



The
WORLDING
Project

*Doing Cultural Studies
in the Era of Globalization*



Rob Wilson
and
Christopher Leigh Connery
editors



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Acknowledgments

The Worlding Project, as vision and text, has been more than four years in the making, so there are many guiding lights and helping hands to acknowledge here and give thanks to at the outset of our publication with New Pacific Press. Foremost among these comrades in arts, politics, and letters has been David S. Watson, prescient owner/visionary leader of Literary Guillotine Bookstore in downtown Santa Cruz, California, and director of New Pacific Press, which has now formed a global-local alliance with North Atlantic Books, based in Berkeley. Scrappy, mongrel, and multiple, this nexus is our own City Lights Bookstore and more.

A place-based vision of collective intervention as wrought into a “minor” mode of shared consciousness and critical-creative synergy, New Pacific Press and its “worlding” series came into being out of an uncanny conjunction of local, regional, and global forces as reflecting this singular place of “holy crossings,” dissent, borderlands becoming, and left-coast experimentalism: Santa Cruz, California. Patiently and with enduring literary-material insight over these years and diverse contexts, David Watson has nurtured, challenged, and prodded “the seed” of this project into realized being from our first backyard discussions in his Santa Cruz home in 2001 as the mass media fogs lifted a bit, globaloney spread, and the wars and demos raged on near and far.

A ground-breaking conference in April 21, 2001, on “Worldings: World Literatures, Field Imaginaries” drew upon the resources and helpful support of the Humanities Division of the University of California Santa Cruz and its visionary Dean of Humanities Wlad Godzich, as well as an array of colleagues from the editorial collective of *boundary 2* and west-coast Asia/Pacific allies like Colleen Lye, Carla Freccero, Susan Gillman, Kirsten Gruesz, David Palumbo-Liu et al., who gave talks on these issues, provoking the “worldings” project forward from its incipient formations in the World Literature and Cultural Studies program at the University, as well as the Center for Cultural Studies which housed and co-supported it (Gail Hershatter and Chris Connery, co-directors). The history of this

consciousness/project is in many ways still carried on in the tactics and dreams of this specific collection, as Chris Connery outlines in his introduction to this multi-sited yet situated work of pedagogy called *The Worlding Project*. We thank Stephanie Casher and Shann Ritchie for their help and care in getting all this rolling, and Masao Miyoshi for always being there with photographs, theory, jeremiads, in-your-face hope.

David Watson also brought into the editorial mix our UCSC graduate student copyeditors and comrades in cultural studies, left-coast politics, and poetics: Raissa Burns, Sean Connelly, Sean Fox, and John Flynn-York all deserve our enduring thanks and gratitude for their painstaking work on shaping these essays into pungent and integral coherence as a book. Johanna Isaacson and Andy Wang offered hope, help, and insight, as did Linda X in the bookstore. In the final stages, Stephen Pollard served as the master book designer who gave the text its material realization via, among other things, integrating the keen Korean-based photography of Drayton Hamilton and Gary Pak with the jazz-like array of digitalized icons chosen by the filmic imagination and web uncanniness of Jin Jirn. As Helene Moglen put it when *Bodies in the Making* came out, all authors should be this lucky.

All of these agents and allies deserve our praise and thanks, as do each of the six other contributors to this *Worlding Project* collection of cultural criticism. Their work has crossed oceans and contexts and endured more than four years of copyediting and re-theorizing to get into this collective form, which has become (so we would hope) greater than the sum of its parts as an intervention into the “worlds” of humanities, pedagogy, and social studies.

We the co-editors, Rob Wilson and Christopher Leigh Connery, hope that all these kindred spirits will be proud of this project as representing one shared intervention into the banal deadliness of neo-liberal globalization and its discursive regimes of space, time, identity-making, and transnationalized cultural studies. We hope it projects a world of newness forward, and will thus come out of our past and future via activating tactics and prodding hope.

Some of these *Worlding Project* chapters have appeared in prior essay versions, even as each work has been reshaped, amplified, and updated for use here: a much shorter version of Christopher Leigh Connery's essay on the "global Sixties" appeared in *Gramma: Journal of Theory and Criticism* (Greece); Meaghan Morris's essay on "martial arts pedagogy" appeared in a Routledge collection which she acknowledges in her essay; James Clifford's chapter on indigenous articulations appeared in *The Contemporary Pacific*; Kuan-Hsing Chen's essay on Club 51 appeared in a much-truncated version in *New Left Review*; Rob Wilson's essay on *Gladiator* appeared in its pre-9/11 form in *The European Journal of American Studies*, and his essay-poem on the "white surfer dude" appeared in a differently configured version in the journal of experimental poetics, *Chain*, co-edited by Juliana Spahr and Jena Osman in Honolulu and Philadelphia. We thank these journals and presses for their permission to reuse.

Preface

David Watson

The Worlding Project and New Pacific Press were conceived simultaneously as a new vision of what the New York Intellectuals once called the “bloody crossroads between art and politics.” The public intellectuals of that time were struggling to align avant-garde modernisms with socialist politics. The cultural critics involved in this collection are working with post-colonial theories and trans-nationalisms in the age of globalization. New Pacific has been publishing these cultural critics from the academy, striving to give their work a more public and immediate, topical voice. *The Worlding Project* has struggled into existence over the past five years, through multiple edits and across the continents, to present this new vision: a creative and critical blend of art and politics that suggests a whole new way to globalize. Rather than globalization, it is what we call *worlding*.

From Kinoshita’s medieval age to Wilson’s utopian future, from Chen’s Taiwan to Morris’s China to Chude-Sokei’s Jamaica, these essays are international and inter-epochal. They show us how a cultural product/artifact represents a sociopolitical environment. Working at the crossroads of art and politics, the writers collected here are producing a poetic critique that promotes an alternative form of globalization. The crossroads this time haven’t been so “bloody.” For this is a globalization filled with human potential: respecting differences and exchanging ideas, synthesizing rather than stratifying, opening the marketplace rather than seeking out new markets, and acknowledging the possibilities of change rather than accepting the model of capitalism’s last man standing.

These essays are great examples of how Cultural Studies are being carried out on an international level, the kind of work being done to world the planet and foster new artistic forms and genres, which emerge as symbolic resolutions to political problems and contradictions. In other words, they are a form of political action being done through culture. And

the work of real cultural activists is a great pedagogical tool because we need an army of cultural activists to counter the forces of the Western war machine. These activists, with the sensitivity of ethnographers and the hopefulness of utopian poetics, will bring a different version of the West to the world, embracing the cultural clashes with understanding and looking for ways to forge synthetic world spaces. The work in this collection is an inspiration to action; it aims to counter the technical and economic discourse employed by those who would commodify the planet. These essays strive to create “different modes of thinking and writing, studying, and teaching the world against and (from) inside” the beast of the US globalizing apparatus. Employing emergent forms of theorizing, activating, and writing cultural poetics and politics, the work here turns the West’s bloody crossroads of art and politics into a peaceful global intersection filled with potential and hope. *The Worlding Project* revolves around a new language, hinted at here and developed fully and poetically in Rob Wilson’s Afterword, the ultimate theoretical manifesto for a Cultural Studies that recognizes difference in this ever homogenizing world, the critical and generative response to Western hegemony and its static model of globalization. It is the hopeful and hectic imagining of art and politics he calls worlding, with emphasis on the whirl.



Introduction: Worlded Pedagogy in Santa Cruz

Christopher Leigh Connery

This collection has its roots in the World Literature and Cultural Studies group at the University of California Santa Cruz—the contributors are faculty members, inspirational forces, or fellow travelers. What the collection has in common with its origin is its contribution to a project—the construction of a field imaginary, a new organization of knowledge. The term *field imaginary* describes the ways in which a given discipline or scholarly field sets its own boundaries—boundaries which it frequently considers to be natural or self-evident. These boundaries are often geographical, but can also be temporal, generic, or conceptual. A moment's reflection should show that even a field classification as seemingly “natural” as “English literature” breaks down under a host of pressures. Our critical stance of “worlding” should always be seen as an interruption and critique of a range of field imaginaries. Donald Pease has made the most important contributions to thinking on the idea of field imaginary.*

This shared sense of a project, a response to new situations that demand new imaginings—with the imaginative character of the enterprise evoked beautifully in Rob Wilson's afterword to this volume—shapes individual scholarly trajectories, as well as personal and collective research agendas in a range of locations. But, and here it shows its roots in a curricular group, it is also a pedagogical project.¹ Its pedagogical vision holds that an undergraduate or graduate student might reasonably be expected to know something about Hong Kong martial arts cinema, indigeneity, a worlded medieval Mediterranean, contemporary Jamaican music, and Taiwanese politics; it holds that this knowledge, while not adding up to a totalizing command of the whole, would attune the student to situations, filiations, specificities, and an awareness of the swirling presence of the whole. This is, of course, a project that many in the academy

*See, for example, his introduction to a special issue of *boundary 2* on the New Americanists. Donald E. Pease, “New Americanists: Revisionist Interventions into the Canon,” *boundary 2*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Spring 1990), pp. 1–37.

1. For a full description and analysis of the program in its early stages, see Kristin Ross, “The World Literature and Cultural Studies Program,” *Critical Inquiry* 19.4 (Summer 1993), pp. 666–676.



are working toward, particularly in what many of them have called the era of globalization. What I want to sketch here is the interaction between local configurations of knowledge and pedagogy and broader currents in literary and cultural study through the changes of the last twenty years. This Worldings collection, and much of the work of the New Pacific Press, aims to activate and take inspiration from its Santa Cruz location, while participating in international efforts to fashion modes of inquiry and of teaching that are adequate to the current era. A pedagogical project will always be unfinished. It will be a journey, and not a destination, recalling the etymology of the word “curriculum”—a running, or a racecourse.

The 1990 brochure describes the pedagogical vision of the World Literature and Cultural Studies program as follows:

World Literature and Cultural Studies is an undergraduate major program that studies literature and cultural production in a global context. By establishing a global comparative field, the program does not merely increase representation of previously ignored or underrepresented cultures, but rather presents both dominant and emerging cultures as dynamically related within specific historic and economic contexts. This means that cultural “classics” are not excluded from the program but approached in a way that does not assume their monumental status. It also means that the history of the debates over how to read and interpret emergent cultures is itself a major focus of the program.

The program examines literature within the broader context of Cultural Studies. Cultural Studies transcends the traditional boundaries between academic disciplines such as literature, history, sociology, anthropology, and media studies, and introduces students to theoretical models provided by Marxism, psychoanalysis, semiotics, feminism, and post-structuralism. Within Cultural Studies the concept of the text is broadened to include non-verbal forms of representation: among them social movements and everyday life practices. Culture, as the program understands it, is neither autonomous nor an eternally determined field, but a series of social differences and struggles.

To these ends the program has organized its study around a number of historical and cultural developments that have global dimensions:



for example, the rise of nationalism and print culture, the European colonial conquest of the nineteenth century, and the emergence of fascist aesthetics on every continent during the interwar years. The program's goal is to have students think more critically and more historically about cultural production—not only texts, but also practices and institutions with specific conditions of production and specific histories of reception. The program wants students to be aware that forms such as the novel or rap have a history and geography, and that artistic forms and genres emerge as symbolic resolutions to political problems and contradictions. The situations that give rise to such symbolic resolutions may, and indeed should, in an increasingly global community, be studied comparatively.²

I quote from the brochure in part to draw attention to the historical specificity of its field intervention, and to suggest ways in which its “world” was different from what was to become “the global.” “Comparatively,” as the Lévi-Straussian/Jamesonian tenor of these last two sentences suggests, always suggests the third term: the world itself, the world systemic, not always intelligible in its localized or concretized instantiation, but the ultimate and necessary horizon for interpretive work. This was the core of the pedagogical vision: the sense that nothing was out of bounds, that the near-to-hand was as strange and de-familiarizable as the distant and unfamiliar, that the local was always worldly. The proximate context of breaking boundaries was the canon wars of the late 1980s, about which more below. But what was the world, in those days, and what was signified by the turn thereto?

When the group began to form, at the end of the 1980s, “globalization” had appeared on the conceptual horizon but had none of its current ubiquity within or beyond the US academy; the major anthologies and studies of globalization were all published in the 1990s and later. In literary study, the age of theory, whose center was deconstruction, was on the wane. It was as if “theory”—a product of the long 1960s³ and thus possessed of that decade's twinned originary energies of breakthrough and containment, simultaneously destroying discursive boundaries and renewing academic professionalization and instrumentalization—required its own sublation in order for its critical and political project

2. Roberto Crespi, Susan Gillman, Sharon Kinoshita, Chris Connery, Carter Wilson, Kristin Ross, Jose Saldívar, Dan Selden, *World Literature and Cultural Studies: An Undergraduate Major Program*. n.d., n.p. I would like to thank all my colleagues in World Literature and Cultural Studies, past and present, for their inspiration. They have been the key influences on my own research agenda. Particular thanks to Susan Gillman for her comments on this essay.

3. For the 1960s character of “the age of theory,” see Fredric Jameson, “Periodizing the Sixties.” In Fredric Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory, Essays 1971–1986*, vol. 2: *The Syntax of History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988, pp. 178–210.

