocation -- and read significance in what official histories of Self / Other overlook. In the process it enables the brief and contingent knowledge of a

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471. Deleuze, Cinema 2, p.216.
472. Said, (1993), p.366

community in diaspora -- for whom travel is the only mode of dwelling and writing, filming, the only place to call home.

Epilogue :
The Famished Border

> ... Men take their colours
> as trees do from the native soil of their birth
> and once they are moved elsewhere entire cultures
> lose the art of mimicry, and then, where the trees were
> the fir, the palm, the olive, the cedar, a desert place
> widens the heart.
>
> - Derek Walcott, *Omeros*, 1990.

"To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognised need of the human soul" wrote Simone Weil in war-stricken England. Yet are the remedies to the loss of roots not usually more dangerous than what they purport to grant ? We have seen that common amongst the displaced is a sense of identity founded on longing, memory, isolation, irony and often even a fetishisation of exile itself. On the one hand such fetishism may lead to most rudimentary statism : the pressure / relief of party-allegiance induces a nationalist metaphysic that regards the collective, idealised idea of 'home-returning' not as travel, but as a 'moral destination'. The re-collection, re-articulation and re-invention of nationhood symptomatic of this particular form of displaced ontology duplicates and reproduces the antagonism and rhetoric of otherness discussed in Chapter Two. The expressions of radical nationalism -- the habitually uncritical sense of community allegiance with its rigid Self / Other dichotomisations -- are accentuated through the 'identity purification' sought because of the violence of displacement .

On the other hand -- and this has been central to this chapter focused on 'becoming', 'crossings' -- is the contention that exile can simultaneously subvert the essentialism inherent to such 'sedentarist' visions of Self. Chapter Four and most of our last chapter have underscored the malleability of an identity created through travel, metropolitan contiguity and border-dwelling. Despite the will-to-homogenise underlined here-above, identities created from the position of exile are inevitably creolised to a certain extent -- changing, bargained and situational rather than essential, exclusionary and moral.[473] Against the glorified national ethic of the embittered displaced quoted above, we find the seeds of a virulent cosmopolitanism -- a 'worldliness' in the Saidian sense that trivialises attachment to 'roots' by transcending quests of authenticity and

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473. Malkki, p.36.

nostalgia to 'place'. The paradoxical identity-formulation we find here is one very much in agreement with Deleuze and Gattari's notion of the 'rhizomatic self' :

> To be rhizomorphous is to produce stems and filaments that seem to be roots, or better yet connect with them by penetrating the trunk, but put them to strange new uses. We're tired of trees. We should stop believing in trees, roots and radicles. They've made us suffer too much. All of arborescent culture is founded on them, from biology to linguistics.[474]

This is a re-assertion of our conceptualisation of identity as continually in the process of becoming -- mobile, procedural, partly self-constructed, partly other-imposed, label, weapon, shield, memory : in sum an hybrid aggregate "composed through bricolage".[475] This of course is equally valid for those who seek out the purity of Self amongst the order imposed by the Other / host state. New maps of desire and detachment are always formed -- and "to plot 'places of birth' and degrees of nativeness is to blind oneself to the multiplicity of attachments that people form to places through living in, remembering, imagining them".[476] Here too, there is resistance and irrevocable creolisation : it is politically, psychologically and ethnogaphically incorrect to believe in 'true roots' stretching unchanged and *ad infinitum* throughout the excesses of geographical and temporal cleavage.

What such investigatory survey of Self-consciousness amongst the displaced teaches the i.r. theoretician is not to merely re-assess the intimate correlation between constant uprootedness and modern identity. To point to the corrosion of borderlines, to the increasing formation of 'border-cultures' -- whose hybrid identity does not lend itself easily to categorisations -- is also to provoke a conceptual reconstitution of the state and its systemic components, among which are its disciplines. The epistemological hegemony of the Western Same that still prevails in the so-called discipline of international relations might have been put under contestation from the inside or the outside in. Yet as always, the classical needs time to deteriorate under baroque pressures. The ethnographic asymmetry between self/other, as we have come to see in Chapter Two, is a reflection of a more primal political asymmetry in which power "like the knowledge being discovered and produced, is unevenly distributed".[477] In an era of rising transnationalism this dualistic construction is certainly no longer appropriate to understand the relations operating within the international. Different spacio-temporal