4. See Toni Morrison, "Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 28.1 (Winter 1989), pp. 1–34, an essay that Morrison originally intended to title "Canon Fodder." This essay was accompanied by responses from Eric Foner and Hazel Carby, reflecting on the state of the canon wars.

5. Charles Norris Cochrane, "The Latin Spirit in Literature," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1932–33), pp. 315–338.



to continue. "Theory," in the Reagan and Thatcher years, was no longer enough: "the political," in an oppositional sense, had become urgent once again. In the United States, the right-wing attack on Afro-American, Latina/o, Asian-American, and Native-American gains in the US academy had become earnest: perceived outrages such as the spurious claim that Alice Walker was taught more commonly than Shakespeare-galvanized American Whiggery, and there were growing signs that the imperial gaze was turning toward the academy. It was unclear then what the US academy would become, how powerful the right-wing attack on it would be, and what answer the academic left would give to the question of the politics of pedagogy, which had become so loudly engaged on the right. But the force of the political had revived. The renewed agenda of politicization touched many fields and shaped work in cultural, theoretical, and media studies. As the 1980s were ending, literary studies had entered a methodological and ideological transition period. The dominant frameworks were still inchoate—post-colonialism was not yet established, and new historicism had proved to be too eclectic, as suitable for de-politicization as it was for the political agenda.

The form that late 1980s politics took within the US humanities was the canon wars, which were in part a right-wing reaction to the consolidation of ethnic American literary and cultural studies.⁴ Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* and E. D. Hirsch's *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* had been recently published (both in 1987), and the arguments at Stanford over the content of the Western Cultures course in 1987–88 had national and even international media coverage, most of it sensational and superficial. Although I imagine that few are nostalgic for the canon wars, they did represent a moment when the content of education was a political matter. Canadian intellectual Charles Cochrane's question—"what is to be the intellectual content of life, now that we have built the city, and it is no longer necessary to extend the frontiers?"⁵—captured some of that era's historical moment. The world was fully present; the multicultural city had taken shape; it was a time for reexamination of the content of humanities education. The canon wars themselves had at their core the new spatiality of literary and cultural study: no longer could a self-contained England, United States, or

“West” be held unproblematically as the location of culture. Post-colonial critique, though not always referred to as such, in the work of Said, Bhabha, Spivak, and the Subaltern Studies group, was one of the intellectual resources that challenged given divisions of the world and its cultural productions. In the late 1980s, though, post-colonialism did not yet exist as a field: there were as yet no MLA job listings in post-colonial literature or theory. Cultural Studies, well established in the UK and in Australia, was another way beyond the canon, and it had by the late 1980s made its first US inroads, though the Illinois conference and the subsequent Routledge Cultural Studies anthology were still a few years away. In its US incarnation, Cultural Studies represented the political turn, but eclectically: it included the turn to popular culture and to identity politics of various kinds and was, as Jameson suggested, a “desire” more than a field.⁶ Such were the broader intellectual currents at the time that the World Literature and Cultural Studies group began to organize itself.

The canon wars, and the emergence of post-colonial and cultural studies, were new challenges to disciplinarity, particularly the centrality of English departments in literary studies. The University of California at Santa Cruz—significantly, perhaps, a university without an English department—was a pioneering US site for the formation of new constellations of knowledge: its History of Consciousness department was one of the earliest interdisciplinary ventures in the US humanities. Interdisciplinarity has also characterized the work of the contributors to this volume, and in Santa Cruz it has a long history. The University of California Santa Cruz Group for the Critical Study of Colonial Discourse, formed in 1984, consisted of James Clifford, from the History of Consciousness department, and a group of graduate students, mostly from that department, including Lisa Bloom, Vivek Dhareshwar, Vince Diaz, Ruth Frankenberg, Deborah Gordon, Caren Kaplan, Lata Mani, Chela Sandoval, and others. It sponsored reading groups, colloquia, and conferences, including “Feminism and Colonial Discourse” (Spring 1987), “Predicaments of Theory” (February 1989), “Re-thinking the Political” (November 1989), “Displacements, Migrations, Identities” (March 1990), and many more. The university’s Center for Cultural Studies grew out of that group’s work and was formed in 1988 with Jim Clifford as its founding

6. Fredric Jameson, “On Cultural Studies.” *Social Text* 34 (1993), pp. 17–52.

7. John Guillory, "Canon, Syllabus, List: A Note on the Pedagogic Imaginary," *Transition*, 52 (1991), pp. 36-54.

director. The Center offered no courses and had no curricular or pedagogical function, but was meant to be a coherent intellectual presence, and its intellectual projects have shaped the work of many on the University of California Santa Cruz campus. It has hosted multiple visits, and focused on writing, by every contributing author in this volume, and the Center has remained an important location for trans-disciplinary, worlded work.

In the United States today, Cultural Studies is recognized as a scholarly orientation—there are at least two professional organizations with that name—but there are few Cultural Studies departments, and its main practitioners don't always agree on what it is or should be. That undefined, contestatory character can be a strength and a weakness. Though the US version of Cultural Studies would come to be caricatured from the right as a late version of identity politics, resistance-saturated pop culture celebration, or PC-delirious anti-Westernism, and from the left as a dumbed-down multi-disciplinarity that well served the agenda of cutback-hungry bureaucratization, or as a de-politicizing embrace of mass-mediated cultural forms, late-1980s Cultural Studies in the United States still had the promise of the anti-discipline, a way to do work that was clear in its political agenda and that performed the immanent critique of the disciplinary, historiographical, and geographical limits to critical projects.

It seemed possible, in the 1980s, that Cultural Studies' arrival in the United States might lead to the formation of new majors and departments, as it had in the UK and Australia. For a variety of reasons, that did not happen, and in retrospect the failure to push for more widespread disciplinary institutionalization may have been a mistake. Cultural Studies did, however, become a force of disciplinary critique and auto-critique that had effects throughout the humanistic disciplines, and that was part of its attractiveness at Santa Cruz. Although Fredric Jameson used the term in a different register, the "desire" that was Cultural Studies at Santa Cruz was an orientation toward the new and the emergent: it never sought, in the counter-canonical logic analyzed by John Guillory and others,⁷ to substitute one canon for another, or to be a home for identity politics, but rather to maintain a posture of unbounded inquiry toward the world. This was at the heart of the pedagogical mission as well. All "otherings" and disciplinary divides were subject to question: high and

mass culture, visual and literary, east and west, present and past. Sharon Kinoshita's essay in this volume, like much of the work she did as an early member of the group, was aimed at a critique of presentism, an examination of the ideological work done by the isolation of a period—in her case the medieval period—from the historical continuum.

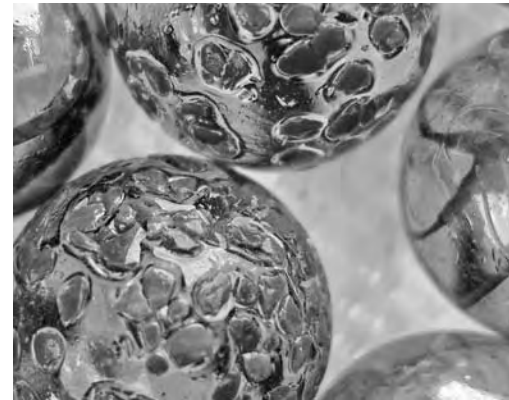
“World” at Santa Cruz was fundamentally a critical category. Edward Said had used the term in a widely cited essay—“The World, the Text, and the Critic”—that registered the nature of text's presence in the world. Said's “world” was a counterpoint to 1970s criticism's turning away from the world and toward the “text,”⁸ and his essay was also an exhortation against a hyper-disciplinary monocentrism. By the late 1980s, though, the pure text had lost some of its power, and no critical position openly turned away from a certain worldedness.

But Santa Cruz's “world” was also always geographical. The World Literature and Cultural Studies publicity material featured world maps—a Eurasia-centered version of the Gall-Peters projection—and while its curriculum could not offer global coverage, it refused to let only the West serve as a vantage point on the world. Louis Chude-Sokei's essay in this volume is typical of the reframing of the vantage point: the cowboy western, and western violence, are viewed from Jamaica, in a way that privileges Jamaican political and cultural specificity and shows us the travels of generic forms. “World” at Santa Cruz was resolutely material, and the import of that materiality was expressed in 2001 by Edward Said, in a special issue of the *PMLA* on “Globalizing Literary Studies,” maintaining the importance not of synthesis and the transcendence of opposites but of the role of geographic knowledge in keeping one grounded, literally, in the often tragic structure of social, historical, and epistemological contests over territory—this includes nationalism, identity, narrative, and ethnicity—so much of which informs the literature, thought, and culture of our time.⁹

Santa Cruz's world was before “globalization,” and it had none of the pretensions to comprehensiveness and historical finality that the latter term was to acquire. It was a point of reference, an imperative to expose one's field, one's object of inquiry, and one's project to the force of its limit points, to its historical character. As Kristin Ross, one of the group's founding faculty members, wrote of the Santa Cruz program:

8. Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 31–53.

9. Edward Said, “Globalizing Literary Study,” *PMLA* 116.1 (January 2001), pp. 64–68.



10. Kristin Ross 1993, p. 671 (see note 1).

11. Simon Gikandi, "Globalization and the Claims of Postcoloniality," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 100.3 (June 2001), pp. 627–658.

World in our title, then, was most of all a refusal: the refusal to allow our object of knowledge to be naturalized in advance, defined or delimited as either a unit of area studies or a particular historical period. Our closest model, we realized, was that of women's studies; for like women's studies we wanted to project an interdisciplinary coherence that was neither that of the historical period nor of the area study. The words "cultural studies," however, as my colleague Jose Saldivar points out, differentiate our effort from that of seeking to establish a discipline . . . As an antidisciplinary practice, cultural studies is a critical position that uses and interrogates the assumptions and principles of these modes of inquiry.¹⁰

This critical functioning of worldedness is evident in different ways in all of the essays collected here, which make visible new spatialities that, as Ross exhorts, refuse the areas given in advance and remind us of other spatial configurations, and of the political and ideological work done by all spatializations and temporal divisions.

And what of the word "literature"? The founding members were all faculty in the University of California Santa Cruz's literature department, but it could be said that "literature and" had within it some of the movement traced in Antony Easthope's book, *From Literary into Cultural Studies*, the expansion of the field of analysis to "cultural production" writ large, even including direct engagement with political movements. A June 2001 special issue of *South Atlantic Quarterly* entitled *Anglophone Literature and Global Culture*—an issue engaging in a programmatic, projective examination similar to the *PMLA* special issue mentioned above—takes the ongoing transformation of the English department for granted: under the sign of "globalization," the national-literature single-language dominant cannot survive unchanged. Literary and cultural studies engagement with the global, as described in Simon Gikandi's essay in that issue, led to the hegemony of post-colonial studies as the primary lens through which globalization is understood, and Gikandi is wary of some of the sacrifices made in this move, just as his essay also seeks to denaturalize the assumption that literature is indeed the best optic on globalization.¹¹ Susie O'Brien and Imre Szeman, the issue's editors, are neutral on this question

of the value of literary and cultural study for understanding globalization. They do, however, register the historical capacity of literary and cultural products to give a particular access to the social-historical totality and to articulate utopian desires, both of which are certainly indispensable for analysis of a historical period whose primary characteristic must be the unintelligibility and inaccessibility of its systemic workings.¹² This visionary and utopian dimension of the literary text has been an important component of World Literature and Cultural Studies at Santa Cruz, but there has been no rush here to de-fetishize or re-fetishize the literary text. There has been no explicit programmatic for or, in John Beverley's words, "against literature."¹³

World Literature and Cultural Studies never became a discipline, and its efforts were always more about scholarly community than defining a discipline. It had a critical relation to nation-based literature foci and was committed to its field imaginary, but it was not a movement to define a new discipline. Even the curricular project had largely a voluntarist character: the relative amorphousness of any US undergraduate curriculum meant that only those students who so chose would cultivate the modes of inquiry the program emphasized in its design. Post-colonialism and cultural studies, in their more programmatic forms, had a different discursive character: their auto-critiques, particularly within the United States, were coterminous with their discursive spread. Post-colonialism as disciplinary orientation, it seemed, couldn't proceed without protestations of its conceptual or disciplinary inadequacy, and even the field's harshest critics, such as Arif Dirlik, were accepted, often on the basis of their critiques, into the fold. This self-examination and auto-critique has no doubt been salutary, particularly for English departments. It might have been difficult for World Literature and Cultural Studies to emerge today, following on two decades of disciplinary self-reflexivity, and the rise to discursive hegemony of both globalization and post-colonialism. Self-reflexivity can be distracting, and in that sense the energy put into new pedagogical and disciplinary projects in the late 1980s, that age of "desire," appear refreshingly forward-looking. I believe that some of that energy is present in this volume.

12. Susie O'Brien and Imre Szeman, "Introduction: The Globalization of Fiction/The Fiction of Globalization," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 100.3 (June 2001), pp. 603-626.

13. John Beverley, *Against Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1993).

14. Kristin Ross, in *op. cit.*, used Jacques Rancière's figure of the ignorant schoolmaster to suggest a pedagogical model that would not be founded on the authority of the "one who knows."

The pedagogical orientation required when faced with a field as wide as "the world"—pedagogy, too, is fundamentally forward-looking—must proceed on humble footing.¹⁴ Its project is as transformative for the pedagogue as it is for the pupils. Meaghan Morris begins her essay in this volume with an anti-PC moment of sympathy with a critic calling for a turn in film studies away from the social and to the formal, to the real content of cinema that is cinema itself. But she cannot go there. Her turn to the pedagogical within her study of Bruce Lee's films is also the point of articulation with "the social":

In innumerable films opposing "fluid" to "rigid" styles of fighting . . . strong, flexible bodies to muscle-bound hulks, . . . humane to fascist authority, . . . and improvisational to mechanistic training, . . . the point of a pragmatic aesthetic pedagogy is always to shape a socially responsive as well as physically capable self that can handle new experiences—brutes and bullies, in these films, are inadaptive—and creatively engage with strangers.

This will to transformation marks the work of many of the contributors to this volume. Morris herself, a prominent public intellectual in Australia and a pioneering figure in Australian and international cultural studies, has for the last several years lived and taught at Lingnan University in Hong Kong, where her creative engagement with strangers is built on the deepest commitment to a new internationalism and to a decentering of US and European academic hegemony. Rob Wilson, trained as an Americanist at the University of California Berkeley English department, has, building on his work in Hawaiian and Pacific Island literatures, made important links and engagements with East Asia, teaching in Taiwan and South Korea and writing on film and cultural politics there. Neither Morris nor Wilson is trained in Asian languages, and their impressive projects of self-education and geographical transformation, coupled with the humility that comes with the willingness to be a novice again, are integral to their pedagogical politics.

Many in the volume have crossed disciplinary or field boundaries. David Palumbo-Liu's first book was in classical Chinese poetry, and he later moved to Asian-American studies, social science discourse, and

beyond. Sharon Kinoshita was trained in and remains a medievalist, but has from within medievalism challenged the ideologies of the geographical and temporal othering of medievalism. Her 2006 book, *Cross Purposes: Cultural Contact and Feudal Crisis in Medieval French Literature* (University of Pennsylvania), is one of the most interesting among a small number of books that through the medieval effect a fundamental reordering of our thinking about the concept of the West. Kuan-Hsing Chen was trained in a US Communications department and wrote a dissertation on poststructuralist theory, but has devoted much of his later work to the idea of Asia, and Asian cultural, economic, and political sovereignty. James Clifford, whose first academic position was in History of Consciousness and thus never had a disciplinary limit from which to move on, has—like Morris, Wilson, and other contributors to this volume—been a living example of a scholarly life without disciplinary or spatial limits.

The student reader of this volume—and I hope there are many—is given a variety of new spatialities with which to think and imagine: a medieval world that is a temporal and spatial construct; the internationalities of those most root-bound, the indigenous, and of the Sixties national revolutionaries; the nature of US worldedness, and the particular character of its intellectual, military, and political presence beyond its borders. The reader finds unexpected *combinatoires* such as Jamaica and the Wild West, suburban Seattle and Hong Kong, or the United States and imperial Rome. Will there be a moment in the student's development when it all comes together, when "the world" clicks into visibility and comprehension, when its seams and divisions, its connections and rhumb lines, its systematicity are clear enough so that every new object of scholarly, literary, or aesthetic encounter finds a place in the comprehended totality? The world, unfortunately, doesn't allow that. A worlded pedagogy, while hoping to avoid the anxiety of *presque-vu* or paranoia, is never complete. Mastery is not the goal. But the new spatialities and temporalities traced here might help to continue to produce students who, while not at home in the world, are productively strangers in it, and have a better idea of what questions to ask and where to go for them.



1

Indigenous Articulations

James Clifford

... l'indépendance, c'est de bien calculer les inter-dépendences.

—Jean-Marie Tjibaou

New Caledonia is a rather long island, about three hundred miles end to end, and never more than fifty wide. Its spine is mountainous, with transverse valleys running to the sea. In 1850 about thirty distinct language groups occupied these separate valleys—a classic Western Pacific social ecology. A century and a half later, much has changed. New Caledonia is a settler colony, once the site of a French penitentiary, now a nickel-mining center, with a long history of violent displacements of the indigenous people. Since the Sixties, there has been an intensification of resistance to French rule, in the name of a more or less unified aboriginal population who have appropriated the colonizers' name for generic natives, *canaques* (but capitalized, with a new spelling: *Kanak*s).

The surviving language groups and custom areas on the island engage in a complex politics of alliance and competition within and outside this new political identity. French is the lingua franca. The Kanak movement, since the Seventies, has made real trouble, both for the relatively liberal French authorities and for the more entrenched whites on the island. The result is a growing economic and political autonomy for the overwhelmingly indigenous northern province, and a very slow return of expropriated lands.

I can't go into the countercurrents and future uncertainties of this simultaneously post- and neo-colonial situation. I only want to bring up one aspect of the *modus vivendi*, which I'm tempted to call "indigenous commuting." (The older meanings of the word "commute," by the way, have to do with exchanging, bartering, changing, mitigating . . .)

Most of New Caledonia's white and Pacific-mix populations live in and around the capital city, Noumea, near the rather barren southern



end of the island. Most indigenous life is located elsewhere, to the north and east in fertile mountain valleys. When I was in New Caledonia in the late Seventies, I was taken around one of these northern habitats, Hienghène, by Jean-Marie Tjibaou, who was then in the process of becoming the Kanak movement's most prominent spokesman. Tjibaou was Mayor of Hienghène, and he was involved in the return of his clan to ancestral lands that had for more than a half-century been forcibly alienated by colonial cattle ranchers.

Tjibaou lived in Noumea, where he had political work to do, but he was able to travel regularly to Hienghène for meetings, ceremonies, and family business, using the road system put in place by the French. It was about a six-hour drive. Tjibaou, who had spent most of his last twenty years away from the valley of his birth, was comfortable in more than one place. And yet there was no doubt in his mind where he belonged. He deeply believed that a continuous relationship with a place—its ancestors, history, and ecology—was necessary if Kanaks were to feel *à l'aise*, if they were to find breathing room in the contemporary world. (Tjibaou 1996) The restoration of lost lands has always been a crucial goal of Kanak insurgency.

Among New Caledonia's Melanesians there is no mass tendency to exodus from rural villages into swelling cities, either on or off the island. A significant Kanak urban population resides in and around Noumea, the political and commercial capital. But there's a lot of coming and going. And studies have confirmed that older patterns of mobility persist in the migrations and circulation linking tribe and town. (Hamelin 2000, Naepels 2000) When I first noticed this mobility, I was struck by a homology of scale between pre- and post-colonial lifeways. People used to walk from village to village, from one end of a valley to the other, on various social, economic, and political errands. It took a day or two. Today, using the automotive infrastructure, it takes a day or two to traverse the length of the island, to visit and return. People still travel, circulate, and manage to be home when it matters. *Plus ça change . . .*

All of this raises some key issues for our discussions today:

1. How is “indigeneity” both rooted in and routed through particular places? How shall we begin to think about a complex dynamic of local landedness and expansive social spaces? Should we think of a continuum of indigenous and diasporic situations? Or is there a specifically indigenous kind of diasporism? A lived dialectic of urban *and* rural? Life on and off the reservation? Island *and* mainland native experiences? There are real tensions, to be sure, along the indigenous continuum of locations. But as Murray Chapman’s extensive research on “circulation” in the Solomon Islands and beyond suggests, we should be wary of binary oppositions between home and away, or a before/after progress from village life to cosmopolitan modernity. (Chapman 1978; 1991) As we try to grasp the full range of indigenous ways to be “modern,” it’s crucial to recognize patterns of visiting and return, of desire and nostalgia, of lived connections across distances and differences.
2. Relations between “edge” and “center.” How should we conceive of an expansive indigenous region: a “Native Pacific”? What traditions and practices allow one to feel rooted without being localized, kept small? I always think of Black Elk, the Sioux shaman and Catholic catechist, traveling as a young man with Buffalo Bill in Paris (a stop Tjibaou would later make on a different indigenous detour). Black Elk says something like: Harney Peak (in the North Dakota Badlands) is the center of the world. And wherever you are can be the center of the world. How do moving people take their roots with them, as “rooted cosmopolitans” in Kwame Anthony Appiah’s phrase? (Appiah 1998, p. 91) And are there specifically indigenous kinds of homes away from home?
3. Which raises the question of just how expansive notions of indigenous or native affiliation can become before they begin to lose specificity and fall into more generalized “post-colonial” discourses of displacement. We find ourselves occupying the sometimes fraught borderland (not, I will argue, a sharp line) between “indigenous” and “diasporic” affiliations and identities. I hope we will actively inhabit and explore, not flee from, the mutually constitutive tension of indigenous and diasporist visions and experiences. We will need to wrestle both with

the seductions of a premature, postmodern pluralism and with the inescapable dangers of exclusivist self/other definitions.

Considering a “Native Pacific Cultural Studies on the Edge,” we necessarily turn our attention to indigenous dynamism, interaction, dwelling-in-travel. But it will be equally important to remember that being “native” in a more than local sense does not mean sacrificing non-negotiable attachments to a place, or places—the grounding that helps one feel at home in a world of complex interdependencies. Black Elk took Harney Peak along when he went to Paris. Moreover, the example of “Kanak commuting” I began with may also help remind us that the “edge” of a Native Pacific isn’t always “out there” thousands of miles from the island centers. In New Caledonia, Noumea marks the powerful “edge” of a particular Native Pacific. The city has long been a white enclave. But it’s an edge that has come to be in contact, back and forth, with “*la tribu*” (landed sites of *la coutume*, customary life). For Tjibaou and many of his compatriots it has never been a matter of choosing one *or* the other, tradition or modernity, but of sustaining a livable interaction while struggling for power.

Being “*a l’aise*” with the contemporary world, *as a Kanak*, meant living and working both in villages and cities. The indigenous cultural politics Tjibaou espoused took shape in landmark events like the 1975 festival, Mélanésie 2000—whose name invoked a dynamic *future*. The festival operated at many levels: a revival and public intertribal exchange of traditional stories, dances, alliances; an emerging articulation of “Kanak” identity at the level of New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands; a manifestation of an expansive “Melanesian” culture for European New Caledonia, for neo-colonial France, for other Pacific nations, and for international bodies like the United Nations. Tjibaou insisted that the Cultural Center he envisaged (now, after his tragic 1989 assassination, named after him) needed to be located in the hostile settler-colonial city, Noumea. The politics of cultural and political identity, as he saw it, always worked the boundaries. And as Alban Bensa has shown, the Centre Culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou is, in its spatial design, an articulated ensemble, juxtaposing and connecting, not without tensions, *la coutume* with the transnational world of art and culture. (Bensa 2000)



So as we consider Native Pacific lives on the “edge,” in places like Auckland, Oakland, Los Angeles, etc., we can remember that the edges, the traversed and guarded frontiers of a dynamic native life, are not to be found only out here in places like California (riding the rim of the Pacific plate, as Vince Diaz always reminds us). Edges and borders cross-cut the region, defining different conjunctures: local, national, and regional; urban, rural, and in-between; colonial, neo-colonial, post-colonial.

This brings me to my central point about “indigeneity” today—its “articulated” nature. I’ll be exploring some of the advantages and limits of articulation theory for an emergent “Native Pacific Cultural Studies,” weighing the possibilities of translating notions like articulation and diaspora from their North Atlantic locations into the spaces and histories of the Pacific. Others will certainly have more to say about the specific paths, pitfalls, and detours of cultural studies in the Pacific—unfinished routes of what, following Edward Said (1983), we can call “traveling theories.”

For clarity’s sake, at the outset let me make some rather sharp distinctions, oppositions I’ll need to blur later on. The notion of *articulated sites of indigeneity* rejects two claims often made about today’s tribal movements. On the one hand, articulation approaches question the assumption that indigeneity is essentially about primordial, transhistorical attachments (ancestral “laws,” continuous traditions, spirituality, respect for Mother Earth, etc.). Such understandings miss the pragmatic, entangled, contemporary forms of indigenous cultural politics. On the other hand, articulation theory finds it equally reductive to see indigenous, or First Nations, claims as the result of a post-Sixties, “postmodern” identity politics (appeals to ethnicity and “heritage” by fragmented groups functioning as “invented traditions” within a late-capitalist, commodified multiculturalism). This viewpoint brushes aside long histories of indigenous resistance and transformative links with roots prior to and outside the world system. We must, I think, firmly reject these simplistic explanations—while weighing the partial truth each one contains.

To think of indigeneity as “articulated” is to recognize the *diversity* of cultures and histories that currently make claims under this banner.

What exactly unites Hawaiians (whose history includes a monarchic state) and much smaller Amazonian or New Guinea groups? What connects Pan-Mayan activists with US tribal gaming operations? What allies the new Inuit autonomous province of Nunavut with Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander land-claims (rather than with, say, the similar strong regionalisms of Catalonia, or perhaps what's emerging in Scotland or Wales)? What do “tribal” peoples in India have in common with the Fijian Great Council of Chiefs?