474. G. Deleuze & F. Gattari, Mille Plateaux: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, University of Minnesota Press, Mineapolis, 1987, p.15.
475. Malkki, p.37.
476. *Ibid.*
477. Kearney, p.64.

relationships reconfigure the dualism inherent to the colonial gaze into epistemological constellations that blur the gap that had hitherto so neatly distinguished Self from Other. The Other, living at the borders, in the metropolis, 'amongst us', on the move -- is constituted in highly dispersed communities, transnational in form and highly similar to the Self in many aspects. The demise of 'man' -- that is the death of the Western subject -- heralded by Foucault is very akin to this awareness. His methodology -- though unarguably concentrated on the 'modern' -- personifies an 'internationalist' vision that also foretells, like Marx's transdisciplinary mode, the dissolution of our age's necessary socio-cultural form, the nation-state.

Looking for Zerzura. [...] Not seeing each other for months. Just the Bedouin and us, crisscrossing the Forty Days Road. There were rivers of desert tribes [...]. We were German, English, Hungarian, African -- all of us insignificant to them. Gradually we became nationless. I came to hate nations. We are deformed by nation-states.[...]
    The desert could not be claimed or owned -- it was a piece of cloth carried by winds, never held down by stones, and given a hundred shifting names long before Canterbury existed, long before battles and treaties quilted Europe and the East. Its caravans, those strange rambling feasts and cultures, left nothing behind, not an ember. All of us, even those with European homes and children in the distance, wished to remove the clothing of our countries [...] Erase nations ! I was taught such things by the desert.[...] By the time war arrived, after ten years in the desert, it was easy for me to slip across borders, not to belong...[478]

Anthony Minghella's 1996 adaptation of this quote's source wonderfully illustrates the possibility to gaze beyond the nation when constructing one's identity, and the unfeasibility of monological utterances everywhere : how the individual acts in ways that always impact on the Other; how the poetical, is always already the political; how nations deform the true issue of responsibility. *The English Patient* is our perfectly fitted concluding case-study of border-straddling filmmaking -- a remarkable final instance to highlight the international relations of cinema.

• This is evidenced first and foremost by the professional and geographical context in which *The English Patient* was shot : a playwright and director, born of Italian parents and raised on the Isle of Wight falls under the spell of a book written by a novelist born in Sri Lanka into the Burgher community (of Dutch, Tamil and Sinhalese descent) who settled in Canada after a stay in England. He then summons an independent producer, Saul Zaentz, born in New Jersey to Russian-Polish parents, to help him direct Ondaatje's story. The cast chosen to interpret the novel's protagonists included English, French, American, Indian, Canadian, Tunisian, German and Italian actors. The crew included an Italian Line Producer, an Australian Director of Photography and First Assistant Director, a British Production Designer and Film Editor, an American

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478. Ondaatje, M., The English Patient, Picador, London, 1993, pp.138-9.

Costume Designer and Associate Producer and a Libanese Composer. The film was shot partly in Rome's Cinecitta Studios, in a Tuscan monastery and on the coast near Pisa, in the Tunisian desert bordering Algeria and in Venice. When the film wrapped after almost five months of cross-border filming on January 31st 1996, there was no clear sense whether the film was 'British', 'American', 'Italian' nor even... 'Sri Lankan'.[479]

• Secondly by the locale in which it entered, and won over, the international maket place : the International Berlin Film Festival, February 1997. Nigel Andrews, writing for the Financial Times[480], headed his article "Frontiers tested in Berlin" and heralded the overwhelming presence of 'political' films in a city symbolically quoted as the place of walls and fissures in East-West dichotomies. This year's Berlin Festival make-up was indeed predominantly *about* multi-culturalism, heteroglossia and the tresspassing of borders. *The English Patient* had to compete against Georgia's *Graveyard of Dreams* , about the fragmentation of the former USSR and the violent awakening of nationalist sentiment amongst its orphans; Spain's *Comanche Territory*, about the nationalistic transformation of three Spanish journalists stranded in a blitzed Holiday Inn at the height of the Bosnian conflict; or Brazil's *Four Days in September*, about a political kidnapping with international ramifications. All attested the profound correlation between film as an art-form capable of transcending the bounds of locality and the director's own quest into the politics of cosmopolitan responsibility, *beyond* the us / them rhetoric.