I do not think we can arrive at a core list of essential “indigenous” features. The commonality is more historically contingent, though no less real for all that. Indigenous movements are positioned, and potentially but not necessarily connected, by overlapping histories and struggles with respect to Euro-American, Russian, Japanese, and other imperialisms. They all contest the power of assimilationist nation-states, making strong claims for autonomy, or various forms of sovereignty. In recent decades, positive discourses of indigenous commonality have emerged, drawing together this range of historical predicaments. I'm thinking of the various pan-Indian, pan-Aboriginal, pan-Mayan, indigenous “Arctic” movements, as well as an expanding network of Fourth World coalitions. The discourses are also propagated through the United Nations, NGO, and tourist networks. Thus today, a number of expansive ideologies express positive notions of “indigenesness,” ideas that in turn feed back into local traditions.

To see such chains of equivalence (which must always downplay or silence salient differences) as articulated phenomena is not to view them as inauthentic or “merely” political—invented or opportunistic. Articulation as I understand it evokes a deeper sense of the “political”—productive processes of consensus, exclusion, alliance, and antagonism that are inherent in the transformative life of all societies.



I will take up the strengths and limits of articulation theory a bit later. But first I want to raise some broad historical issues, identifying features that distinguish Island Pacific contexts from those in which North Atlantic cultural studies tools have been hammered out. And I hasten to add

that I'm not pleading "Pacific exceptionalism," but highlighting salient differences within a connected, open-ended history of the late twentieth century. The point is to locate Pacific histories in relation to global forces, not outside them, and not in a predetermined condition that must forever play catch-up to linear Progress.

The timing of decolonization (an uneven, unfinished process) in the region is critical. Changes in formal political sovereignty generally came to the Pacific in the 1970s and 1980s—a couple of decades after the clustered postwar experiences of African or South Asian independence. Decolonization is, of course, not an all-or-nothing, once-and-for-all transition; and long, ongoing histories of resistance and accommodation, of unlinking and relinking with imperial forces, need to be kept in view. But the national independence movements of the 1950s and 1960s represent an epochal moment in this process and as such retain a certain normative status.

Pacific decolonizations encounter a rather different historical situation, with altered constraints and possibilities (Firth 2000). Since the 1960s, for example, the notion that political independence under the leadership of nationalizing elites would lead to liberation and social justice has been pretty definitively exploded, particularly for local or tribal peoples. In many parts of the world today nation-state affiliations no longer seem, so unambiguously, the royal road to a better future.

Moreover, the capitalist world system has been going through some important mutations, beginning in the early 1970s and emerging as what's variously called flexible accumulation, late capitalism, post-Fordism, or postmodernity (Jameson 1984, Harvey 1990, Ong 1998). As a result, the very idea, the rallying cry, of independence seems increasingly to have quotation marks placed around it. For Jean-Marie Tjibaou "independence" and "interdependence" were inseparable. Thus sovereignty could never be separatist, an end in itself: "It's sovereignty that gives us the right and the power to negotiate interdependencies. For a small country like ours, independence means reckoning interdependencies well." (Tjibaou 1996, p. 179) The notion of sovereignty, control over borders, over culture, over economy, is complicated by the fact that today no nation, not even the

most powerful, efficiently governs its economy, frontiers, and cultural symbols. You can't keep out illegal immigrants, drugs, Coca-Cola and Michael Jordan. Or Bob Marley: the articulation of reggae with indigenous projects in the Pacific and elsewhere is a resonant, if unorganized, form of "globalization from below" (Brecher, Costello, and Smith 2000). Moreover, since movements of people across borders are dramatic and often non-linear, experiences of identity and citizenship are complexly parceled out. Families may be organized in long-distance patterns. Indeed, one can be born and live in Los Angeles, Salt Lake City, or Auckland and yet be deeply connected to Hawai'i, to Tonga, to Samoa, to the Cook Islands. (Small 1997, Kauanui 1999) Such diasporic predicaments, the remittance economies they often reflect, and the "commuting" (exchanging, changing, mitigating) they entail, are facilitated by technologies of air travel, the Internet, videos, etc. . . . If people in the Pacific have occupied large spaces with canoes, why can't they dwell with airplanes and the Web?

Of course, transnational dynamics have long existed. But their salience for the cultural politics of decolonization was not at all clear in the 1950s and 1960s. Then, a modernist vision of nationhood held sway, a vision of drawing lines around particular territories and building imagined communities inside. Nation-building in ethnically complex territories—making "Nigerians" or "Indonesians," for example—involved reducing or opposing retrograde "tribalisms." The nation-state alone could be progressive. Nation-state projects are, of course, far from dead, but things are inescapably more ambiguous today. Revived, newly configured projects of the indigenous and the local pull against such modernizing attitudes. (As I write [2006], the multi-ethnic nation-state edifice seems especially rickety in places like Fiji, the Solomon Islands, and Indonesia.)

These developments reflect old and new "ethnic" antagonisms, traditional regional differences, as well as the pressures and opportunities of a capitalist world system. Theorists of globalization and postmodernity tend to see a newly "flexible" system actively making room for, and to a degree commodifying, the politics of localism, identity, and culture. I would insist, however, on the phrase "to a degree." The partial entanglements of indigenous and local societies in global structures are not

simply the world system's unfinished business. They have their own dynamism. As much historically minded ethnography in the Pacific has shown, the contemporary movements around identity, *kastom*, and sovereignty continue to transform long histories of conflict and interaction. (For example: Dening 1980, White 1991, Finney 1994, Jolly 1994, Sahllins 1994, Bensa 1995, Thomas 1997)

This work converges with that of indigenous scholars (for example: Diaz 1993, Helu 1999, Hereniko 1995 and 2000, Teaiwa 2001) to trace sustained experiences of cultural survival, resistance, and innovation under changing circumstances of performance and alliance. Traditions articulate, selectively remember and connect pasts and presents. Indeed, as both Roy Wagner (1979, 1980) and Lilikala Kame'eleihiwa (1992) in their different ways affirm, the "past" in indigenous epistemologies is where one looks for the "future." The quotation marks suggest how a Western common-sense view of historical development, based on the opposition of tradition and modernity, is deconstructed in translation. Moreover, as Jonathan Friedman (1994) has argued, such dynamic traditions now find expanded room for political expression in the "ethnic" and "racial" spaces of a decentered West—sites of mobilization too quickly rounded up under the rubrics "multiculturalism" or "identity politics." (Clifford 2000) The increasingly strong tribal sovereignty movements of the 1980s and 1990s show, at least, that the current hegemony—call it neo-colonialism, postmodernity, globalization, Americanization, or neo-liberalism—is fractured, significantly open-ended. Very old cultural dispositions—historically re-routed by religious conversion, formations of race/ethnicity, communication technologies, new gender roles, capitalist pressures—are being actively remade.

Pacific decolonization struggles thus have their own temporalities and traditions. And because political decolonization comes to the Pacific when sovereignty is an increasingly compromised reality, we see the emergence of different forms of national identity, new sorts of negotiations among the local, the regional, the national, and the global. Compare the current process of "nation building" in Papua New Guinea with that in 1960s Africa. Consider new forms of federalism, of indigenous autonomy within partially liberalized settler regimes (New Caledonia, Aotearoa/



New Zealand). Consider the two Samoas. Or think of the different agendas proposed by advocates of Hawaiian sovereignty. Given a general loosening of the hyphen in the nation-state norm, it's revealing to compare questions of regionalism and nationalism in the Pacific with similar issues being worked out elsewhere, for example in the European Union. Comparisons of this sort can now be made without recourse to notions of margin and center, backward and advanced, notions that have, in the Western imaginary, long kept the Pacific "out there" and "back then."

Of course today's mobile capital and labor regimes can work through regions as well as—sometimes better than—nations. But region-making is not only a top-down process. Catalonia may make sense economically in the New Europe, but it responds also to long-standing cultural, linguistic, and political aspirations for autonomy, within and separate from Spain. There's often a bottom-up or ex-centric element to regional aspirations, a history deeper than postmodern spatial structures and financial networks. We're all familiar with Epeli Hau'ofa's resonant hope: that Pacific Islanders see themselves, and the spaces between their homelands, not as dots in a vast ocean but as relays in a sea of islands which they themselves create through old and new practices of travel, visiting, trade, and migration (Hau'ofa 1993). Hau'ofa connects old stories with modern situations, recognizing temporal overlays in a complexly contemporary space. Hau'ofa's sea of islands is not, of course, the "Pacific Rim," a regionalization based on capital flows with an empty center. (Connery 1994) It's a region cobbled together, articulated, from the inside out, based on everyday practices that link islands with each other and with mainland diasporas. Hau'ofa reaches back to voyaging canoes and, at the same time, tells stories about jumbo jets—about Tongans, Samoans, and Hawaiians going back and forth to Los Angeles, Auckland, and Salt Lake City. Like Paul Gilroy's "Black Atlantic" or emerging indigenous connections across the "Arctic," the Pacific "sea of islands" helps us conceptualize practices of subaltern region-making, realities invisible to more world-systemic, center-periphery models of globalization and locality.

Hau'ofa's Pacific mobilities reveal, unmistakably, a kind of indigenous cosmopolitanism (see also: Thaman 1985). Yet there's a paradox here, a rich

and sometimes difficult tension. For to recognize a specifically indigenous dialectic of dwelling and traveling requires more than simply unmaking the exoticist/colonialist concept of the homebody native, always firmly at home, in his or her place. I've learned a lot from island-savvy graduate students at the University of California Santa Cruz—Teresia Teaiwa, Vince Diaz, Kehaulani Kauanui, Pam Kido, Noelani Goodyear-Kaopua, Heather Waldroup, and April Henderson—about different lived experiences of roots and routes. To do justice to complex strategies of dwelling and traveling in the Native Pacific, and across its multiple edges, we need something rather different from the influential perspectives of Appadurai (1990) or Gupta and Ferguson (1992), crucial though their critiques of naturalized places, “cultures,” and “natives” have been. (For an engaged counterpoint see Teaiwa 2001.) The contrast between colonial fixity and post-colonial mobility, between indigenous roots and diasporic routes, can't be allowed to harden into an opposition or a before/after scenario in which cosmopolitan equals modern. When reckoning with traveling natives, if I can call them that, in the Pacific, this sort of categorization breaks down. We are left with a range of attachments to land and place—articulated, old/new traditions of indigenous dwelling and traveling.



Let me now focus more directly on how articulation theory helps us understand all this. What are its limits? Where does it need to be adapted, customized? The politics of articulation for Stuart Hall is, of course, an updating of Gramsci (Hall 1986a, b; Slack 1996). It understands frontier-effects, the lining up of friends and enemies, us and them, insiders and outsiders, on one side or another of a line, as tactical. Instead of rigid confrontations—civilized and primitive, bourgeois and proletarian, white and black, men and women, West and Third World, Christian and pagan, etc.—one sees continuing struggles across a terrain, portions of which are captured by different alliances, hooking up and unhooking particular elements. There's a lot of middle ground, and many political and cultural positions are not firmly anchored on one side or the other but are contested and up for grabs.

The term “articulation,” of course, suggests discourse or speech—but never a self-present, “expressive” voice and subject. Meaningful discourse

is a cutting up and combining of linguistic elements, always a selection from a vastly greater repertoire of semiotic possibilities. So an articulated tradition is a kind of collective “voice,” but always in this constructed, contingent sense. In another register—outside the domain of language with its orders of grammar and speech, structure and performance—“articulation” refers to concrete connections, joints. Stuart Hall’s favorite example is an “articulated lorry” (something that to us Americans sounds very exotic!). Something that’s articulated or hooked together (like a truck’s cab and trailer, or a sentence’s constituent parts) can also be unhooked and recombined. So when you understand a social or cultural formation as an articulated ensemble it does not allow you to prefigure it on an organic model, as a living, persistent, “growing” body, continuous and developing through time. An articulated ensemble is more like a political coalition or, in its ability to conjoin disparate elements, a cyborg. While the possible elements and positions of a sociocultural ensemble are historically imposed, constraints which can be quite persistent over time, there is no eternal or natural shape to their configuration.

Articulation offers a non-reductive way to think about cultural transformation and the apparent coming and going of “traditional” forms. All-or-nothing, fatal-impact notions of change tend to assume that cultures are living bodies with organic structures. So, for example, indigenous languages, traditional religions, or kinship arrangements may appear to be critical organs which if lost, transformed, or combined in novel structures should logically imply the organism’s death. You can’t live without a heart or lungs. But indigenous societies have, in fact, persisted with few (or no) native language speakers, as fervent Christians, and with “modern” family structures, involvement in capitalist economies, and new social roles for women and men. “Inner” elements have, historically, been connected with “exterior” forms, in processes of selective, syncretic transformation. When Jean-Marie Tjibaou (1996, p. 303), speaking both as a former priest and as an advocate of Kanak *coutume*, says that the Bible does not belong to Westerners (who seized it “passing through”), he is detaching and rearticulating European and Melanesian religious traditions.

The creation of unexpected political/religious ensembles, often in moments of colonial stress, is what first fascinated me about the Pacific when I worked on the linked “conversion” experiences of the missionary-ethnographer Maurice Leenhardt and Melanesian Protestants (Clifford 1982). Across the Pacific, people have attached themselves and their societies to parts of Christianity while rejecting or thoroughly transforming other elements. (The essays collected by John Barker, 1990, provide abundant examples—see *References list, end of this chapter.*) To a degree, it has been a matter of processing the new through dynamic traditional structures. This is the part of the story that Marshall Sahlins’s seminal work (for example 1985) has featured and made inescapable. But it cannot be the whole story: arguments for cultural continuity through structural transformation are most persuasive in earlier periods of commercial contact and need to be supplemented by other, more politically contingent processes, especially once regimes of colonial and now neo-colonial governmentality are in place. (Carrier 1992, p. 140, suggests a similar reservation.) The “cultural” continuity of indigenous societies has frequently been uneven, not guaranteed by a persistent, transformative structure. Since local traditions during the past two centuries have been violently disrupted, and inasmuch as new modes of individualism, universalism, exchange, and communication have restructured bodies, societies, and spaces, the traditions that indeed persist need to be seen as particular combinations of heterogeneous elements, old and new, indigenous and foreign. James Carrier’s (1992) explicit use of “articulation” to describe the historical relation of gift and commodity forms in Ponam Island society is exemplary in this regard. (See also Errington and Gewertz, 1991, on colonial, evangelical, and capitalist interactions in New Britain; and Tsing, 1999, on “articulations” of environmentalism in Malaysia and Indonesia.) Indigenous women’s movements weave together traditional and Christian roles, deploying the languages of “*kastom*” and anti-colonialism to grapple with patriarchal power at local, national, and international levels. (Molisa 1987; Jolly 1994) What emerges is a quite different picture from that of an authentic, ancient tradition holding out over the centuries by selectively integrating and rejecting external

pressures and temptations. (Diane Nelson's [1999] use of articulation theory in an analysis of large-scale indigenous mobilization in Guatemala offers a rich comparison, as does Alcida Ramos's [1998] account of entangled indigenous and national agendas in Brazil.)

In articulation theory, the whole question of authenticity is secondary, and the process of social and cultural persistence is political all the way back. It's assumed that cultural forms will always be made, unmade, and remade. Communities can and must reconfigure themselves, drawing selectively on remembered pasts. The relevant question is whether, and how, they convince and coerce insiders and outsiders, often in power-charged, unequal situations, to accept the autonomy of a "we." This seems to me a more realistic way of talking about what has been called cultural "invention."

Most people in this field are aware that the invention of tradition is much disputed in the Pacific. The storm around Alan Hanson's article on Maori traditions and Haunani-Kay Trask's categorical rejection of anthropological authority in works by Roger Keesing and Jocelyn Linnekin are the best-known cases. (Hanson 1989; Trask 1991; Keesing 1991; Linnekin 1991) The debate often came down to line-drawing between "insider" and "outsider" representations of indigenous cultures. And in this it expressed an appropriate de-centering (not necessarily a refutation) of non-Native expertise—a strong claim for the value of local historical accounts and oral traditions. But decolonizing struggles pitting anthropological against native authority have, at least in the short run, tended to obscure substantive historical issues.

How should differently positioned authorities (academic and non-academic, Native and non-Native) represent a living tradition's combined and uneven processes of continuity, rupture, transformation, and revival? My suggestions today about articulation contribute to an ongoing argument (and, I hope, a conversation) on these critical issues. I am not persuaded that "the invention of tradition" approach in the Pacific was essentially a matter of anthropologists, faced by new indigenous challenges, clinging to their professional authority to represent cultures and adjudicate authenticity. (Friedman 1993; for a more nuanced account of struggles

over “authenticity” see Wittersheim 1999.) That is certainly part of the story. But the notion of “invention” was also getting at something important, albeit in a clumsy way. The thinking of Roy Wagner (1980), deeply influenced in its structure by New Guinea poetics and politics, is a better source for the term’s non-reductive meanings than the usual reference, Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983). This prescient recognition of inventive cultural *process* has tended to be lost in the flood of analyses that demystify nationalist fictions and manipulations.

Recognizing this tendency, it seems to me that the notion of invention can be usefully rethought as a politics of articulation. We are on more concrete, because more dynamic, historical grounds. The whole notion of custom looks quite different when seen this way, when what Margaret Jolly (1992) has pointedly called “spectres of inauthenticity” are laid to rest. The question of what is borrowed from here or there, what is lost and rediscovered in new situations, can be discussed within the realm of normal political/cultural activity.



Articulation theory cannot account for everything. Pushed to extremes it can take you to a point where every cultural form, every structure or re-structuration, every connection and disconnection, has a radical contingency as if, at any moment, anything were possible. That is, in fact, a misreading of Stuart Hall on articulation. He is quite clear that the possible connections and disconnections are constrained at any historical moment. And indeed, certain forms and structural antagonisms persist over long periods. Yet these enduring forces—whether they be Christianity and capitalism or traditional cosmology and kinship—can be understood concretely only as they work through specific cultural symbols and political blocs. These are never guaranteed, but are actively produced and potentially challenged.

When thinking of differently articulated sites of indigeneity, one of the enduring constraints in the changing mix will always be landedness, or the power of place. This is a fundamental component of all tribal, First Nations identifications. Not everyone is equally on the move. Many people live where they have always lived, even as the habitat around

them goes through sometimes violent transformations. And as the scale of “tribal” and “national” existence alters dramatically, people living exiled from ancestral places often sustain and revive a yearning, an active memory of land. This grounding, however tenuous, offers a sense of depth and continuity running through all the ruptures and attachments, the effects of religious conversion, state control, new technologies, commodities, schooling, tourism, and so on. Indigenous forms of dwelling cover a range of sites and intensities: there are “Native” homebodies, commuters, travelers, and exiles. The desire called “the land” is differently, persistently active. Epeli Hau’ofa captures this desire in the vision of a displaced Tongan, raised in New Guinea, living in Fiji.

To deny human beings the sense of a homeland is to deny them a deep spot on Earth to anchor their roots. Most East Oceanians have Havaiki, a shared ancestral homeland that exists hazily in primordial memory. Every so often in the hills of Suva, when moon and red wine play tricks on an aging mind, I scan the horizon beyond Laucala Bay, the Rewa Plain, and the reefs by Nukulau Island, for Vaihi, Havaiki, homeland. It is there, far into the past ahead, leading on to other memories, other realities, other homelands. (Hau’ofa 2000, p. 470)

Land (*ples* in Vanuatu, “country” in Australia, *la tribu* in New Caledonia, etc.) signifies the past in the future, a continuous, changing base of political and cultural operations. Articulation theory, which sees everything as potentially realigned, cut and mixed, has difficulty with this material nexus of continuity. When a community has been living on an island for more than a thousand years, it’s not enough to say that its members’ claims to identity with a place are strategies of opposition or coalition in struggles with neighbors, or reactions to colonizing or world-systemic forces. It may be true and useful to say these things. But it’s not enough. (See Thomas 1997, pp. 11–15, for a discussion of these emphases and their appropriate tension.)

People aren’t, of course, always attached to a habitat in the same old ways, consistent over the centuries. Communities change. The land alters. Men and women speak and act differently, in new ways, on behalf of tradition and place. Senses of locale are expressed and felt through



continuously renegotiated insides and outsides. And yet . . . this historical sense of entangled, changing places doesn't capture the identity of ancestors with a mountain, for as long as anyone remembers and plausibly far beyond that. Old myths and genealogies change, connect and reach out, but always in relation to an enduring spatial nexus. This is the indigenous *longue durée*, the pre-colonial that tends to be lost in post-colonial projections. Thus indigenous claims always transcend colonial disruptions (including the posts and the neos): we were here before all that; we are still here; we will make a future here. (See too the exemplary statement by Alutiiq elder Barbara Shangin, quoted in Clifford 1997, p. 343, and 2000, p. 107.)

While recognizing this fundamental claim to a distinctly rooted history, I want to argue against rigid oppositions in defining the current array of indigenous experiences. We need to distinguish and also (carefully, partially) to connect "diasporism" and "indigenism." What's at stake is the articulation, the cobbling together, of "big enough" worlds: concrete lives led in specific circuits *between* the global and the local. We cannot lose sight of ordinary people sustaining relational communities and cosmologies: composite "worlds" that share the planet with others, overlapping and translating. An absolutist indigenism, where each distinct "people" strives to occupy an original bit of ground, is a frightening utopia. It would entail relocation and ethnic cleansing on an unimaginable scale: a denial of all the deep histories of movement, urbanization, habitation, re-indigenization, sinking roots, moving on, invading, mixing—the very stuff of human history. There must be, and in practice there are, many ways to conceive of "nativeness" in less absolute terms.

Nativism, the xenophobic shadow of indigeneity, values wholeness and separation, pure blood and autochthonous land. It denies the messy, pragmatic politics of articulation. Of course there's no shortage of violent examples in today's ethnically divided world to remind us of this ever-present tendency. But nationalist chauvinism, while a constant tendency, is not a necessary outcome of the new indigenisms. The articulated, rooted, *and* cosmopolitan practices I've been trying to sketch

here register more complex, emergent possibilities. (See also Childs 1993, 1998.) Indeed, this study is well-positioned to bring into view an extended range of ways to be “native.” (Diaz 1993, 1994; Kauanui 1999) The movements of Native Pacific people suggest newly inventive struggles for breathing space, for relational sovereignty, in post-/neo-colonial conditions of complex connectivity. They are about finding ways to exist *in* a multiplex modernity, but with a difference, a difference located in cultural tradition, in landedness, and in ongoing histories of displacement, travel, and circulation. As Hau’ofa suggests, an element of “diasporism,” of movement between places, is part of escaping belittlement—of becoming big enough, global enough. But he also stresses that this must not mean losing contact with specific ecologies, places, and “pasts to remember” (Hau’ofa 1993, 2000). Since indigenism and diasporism aren’t one-size-fits-all categories, we need to work toward a more nuanced vocabulary, finding concrete ways to represent dispersed *and* connected populations.

Native Pacific conditions are importantly different from those generating North Atlantic cultural studies. In my own work, I’ve found that when importing Stuart Hall or Paul Gilroy, Avtar Brah or Doreen Massey, into the Pacific, I’ve been made sharply aware of the Caribbean, South Asian, and British histories that lie behind their “worldings” (as Gayatri Spivak might put it). In these histories the “indigenous”—particularly in its stronger, autochthonous, First Nations version—makes no persistent claim. But if Black Atlantic and South Asian diaspora theory is to travel well in the Pacific, there needs to be a significant adaptation to a different map and history. Obviously I think such a theoretical translation can only be good for the unfinished project called “cultural studies.” (Indeed, as it’s developing in Australia, Aotearoa/New Zealand, and Canada, often under indigenous pressures, we can see new forms already emerging.) The provincialization of theory as a condition for its travel is crucial for a really cross-cultural, rooted and routed, cultural studies.

This will suggest, perhaps, my personal excitement at feeling myself simultaneously displaced and recruited by an emerging Native Pacific Cultural Studies.

Conclusion

In closing let me return briefly to New Caledonia and Jean-Marie Tjibaou for a glimpse of an articulated, rooted, and mobile indigenous world. I've said that Tjibaou took me around Hienghène, his home in the north of the island. He had left for more than twenty years, to be trained as a Catholic priest. Now that he had quit the church and his clan was moving to occupy expropriated ancestral lands, he returned as a Kanak activist.

Northeast New Caledonia has steep green valleys, with mountainous outcroppings—every cliff and stone holding ancestral significance. The Kanak villages often occupy rising ground, with symbolic trees, palms, and special plants laid out in a very beautiful, orderly way.

We were in one of these villages near Hienghène, reclining on the lawn, talking and just feeling comfortable looking out through the trees. Earlier I had been inside several of the village houses, concrete structures mostly bare with perhaps a few newspaper clippings stuck haphazardly on the wall. I was puzzled and asked Tjibaou: Look at this village, beautifully set in this valley, everything so aesthetically arranged. Yet inside the houses it's bare. . . .

We talked it over, agreeing that here, after all, people don't spend a lot of time indoors. Then suddenly my guide made a sweep with his hand that took in the village, the valley, and the mountains: "*Mais, c'est ça la maison.*" But that's the house.

Tjibaou's sweep of the hand—including so much within his Kanak house—expressed a deep sense of being centered in a village and a valley. This feeling of belonging, of being in scale with the world, was fundamental to Tjibaou's hope that Kanaks might find ways to feel *à l'aise*, at home, in the twenty-first century.

And in the intervening years, as I've read more of Tjibaou's political, ethnographic, and personal writings—now collected in a superb volume, *La Présence Canaque*—I've come to think his gesture was taking in even more. Beyond the Hienghène Valley he certainly included New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands where a composite "Kanak" identity was emerging in political struggle. But didn't he also embrace the Pacific sea of

islands—a wider world of cultural exchanges and alliances that were always critical for Tjibaou’s thinking about independence as interdependence? And neo-colonial France—whose religion and civilization, for better and worse, still contribute to the Kanak house? And—in a new indigenous articulation—the world?



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2

Learning from Bruce Lee: Pedagogy and Political Correctness in Martial Arts Cinema

Meaghan Morris

Film is a mirror, not of reality, but of the act of regarding it.