• And lastly -- yet most saliently perhaps -- by the story it tells.
On the surface, the film looks at the absurdities of W.W.II from the viewpoint of four sharply contrasted characters brought together by fateful necessity amidst the ruins of an abandoned Tuscan monastery.[481] All are wounded in one way or another, physically, psychologically and often both -- epitomised by the eponymous character, this 'English patient' so badly burnt that he is faceless, skinless, nameless, and will not recall his roots. Three continents intertwine a segment of their lives at his death bed : Hana (Juliette Binoche), a Canadian nursing officer who left her unit to tend to the patient's wounds; a Canadian thief, Caravaggio (Willem Dafoe) who served for the Ally intelligence services during the war in North Africa, was mutilated by the Germans and became obsessed with the true nationality of this 'patient' he suspects not to be English at all; and a Sikh sapper, Kip (Naveen Andrews), daily risking his life as a land-mine disposal officer with the British Empire's Royal Engineers. Half the book and half the

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479. Minghella and Ondaatje aggreed on the implausibility and futility to bracket the film into a national denomination in a public interview held at the National Film Theatre, London, March 4, 1996.
480. Weekend Financial Times, February 22-23 1997.
481. See Philip French's coverage in The Observer Review, March 16, 1997.

film bring in a fourth continent through the morphine induced flashbacks of the patient to the thirties : pre-war Cairo and the Libyan desert. The patient turns indeed not to be English : Almásy (Ralph Fiennes), an Hungarian aristocrat then member of a Royal Geographical Society cartographic expedition in search for Zerzura, 'the lost oasis' mentioned by Herodotus (how we come full circle to our first chapter !..). The ever present copy of Herodotus *Histories* assumes a life of its own, a powerful central link between present and past : it is from its reading that the patient lapses back to his other life -- and fell under the spell of the desert, and the voice of his colleague's wife, Katherine (Kristin Scott Thomas), reading a story from his copy. Herodotus brought them to the desert and to one another -- and later continues to haunt each protagonist's relation to official history and myth. The affair that ensues between Katherine and Almásy ends tragically with her lethal injury in a plane crash in the Gilf Kebir range and Almásy's desperate attempt to rescue her. By that time war has broken out and when he does stumble upon an Ally garrison in the desert and begs for help, his name and nationality matter far greater than his motive. He is refused a car and imprisoned. He later escapes and -- ranking personal allegiances higher than those of the war -- trades his knowledge of desert maps with the Nazis in exchange for a plane and petrol, so as to keep his promise to Katherine.

As Ondaatje's novel underlines, "...betrayals in war... are childlike compared to our human betrayals during peace".[482] Minghella himself insists on the overbearing role assumed by the agency / structure dialectic as he conceived his screen-adaptation : how an individual may change, even to a small degree, the course of official history; how we all share responsibilities *as human beings* that transcend -- or should transcend -- the particularities of national appurtenance.[483] The nationalistic betrayal of Almásy is of course not left unpunished : he is burnt alive and all the book centres on his recollections of 'loss' and the Libyan sands -- his 'home' -- from the standpoint of his present purgatory. Nonetheless it is a treason that he deemed necessary, he who felt he did not belong to any nation. The war ends, the idea of home is erased, memories dry up, people move on. Yet the political is never once effaced : it only assumes a far deeper personal significance.