—Sam Rohdie, “Sixth Form Film Teaching in Hong Kong”

Set the images all in your head. Then believe them.
And know it can't be stopped.

—Bruce Lee, *No Retreat No Surrender*

In recent years I've been troubled by the return of a ploddingly sociological approach to cinema in academic as well as media criticism.* By “plodding,” I don't mean a sociology which goes out to explore the dense social contexts of film consumption today; in cinema as distinct from television studies, we've had very little of that. I mean a strictly armchair way of seeing or not-seeing films which first views them as evidence of some social or political mess, then treats them as guilty stand-ins for that mess—and wages a war of attitude on other viewers.

In the early 1990s, neo-conservative rhetoricians gave a catchy new name to this and other long-established modes of public cultural activism: “political correctness.” Outlasting the furor it created on campus, the term passed into ordinary language where it continues to thrive today. Now, whatever one thinks of the diverse attitude wars and thorny institutional issues mashed together as “PC” by the myth tanks clearing the way for George Bush, Sr., in the United States and then Prime Minister

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1. On the controversy surrounding Dennis O'Rourke's *The Good Woman of Bangkok*, a fictionalized documentary about the white Australian director's love for a Thai prostitute, see the dossier of debate included in Berry, Hamilton, and Jayamanne (1997). See References list at the end of the essay.

2. Dr. George Miller is the Australian director of the *Mad Max* trilogy, along with numerous Hollywood films including *The Witches of Eastwick*, *Lorenzo's Oil*, and *Babe: Pig in the City*.



John Howard in Australia (my own views on PC matters are quite mixed), it is the case that a hissing moral outrage has greeted just about every decent film of recent years, from *Silence of the Lambs* and *Natural Born Killers* to *Romper Stomper* and *The Heartbreak Kid*. But the hissing comes from all sides, and the outrage is not new. That puritan fear of the aesthetic which damned the theatre in the eighteenth century and warned in the nineteenth that novel-reading would addle women's brains has now given us film critics who can't see any difference between *The Lion King* ("Orientalism," racism) and *The Good Woman of Bangkok*.¹

Troubled by this but also provoked, made to think about my own basic values, I've often wanted to mass-distribute copies of Dr. George Miller's short film, *Violence in the Cinema, Part 1* (1972).² Thirty years ago, in another time of anxiety about the power of representation, *Violence in the Cinema* presented two arguments about the "effects" of violent films. One was a lecture delivered by a social expert onscreen. The other was the lesson of the film itself; as I remember it, the speaker's body starts exploding and splattering in the visual field until his head comes off, while on the soundtrack his voice drones on, lucid, boring, relentlessly making sense. The combination explained more vividly than anything else I've seen the fact that cinema involves film-making, make-believe, an aesthetic situation. Violence in the cinema lets you have a talking-headless lecturer. Violence in the classroom doesn't.

Of course I'm not alone when I recoil from the moralistic sampling of film themes, scenes, and bits of dialogue which now prevails from the newspaper op-ed page to the cultural studies textbook. Just reading around my neighborhood I find Adrian Martin (1998, p. 28) renewing the topic of cinophilia ("an experience of the *materiality* of the medium, something quite beyond literary abstractions of theme. . .") and Lesley Stern (1995, p. 220) reaffirming the fiercely aesthetic over "movies which merely elicit recognition" and "reproduce boring and often nasty social relations." The most uncompromising restatement of critical principles I've come across, however, is an essay by Sam Rohdie (1995b) on "Sixth Form Film Teaching in Hong Kong."

First given as a talk to teachers in response to a film syllabus more focused on society than cinema, Rohdie's essay spells out some classic tenets of film formalism. Filmmakers are expert in the cinema, not social theory; film worlds are fictional, they are realms of fantasy and desire in which the process of make-believe itself is of central concern; and the "worthy issues" we call social themes are often alibis for what really moves us in the cinema, "the wonderful asocial wish to do whatever you please" (1995b, p. 5). In short, films reflect on looking, not reality at large: "the cinema, primarily, is not a commentary on life, but a commentary on cinema" (p. 8).

I am always moved and delighted by these principles, founding as they do a vocation on the necessity for critics to do what pleases *us* most, namely, commenting on cinema. Rohdie expounds them beautifully; I share his belief that aesthetics is fundamental to film teaching, and faced with the syllabus he describes I would have argued, with far less dexterity, much the same thing. Yet something here troubles me, too. Rohdie's is a *too* fundamentalist take on film interpretation. In its impulse to purify cinema of worthy concerns ("they take us away from the film") and to cast the dreaming individual Oedipus ("you can sleep with your mother, murder your father. . .") as the ideal film spectator, his pedagogy restores and renders absolute those great divides between "art" and "society," "fiction" and "reality," which the social critic, a bad film spectator, all too flatly denies. In doing so it precludes, say, Stern's more questioning exploration of a phantasmatic "connection" between films and other realities, perhaps between spectators: for Stern (1995, p. 219) "movies are not imaginary; they constitute part of my (our?) daily life." And it has little in common with Martin's (1997, p. 223) loving acceptance of all that cinema is: the "boring and nasty in conventional narrative film," he notes, is "maybe 99.9% of cinema as we know it."

Compared with an aesthetics of connection and porous subjectivity, Rohdie's is a hard-edged modernism in which art is an autonomous realm of freedom. Like dreams, he says in another essay, the cinema is not bound by the social any more than "Bruce Lee or Jackie Chan can be

kept still, confined by a banal goodness, the dull gestures of an everyday reality” (Rohdie 1995a, p. 27), even when such banality is the “message” of their films. In this understanding, “cinema” is always less than the films that are its medium. You subtract the dross (themes, issues, messages) to touch the aesthetic spirit. Before modernism, the Romantics called this spirit “Imagination”—and its muse or vehicle they called “Inspiration.”

This is powerful stuff. Policed as we are these days by a code of truth to Experience—a mutation of another Romantic principle—many people do long for some untrammelled talk about art. I’m one of them. Yet in being provoked, made to think, by PC criticism (let me use that abusive term for a while), I’ve also come to accept that a purist aesthetic ignores not only too much cinema but also 99.9% of the ways in which films matter to people, both in and out of school. Since the “art” and “reality,” formalism and Marxism debates of the early 1970s (not to mention the 1920s), forests have died to promote the model of representation staged by *Violence in the Cinema* in a few hilarious minutes, and the theory of the imaginary shaping Rohdie’s elegant text. Yet all that writing falls beside today’s controversies; it comes close, then misses the point.

Something has changed. In spite of the publicity accorded a few sensually challenged persons who see violation in each beautiful body displayed—to the joy and solace of the rest of us—in public advertising space, in spite of efforts to blame videos for massacres and violent crime (Barker and Petley, 1997), in spite of all the rote deconstructions of race-class-gender-sexuality coming off the cultural studies presses: denying the imaginary is not what the fuss is about these days. Most PC critics, whether we are students, teachers, community activists, or casually interested citizens, know all about the differences between fiction and other realities. Rather, it is the very power of art and imagination—more exactly, a politics of *gaining access* to some of the freedom and power to make-believe—that is now at stake.

A Make-Believe World: No Retreat No Surrender

Such power is explicitly at work, as Rohdie teaches us, in the most formally banal cinema. Take a scene from Corey Yuen’s roughly made, badly

acted, and (re-released on tape) barely visible but immortal US martial arts classic, *No Retreat No Surrender* (1985).³ Nothing artistically transcendent here, plenty of nasty social relations. Late one night in suburban Seattle, a bruised and dejected white boy—the Outsider, the new kid in town—sinks down to rest in the shrine he’s reconstructed in an empty house after a tearing fight with his father. His black sidekick, “R.J.,” has gone home. Sad, tired, lonely, resentful of his wounded father’s cowardice, shamed himself as an incompetent fighter in front of his would-be girlfriend, Jason Stilwell (Kurt McKinney) takes comfort from the icons around him, settles under the covers of a Bruce Lee book, and gently falls asleep.⁴

In the murk on screen we glimpse the stuff of his dreams. This boy’s inner life is made of film stills. Stills, and the forms they give to other Bruce Lee paraphernalia: books, magazines, a huge poster restored from its shredding at the hands of Jason’s father, and, extending the icon’s power into the bodily everyday, props for becoming like Bruce Lee: sandbags, a wooden man, ropes. More than an expression of fandom, this place is a *sanctum* for an ideal which is—however kitsch, suburban, crass, narcissistic, exploitative, American, cartoonish, tacky (pick an insult from any pile of reviews)⁵—aesthetically shaped and ethically practical. It is also, in this scene, furtive, relegated to secret, childish places: wildlife in suburbia.

Even harder for critics to deal with unhysterically, the handling of spirituality in this and many other US martial arts films is humorous, and self-parodying too. We’re invited to laugh and groan and gasp with disbelief as Jason prays at Bruce Lee’s grave. (“My name is Jason Stilwell and I just moved here from Los Angeles and I’m a martial artist too. . . .”) This is melodrama, real melodrama, not the tortuous allegory of a Freudian case-study world which feminism found in the “woman’s film,” but festive, romping, participatory popular melodrama. “What should I *do*?!” cries Jason’s father in his hospital bed, when crippled by evil Mafia men who want to take over his dojo, and as he inwardly sighs the wrong response—“There’s nothing else to do but . . . leave!”—the unspoken right answer is clear: “Fight back! Fight back!”⁶

With its call-and-response communalism, melodrama is didactic about the import of narrative conventions and genre rules as well as ethi-

3. The film’s screenwriter has noted of his first script that “*NRNS* is no great masterpiece . . . but it captured people’s imagination. It got a widespread theatrical release, and played all over the country. I still have people come up to me to tell me that *NRNS* is their favorite movie of all time. I find that hard to believe, but it makes me feel good all the same” (Strandberg 1997). The “text” of *No Retreat No Surrender* is a bit unstable, differing in various editions. The version I am calling “barely visible” was rereleased by Film-pac on PAL as the “Original Unedited Version” [as packaged in 1986 by Filmways Australasian Distributors]. Small but significant differences from the version now available in the United States are indicated where necessary.

4. This scene is worth comparing to the brilliant sportswriter Davis Miller’s (2000, p. 27) description of the “sustenance” that he drew as a young man from Lee’s image: “I cut the best pictures from . . . magazines and pasted them to pieces of black construction paper, which I taped to the wall beside the Ali poster opposite my bed, where I’d see them each night before I went to bed and each morning when I woke.”

5. Julius (1996, p. 140) uses this vocabulary at the friendly end of the range: “A teenage boy learns to overcome his problems with the spectral assistance of a celebrity stiff in this cheap and cheesy but basically harmless fantasy.”

6. This scene is missing from the currently available US edition.

7. Although *No Retreat* is not simply an “American” film (see the next part of this essay), in referring to “US martial arts cinema” I follow Desser (2000a; see also 2000b) when he argues that “the force and popularity” of kung fu films in the United States during 1973–75 “would lead to a genre we might call martial arts, a genre which arose in the United States only after the kung fu craze had passed.” As Desser notes, Chuck Norris was a key figure in the genre’s early definition, with the success of *Good Guys Wear Black* (1978). Strandberg (1997) can also justly claim that *NRNS* started a “resurgence of interest in martial arts films” from the mid-1980s; still a theatrically oriented film, it paved the way for *Kickboxer* (1989), a hit fully able to take advantage of an expanding video market. On the importance of tape in widening the circulation of Hong Kong and other Asian popular cinema, see Server (1999).

8. For a good guide to clones that distinguishes “homages” to Lee from films trying to “steal his persona,” see Weisser (1997, pp. 221–222). On the Lee-clone industry generally, and on Kim Tae Chong [aka Kim Tai Chung] in the dreadful *Game of Death* movies completed after Lee’s death, see Meyers, Harlib, and Palmer (1991, pp. 34–44).

9. An excellent discussion of how action cinema in general and Steven Seagal’s films in particular appeal to working-class experience (especially through “a core fantasy in which one does the right thing without having to calculate economic hardship”) is Kleinhans (1996). See also Trasker (1997) on martial arts films as popular fantasies of physical empowerment responding “to the *constitution of the body through limits*.”

cal decisions. When Jason is roused from his slumber by weird music and a bright white light, the “Bruce Lee” who appears to him is both a didact and a special generic figure—the Muse of US martial arts cinema.⁷ In literary mythology, a Muse empowers as well as inspires the mortal artist she deigns to visit. Bruce Lee not only explains the rules of the fantasy role that Jason wants to embody (to be a hero he must begin to learn all over again, train obediently, and give up on revenge), he also gives Jason the knowledge and confidence he needs to bring his ideal self-image “to life.”

Briefly played by Kim Tae Chong, this Muse for suburban Americans is flagrantly a spinoff from the cult video world. A podgy-faced caricature of a Lee-clone who brings into the film the jerky English dubbing of old kung fu movies, the spirit who visits Jason is a product rather than a symptom of what Teo (1997, p. 120) calls the “cult worship” of Lee after his death, which made him “an object, even a fetish.”⁸ *No Retreat No Surrender* comments on this worship rather than simply catering to it. As his Muse and teacher, Lee unblocks Jason’s powers as a martial artist by helping him transcend his fascination with Bruce Lee images, his fix on Lee the fetish.

Understood as a positive pedagogy, something more than Orientalist mumbo-jumbo (although it certainly is that too), Lee’s teaching here bears directly on what Rohdie calls the “act of regarding” reality, and on the proper use of images in a *media-shaped* reality. Jason learns to create images of his own, mental videoclips starring himself, and to believe in them so powerfully that he can act them out in the world—or, more exactly, carry their power into the world (“it can’t be stopped”). In this way he learns that positive thinking is the key to success in the classic American tradition. More than self-help hype, however, he learns how to gain access to aesthetic power in bad existential conditions—in this film as in reality, a trickier, more strenuous proposition than idolizing Bruce Lee.⁹

Learning from Bruce Lee

Why “fetishize” a *teacher* as the ideal action hero? The overwhelming concern with “the body” in recent cultural criticism can obscure this aspect of (Western) Bruce Lee worship and narrow unduly our approach to action cinema in general.¹⁰ Consider the persistence of the training

film in Hollywood cinema, from John G. Avildsen's *Rocky* (1976) to Ridley Scott's *G.I. Jane* (1997). Hollywood heroes tend to be self-impelling, their teachers "family" figures; true friends or antagonists who turn out to be helpers (Mickey in *Rocky*, Master Chief in *G.I. Jane*), they are motivators rather than Muses. However, the training film offers more than a spectacle of fabulously self-made bodies acting out their masochistic reshaping routines. It also frames and moralizes this spectacle as a pedagogical experience. Training films give us lessons in using aesthetics—understood as a practical discipline, "the study of the mind and emotions in relation to the sense of beauty"¹¹—to overcome personal and social adversity.

Consider also the complexity of the vast cultural networks in which this pedagogy thrives. To some extent in industrial reality as well as in formalists' dreams, the training genre links the Hollywood blockbuster economy of "global" success to the low-budget, transnational martial arts cinema with its direct-to-video fables of exemplary personal attainment (see Mark DiSalle and David Worth's *Kickboxer*, 1989, and Worth's *Lady Dragon*, 1992). Martial arts videos in turn connect diverse circuits of cult activity, sports fandom, gym, street and self-defense culture, identity politics, and self-improvement philosophy to worlds of home entertainment. And both "cinemas" translate and circulate the *formal* influence of the great Hong Kong pedagogy films of the 1970s: among those long available in the West on tape, Chang Cheh's *Shaolin Temple* (1976), Liu Chia-Liang's *36th Chamber of Shaolin* (aka *The Master Killer*, 1978), and Lo Wei's comedy with the young Jackie Chan, *Spiritual Kung Fu* (1978).¹²

Typically described by one writer (Shone, 1995) as "a strange twilight zone" and "a critic-proof mud" lying "fathoms below the critical nets through which mainstream films have to swim," martial arts films today compose a fuzzy space between the critically visible grandeurs of "Hollywood" and "Hong Kong." Entrepreneurially transnational in most instances, their ancestral text is neither *Rocky* nor, say, Lo Wei's *Fist of Fury* (aka *The Chinese Connection*, 1972), honored though these are, but Robert Clouse's unsettling hybrid, *Enter the Dragon* (1973). Starring Bruce Lee, John Saxon, and Angela Mao, introducing the African-American karate champion Jim Kelly, produced by Fred Weintraub and Paul Heller

10. As every student of Hong Kong cinema knows, teachers are fundamental to the kung fu universe. The dominant approach to Western action cinema has different concerns: see Trasker (1993).

11. *Macquarie Dictionary*, my emphasis. Despite its polemical tone and title, Eagleton (1990) is a useful introduction to this practical understanding of aesthetics.

12. These directors' names are given in the Wade-Giles forms widely used on PAL video boxes. For further reference, "Chang Cheh" (occasionally "Chang Che") = "Zhang Che"; "Lo Wei" = "Luo Wei"; "Liu Chia-Liang" = "Liu Jialiang" and "Lau Kar-leung."



13. For a discussion of the film as an “uneasy amalgamation of antithetical East-West sentiments,” see Teo (1997, pp. 117–118). In some ways this was a cruel inheritance. Since *Enter the Dragon*, the legend of Lee’s success has been used by Western critics as a structure of expectation crushingly imposed on ambitious video stars and vastly accomplished Hong Kong artists alike: “can Jean-Claude Van Damme ever make a real film?” and “can a real Jackie Chan film make it in America?” were treated as equivalent problems. They aren’t: much more complex obstacles lay in Jackie Chan’s path, not least his creative relationship to an older Hollywood cinema consigned now to film study classes and to cable TV.

14. On Ng See Yuen, see Lui (1980, pp. 143–148) and Teo (1997, p. 277).

for Warner Brothers in association with Golden Harvest’s Raymond Chow, *Enter the Dragon* was a “kung fu James Bond film”—like the spaghetti Westerns, overtly a work of translation—pitched with legendary success to a genuinely global audience.¹³

With far more modest means and aspirations, *No Retreat No Surrender* is a translation in this tradition; Jason’s Muse is Lee as he appears in the prelude to *Enter the Dragon*, tenderly cuffing a student. With an American writer (Keith Strandberg), a mini-international cast, and US urban locations (Los Angeles, Seattle) important in the legend of American Bruce Lee, *No Retreat* was promoted on its release as a rehash of two Hollywood training hits, Avildsen’s *The Karate Kid* (1984)—which translated *Rocky* from big league boxing in the Rust Belt to baby martial arts in California—and Stallone’s “self-made” *Rocky IV* (1985). *No Retreat* stole swaths of plot from *The Karate Kid*, replacing the latter’s “Mr. Miyagi” with Bruce Lee’s ghost. Its debt to *Rocky IV* can seem esoteric now, dated as that film is: as “Ivan the Russian,” the villain Jason faces in the final tournament bout, a young Jean-Claude Van Damme kittenishly mimics Dolph Lundgren’s Soviet-Man-on-steroids.

In style and industrial genealogy, however, *No Retreat* was closer to the Shaolin pedagogy films than the white-ethnic working class Hollywood of Avildsen and Stallone. A film made to make it in America, it could also be called a “make-believe” American film. Reversing the *Enter the Dragon* formula (US power and money, “exotic” stars and scenes), it was produced by Ng See Yuen from a story developed with Corey Yuen, aka Yuen Kwai. A Hong Kong industry stalwart, Ng had produced Jackie Chan’s first big hits, *Snake in the Eagle’s Shadow* (1977) and *Drunken Master* (1978), as well as Tsui Hark’s *The Butterfly Murders* (1979).¹⁴ An action choreographer and former Opera School classmate of Jackie Chan and Samo Hung (see Chan, 1998), Yuen Kwai is probably best known today for directing *Above the Law* (aka *Righting Wrongs*, 1987) with Yuen Biao and Cynthia Rothrock; *Yes! Madam* (1987) with Rothrock, Michelle Yeoh, and Tsui Hark in a cameo role; and for his recent remakes of Hollywood hits (*The Bodyguard from Beijing*, 1994) and Hong Kong classics (*Fong Sai-Yuk*, 1993, *Fist of Legend*, 1995) starring Jet Li.

Within a hard-edged allegory of the text as a reflection of its own creative process, *No Retreat No Surrender* could plausibly be seen as a Hong Kong film that cleverly accessed a US market by retelling the classic Hollywood success story (“Outsider makes good”), using Bruce Lee, the ultimate migrant crossover star, as its *mise en abyme* of accomplishment. The film’s canny makers clearly understood Lee’s special role in US martial arts *film* culture: neither a “body” nor a generic action hero, Lee is first and foremost an iconic film teacher. In a mythology still being elaborated by countless martial arts magazines and by “secrets of Jeet Kune Do” videos and books, Lee figures as both a great martial arts teacher who struggled against adversity to become a great film star, *and* an exemplary martial artist who used film as a pedagogical medium—on both scores, inspiring others to do likewise.¹⁵

Jason is an emblematic consumer of Lee’s media pedagogy. An alienated white boy from Bruce Springsteen territory, he is also the ideal spectator defined by the film. He doesn’t want to sleep with his mother (glimpsed for two seconds taking groceries up the drive),¹⁶ but he’d like to impress his girlfriend while getting his father a life—a plain if perfunctory Oedipal fantasy. However, a film’s ways of involving viewers in fantasy are not always well described by psychoanalytic models of identification, whether with images or looks, and a messier line of thought gets us closer (in my middle-aged female opinion) to the core of this odd film’s appeal.

It is a matter of the *formal* content of the film’s media pedagogy, the DIY philosophy expounded in its patchy training sequences and practiced as it works over the lessons of other films. Instead of seeing *No Retreat No Surrender* as a Hong Kong ripoff passing as American, we can just as well say that it remade *The Karate Kid* for people who like Hong Kong movies. The copy changed its model by stripping the gloss from its realism: with ultra-low-budget values, physical humor, exclamatory music, and minimal interest in character, *No Retreat* lavishly *added* passages of farce, comic melodrama, pathos, and unabashed play-acting with rude stereotypes to the sweet suburban story of the Kid.

Low-key by domestically-oriented Hong Kong standards at the time (see Yuen Kwai’s own *Lethal Lady*), these features of the film are conducive

15. The density of this mythology probably owes something to the fact that Lee’s students in the 1960s included Hollywood people, among them James Coburn and Steve McQueen. See Desser (2000a) and Abbas (1997, pp. 16–47). Trasker (1997, pp. 322–328) offers an interesting discussion of Lee’s use of his knowledge of the Hollywood and Hong Kong film industries.

16. The recent US version has altered this, re-Oedipalizing Jason by adding incoherent footage of a sweet domestic scene between Jason, his mother, and his girlfriend.

17. On the popularity of kung fu comedies in Hong Kong in the late 1970s, see Stokes and Hoover (1999, pp. 92–93).

to noisy collective enjoyment without inhibiting private dreams; they are festive ways of sharing “asocial” wishes and fantasies with lots of other people. Theories of popular “appropriation” abound these days, but imitation does not always imply a furtive or hostile ethos of cultural theft and transgression. If *No Retreat* is composed of borrowed elements mixed in a porous industrial space (“martial arts cinema”), it seeks *affinities* between them; it sifts the training film and kung fu comedy together in a loose, rubbly way which is open to the sympathetic laughter of viewers.¹⁷

This, too, is aesthetic work, and the role of “Bruce Lee” is to explain its basic principles. These bear, as I’ve said, on the act of regarding reality, but they are mainly concerned with the power *in* reality which images can have. Two techniques of empowerment are demonstrated by parables enacted in Jason’s homemade gym. The first is *pragmatic variation*, or “never can succeed without a surprise.” Teaching Jason not to give visual warning of the action he intends, Lee breaks Jason’s grip with a move he doesn’t foresee (while being himself the film’s “surprise” to the Hollywood training formula). The second technique is *productive repetition*, or practice makes perfect (expressed as the double bind, “from now on, be spontaneous!”). When Jason complains of not feeling “natural” using an exercise machine, Lee throws him an apple; catching it, Jason learns that active effort enables effortless action, and natural movement presupposes cultivation.

These are clichés of martial arts cinema, as of many self-development regimes, and as compositional principles they refuse autonomy to art. In innumerable films opposing “fluid” to “rigid” styles of fighting (*Dragon*, the *Kickboxer* and *Bloodfist* films), strong, flexible bodies to muscle-bound hulks (*Rage and Honor*, *Bounty Tracker*, *Best of the Best 2*), humane to fascist authority (*Showdown*, *Sidekicks*, *Only the Strong*, *Watch the Shadows Dance*), and improvisational to mechanistic training (*Rocky IV*, *The Karate Kid*, *Best of the Best*), the point of a pragmatic aesthetic pedagogy is always to shape a socially responsive as well as physically capable self that can handle new experience—brutes and bullies, in these films, are inadaptable—and creatively engage with strangers. Stamped on *No Retreat No Surrender*’s opening scene, when Jason whirls out of the stiff routine of his father’s karate class, this is the trademark ethic of the experimental art of Bruce Lee.

It is also one of those banal messages that, according to Sam Rohdie, fail to confine in their “goodness” the energy of cinema and dreams. For Rohdie, banality is a constraint; fantasy frees us from the everyday, the marvelous flees the mundane. In most martial arts films, banality is a source of power; as practice, repetition, training, the “dull gestures of an everyday reality” intimately *form* the martial artist and bring wonder into the world. Like the soup stirred and the fire stoked by novices in the kitchen of *Shaolin Temple*, the wax applied by the Karate Kid to Mr. Miyagi’s car, even the wood Rocky chops in *Rocky IV* for (suitably grateful) peasants, the apple Lee throws Jason is banal in just this way: it marks a ground and a beginning, not a limit.

Affirmative Action: *Dragon*

As spectators, we can take this message or leave it. But if cinema primarily comments on cinema, as Rohdie has it, then films may comment on economic problems of composition (often posed in training films, where the socially striving self, not just the body, is raw material for work) as well as on matters of style. Films may reflect, too, on cinema as an *industrial* field of dreams, transnationally producing and distributing acts of regarding reality; therefore, on collective and even geo-political fantasies of doing “whatever we please.” And in the ordinary course of a narrative or an image unfolding in time, films may reflect on the blockages and frustrations that desires, even in cinema, do encounter.