Reading this film's multi-layered genealogy sallies us forth to consider its wider implications for our own work and tentatively enables us to extract some crucial concluding points. An important one is that to move beyond nations and its implicit binarism does not mean to refute the Other. Well on the contrary. This thesis in general and this chapter in particular hope to have convinced the reader that identity is *without*

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482. M. Ondaatje, *op.cit.* p.97.
483. Melvin Braag's interview with Minghella, Radio Four, March 3, 1997

exception relational, and that "the condition of existence of every identity is the affirmation of a difference, the determination of an 'other' that is going to play the role of a 'constitutive outside'.[484] Ontologically -- hence politically -- it seems essential that we learn to cherish and cultivate not the enemy, but the adversary -- not the impulse to destroy, but the effort to be made in order to cohabit, dialogue and tolerate. The effort also to exercise the cinematic gaze, to critically abandon onself to the pleasurable subversion unravelling the Different.

Those whose identity is made on the borders, through the restlessness of travel teach us remarkable lessons of normative humility in the face of the 'stranger' -- laying thus the founding stone towards a practice of 'pluralist democracy'. This thesis never ceased to suggest that it is at the very precarious site of the 'in-between' that we can articulate, negotiate and experience genuine 'agonistic' pluralism. A pluralism which does not attempt to eradicate dissimilarities through assimilationist strategies -- total fusion or total separation -- but quite on the contrary realises that "democracy will always be to come [...] which emphasised not only the unrealised possibilities but also the radical impossibility of final completion".[485] The 'impossible good' that is such democracy is also its *élan vital*. The Other and its otherness are irreducible. In purity, democracy dies. Simply that.

> The existence of pluralism implies the permanence of conflict and antagonism and these should not be seen as empirical obstacles which would make impossible the perfect realisation of an ideal existing in harmony which we cannot reach because we will never be capable of perfectly coinciding our rational selves.[486]

Hence the logic of democracy -- based as it were on equivalence -- is seen as incompatible with the logic of liberalism, based on difference. This very incompatibility nevertheless provides the necessary tension that would make "pluralist democracy a regime particularly suited to the indeterminacy of modern politics".[487] To point this out is to incite both practitioners and scholars of the international to devise frameworks for the construction of democratic identities based on the acceptance of difference -- and uprooted hybridity -- as the paradoxically impossible *and* possible condition to foster unity and totality.

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484. C. Mouffe, *op.cit.* p.2.
485. C. Mouffe, *For a Politics of Nomadic Identity*, in Robertson *et al.*, p.112.
486. *Ibid.*
487. *Ibid.* p.111.

What such "pluralist democracy" would then naturally instil, is to abandon all rhetoric of place in the manner of Auerbach or the monk Hugo de St. Victor often quoted by Said.

> Hugo twice makes it clear that the 'strong' or 'perfect' man (sic.) achieves independence and detachment by working *through* attachments, not by rejecting them. Exile is predicated on the existence of, and love for, and bond with, one's native place; what is true of all exile is not that home and love of home are lost, but that loss is inherent in the very existence of both.[488]

If borders of knowledge and experience are to be transgressed, the exile, the displaced, teach us also that with loss of 'home' and life on the margins comes the impossibility to forge conciliatory conclusions in theoretical discourse. "The domestic scene is supplemented, extended and stretched; and then sometimes overstretched, even subverted".[489] To have revisited and re-sacralised uprooted identities enforces the incalculability of epistemological horizons and weakens any attempt to transcend the "worldliness" of the text with ready-made assumptions marked in notions of 'truth' or 'reason'. Under the spell of criticism -- which in itself always involves a perpetual departure -- we are set in a movement which calls forth the impossibility of destination : between the *fort - da* of the critical gaze, we are ourselves set in a self-perpetuating motion, a travel without guarantee of return.

> [...] The question would be, then, not how to arrive, but how to move, how to identify convergent and divergent movements; and the challenge would be how to notate such events, how to give them a historical and social value.[490]

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488. Said, (1993) *op.cit*. p.366.
489. Chambers, (1990), p.116.
490. Chambers, (1994), p.42.

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Special Thanks to the Press Office staff of *Miramax International*, London, *Twentieth Century Fox*, Los Angeles and *Warner Brothers*, Burbank, CA., for letting me browse through their 1995 - 1997 press-clippings and archives.