Take a scene about the act of regarding reality from Rob Cohen’s glossy and engaging romantic biography, *Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story* (1993). It takes place in a West Coast cinema in the early 1960s: recently arrived from Hong Kong but a US citizen by birth, Bruce (Jason Scott Lee) is sitting with his white girlfriend, Linda (Lauren Holly). Deft vignettes have already established the strength of the couple’s attraction and the hostility they face: in the preceding scenes, we’ve seen them obliquely denied service at a restaurant and we’ve briefly watched Bruce at his everyday training, a simple *mise en scène* emphasizing just how gorgeous and powerful he is.

A cut takes us outside a theatre advertising a “Laff Fest Revival.” There follows a beautifully intimate study of film spectatorship as a sometimes

lonely crowd experience, moving and unpredictable as it differs between people and subtly alters relationships. It begins by positing those familiar imaginary units, “the audience” and “the couple.” Potentially from the latter’s point of view, the first shot looks up across rows of heads to take in a scene from *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*; Audrey Hepburn elegantly scrabbles at a door as Claude Stroud arrives left, asking her the question which *Dragon* reframes as a question about the scene itself; “Hey, baby, what’s going on here?” In the reverse shot a happy, expectant Linda, her face framed by others in similar spirits, leans right to whisper that she “loves this movie so much.” Bruce winces, “Oh yeah?” in reply; it seems that he, too, has seen “this movie” before.

The couple loses unity and abstraction: Linda brightens, Bruce darkens, they part towards opposing edges of the frame. With the audience still in the picture, the next shot is of a grossly made-up Mickey Rooney bolting upright in bed to bang his head on his own idiotically positioned lamp. The audience then drops out of the image but swells the sound with “laffs” as we all watch the cartoon “Oriental”—mammoth buck teeth, raucous voice, sing-song “Ah So” English—fall over his own photographic equipment as he crashes to the door in a slapstick performance of perfect incompetence. An extreme close-up snaps Linda, full face, laughing, nested in the pleasure around her; we share her gaze to the screen as the beautiful Hepburn looks upwards, and we all look with Hepburn at “Mr. Yunosshi” hideously rasping down the stairwell: “Miss Golightly! I prote-e-e-st!”

The next shot is again of Linda in closeup but holds her face a little longer; she turns right to share her pleasure and her smile suddenly fades. Only then does the camera pan left to reveal the solitude of her partner, who sits unsmiling as Rooney shrieks, “You disturba me! You must have a key made!” When it pans back to Linda, she is still looking in Bruce’s direction. Slowly she looks back to the screen, her own face now unsmiling (in a medium closeup that sets her in contrast with those around her) as Rooney screeches: “I’m an artist! I must have my rest!” When she turns back to Bruce, the couple is framed together for the first time since she declared her love for “this movie.” They look at each other, and Linda says, “Let’s get out of here.”

This is a defining moment in the love story organizing *Dragon*, a sanitized as well as hagiographic interpretation of Bruce Lee's life as authorized by his widow. But with its fluid intercutting of varying "points of view" on *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, this scene is also a rhythmically exact little story about people being differently "moved" (Rohdie's term) in the cinema, their wishes and dreams diverging and then, on this occasion, reaching new empathy as the responses of others around them—the sociable dimension of cinema—inflect and color their own. So clear is the scene's affirmation of the diverse collective nature of film experience that it could be said to deconstruct the very idea of "the spectator" (that wishful critical projection) and its attendant generalizing rhetoric about "what really moves us."

I'm content to claim that it suggests a definition of "political correctness" in cinema. PC is not primarily a code regulating expression but a spectators' revolt. Aesthetically focused but social in resonance, PC is an act or a movement of criticism initiated by groups of people who develop shared responses to particular cultural conventions, and begin to form "an" audience in the marketing sense: by articulating a collective "commentary on cinema," they announce themselves *as* an audience. And they vocally object to the quality of something which cinema provides.¹⁸ Understood this way, PC as a critical formation has less in common with the grim radicals of media bad dreams (real as dreams may be) than with those highly respectable "consumers' movements" which have, through the very same media, powerfully influenced business and advertising practices in recent decades.

Dragon, too, is a respectable and ethically moderate film. The scene I've discussed is didactic (it shows us "how to read a film"), but it teaches neither a hardline identity politics nor an unforgiving war on Linda's sense of humor; it is a parable of change and reciprocity. The scene's premise, after all, is that people routinely sit through a film they dislike in order to please their loved ones, not fun but no big deal; and the editing credits *Dragon's* audience with a capacity for involvement in more than one way of seeing. Looking with Linda we can see the beauty and lightness in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, and then see what her partner sees—coarse

18. For an interesting account of a formalized group of this kind, the Media Action Network for Asian Americans (which picketed Philip Kaufman's *Rising Sun* after failing to influence the script), see Payne (1996). On the long history of such protests, dating back at least to 1911, see Shohat and Stam (1994, p. 181).

racism dressed as refinement. Looking with Bruce we see this coarseness go unremarked, as though we ourselves were invisible to those closest to us. From a third position, we see Linda come to understand and share Bruce's revolt, or, since that word is a bit too strong, his revulsion.

If this scene "mirrors" an act of regarding reality, it does so by reflecting back to its audience the mixed, porous, and eventful nature of cinema's own reality. It also assumes a triangular rather than dualistic model of what happens when people watch films. In *Dragon*, film study is more than a matter of "negotiating your subjectivity with the subjectivity of the film" (Rohdie 1995b, p. 11); cinematic negotiation involves you, the film, and other people. However, while it has three terms, this is nonetheless a model of imaginary experience: *Dragon* is not a debunking of fantasy in the name of social realism or the law-abiding Symbolic of psychoanalysis. On the contrary: when Linda suddenly connects the Chinese man beside her, the "Oriental" on screen, and her pleasure in both, she makes an *imaginative* leap outside the logic of her own familiar dreams which allows her to experience something new. Putting "herself" in another's position, she finds that her companion lives a connection between his body and the grotesque parody on screen—one fictionally modeled in a fleeting moment of cinema but relayed and sustained in his everyday life by the gazes (and the voices) of other people.

Linda returns to *Breakfast at Tiffany's* with the eyes and ears of a critic, or so I like to think; as a student, she is certainly able to "enter into" another subjectivity in the way that Rohdie advises us to do (1995b, p. 11). No doubt, I'm sketching here my own ideal spectator: I love the experience Linda has, that jaw-dropping jolt of astonishment at how the world shifts when you see, or believe that can you see, what someone else is seeing. This in no way prevents me when I watch action films from taking pleasure in murdering everybody, never mind just Dad. The point is simply that many things move people in the cinema, "worthy issues" included, and that fantasy can impel us towards others as well deeper into our selves.

Of course, an imaginative leap can always fall flat. *Dragon* promotes the utopian potential of cinematic negotiation; reconciliation and deeper

mutual understanding follow from going to the movies with Bruce Lee. In wider reality, precisely because cinema is sociable, an empathetic movement may equally well meet rejection, indifference, misunderstanding, or dissent. For some viewers, *Dragon* itself is a provocation to criticism; blurring Lee's overt and distinctive cultural nationalism into a generalized "reaction against racism" (Teo 1997, p. 113), it transfigures a Hong Kong Chinese hero as flexibly "Asian"-American. Nowhere in the film is this effected more clearly than in the *Breakfast at Tiffany's* scene, in which we watch a white American woman empathizing with a Chinese-American man identifying with a *Japanese* stereotype as embodied by an Irish-American actor.¹⁹ Now, as Teo (1997, p. 111) points out, Lee's Hong Kong films were not only nationalist in an "abstract" way unrelated to a government or state (manifesting "an emotional wish among Chinese people living outside to China to identify with China and things Chinese"), they also had a "xenophobic streak" (p. 113)—in particular, towards Japanese.²⁰ Accordingly, Teo suggests that "Western admirers of Lee view him differently from his Eastern admirers, and the difference revolves around his nationalism"; for Westerners like the English critic Tony Rayns (1980), the narcissism (and homoeroticism) of Lee's body-culture is his most distinctive trait.²¹ These two modes of viewing converge on the figure of Lee in that he can, in Teo's words, be "all things to all men" (1997, p. 110), but they do not really communicate: "to his many Western viewers, Lee's nationalism is a non-starter" (p. 113).

My view is that the term "Western" is way too large for the complex tensions of spectatorship here. As a Western but Australian participant in these, I can't help but see that a US identity politics, uninterested in any but American social conflicts and burdens, often ignores or refuses to *imagine* that things are "different" for people elsewhere. No doubt there is ample evidence for a "Western" post-nationalist view of Lee, at least in his later life; such compilation tapes as *Bruce Lee: The Legend* and *Bruce Lee: Curse of the Dragon* contain plenty of interviews in which Lee tells Western audiences what Teo thinks we want to hear—universalizing humanist messages exalting the individual and renouncing national "styles." Yet I suspect that far from being a "non-starter" for Western admirers,

19. Screening *Dragon* in Australia, I have found that this moment in the film often creates controversy. People wishing to judge the film's historical accuracy (or to stake a claim to be able to do so) express incredulity that the real Bruce Lee would ever have "seen himself" in a Japanese stereotype at all.

20. Lee's films were not remarkable in this respect. Japanese were widely made targets of hostility and caricature in 1970s Hong Kong cinema (as indeed in many other national cinemas, including Hollywood, in the decades after the Pacific War). See Meyers, Harlib, and Palmer (1991, pp. 64–66) on "cinematic hatred of the Japanese" as expressed in the films of Wang Yu, the 1960s Hong Kong superstar displaced by Bruce Lee's success; paradoxically but also routinely for the times, Yu made anti-Japanese films while working with Japanese filmmakers. While noting the "extremism" of Yu's cinema, Meyers, Harlib, and Palmer have their own problems about Japan. First published in 1985, their book begins a chapter on "Samurai Swordsmen and Karate Killers" by matter-of-factly calling Japan "the nation built on hypocrisy" (1991, p. 163).

21. For an interesting discussion of these issues in terms of a distinction between Hong Kong and American martial arts cinema, see Trasker (1997).

Lee's modeling of an empowering cultural nationalism detached from any specific *political* state is exactly what makes him inspiring for the comparably abstract and culturalized ethnic "nationalisms" that flourish in the United States and other densely multicultural Western nations. After all, as Desser (2000a) points out, the American "kung fu craze" of 1973 that launched Lee's global success began in inner-city cinemas frequented by black and Hispanic audiences that maintained their interest in martial arts culture long after the craze had passed.

However, unless we see how the narcissism *serves* the nationalism (and vice versa), all this remains an argument about representation and the fiction/reality relation. What makes *Dragon* so rich a commentary on cinema is rather that it frames its "critique" of *Breakfast at Tiffany's* as an episode in a broader narrative about Bruce Lee's dream of making martial arts films himself; there is an overtly Chinese artist as well as a Western critic in the *Breakfast at Tiffany's* scene. In fact, Lee was able to direct only one complete feature, and that in Hong Kong rather than Hollywood: *The Way of the Dragon* (aka *Return of the Dragon*, 1972) is one of the most famous martial arts films ever made. *Dragon* touches lightly on this achievement; a fairy tale of star-crossed love in more ways than one, it is mainly interested in the hero's *desire* to gain access to the enchanted castle of Hollywood, and the obstacles he has to overcome.

Focusing on legendary stories that Lee wore a mask as Kato in *The Green Hornet* series to shield American audiences from his "Oriental" face, and was replaced as Caine in *Kung Fu* by the safely white David Carradine—of whom Chuck Norris has reportedly said, "Carradine's as good at martial arts as I am at acting" (Meyers, Harlib, and Palmer 1991, p. 221)—*Dragon* interprets Lee's life not only as a battle against Western prejudice and, as Teo (1997, p. 113) delicately notes, a "fatal destiny" obscurely attributed to "Chinese superstition," but also as an affirmative struggle for the freedom and power to "make believe." Whatever the truth of these stories, and however mythopoeic and American-centered its approach to biography may be, *Dragon* is one of the more powerful treatments of institutionalized racism in a film *industry* (as well as in film images) that US cinema possesses.

Formalism complements materialism here. Those legends of adversity are incipient in the *Breakfast at Tiffany's*'s scene, held there in potential along with the grief which Linda will have from her mother over marrying a Chinese man; the near-fatal opposition Bruce will encounter from local kung fu masters for taking students who are not Chinese; along with the birth and prefigured death of Brandon Lee. What loads this eventfulness into the scene, framing it as a prediction of Bruce Lee's future in film history as well as a critique of Hollywood's past, is a design effect so delicate as to be almost imperceptible. The sleekness and tone of Linda's long hair, the make-up and lighting of Lauren Holly's fine-boned features, and the crowning touch of her hat, all visually echo (though they do not mirror) the styling of Hepburn as she laughs, hair swept up, castratingly at the "dear little man" above who wails about being an artist—promising to "let" him "take pictures."

As Linda and Bruce push out of their seats, silhouetted against the screen, Mr. Yunioshi asks Holly Golightly: "When?" This is what the hero of *Dragon* will ask of Hollywood, before despairing of an answer and returning to Hong Kong. As readdressed to *Dragon's* audience, however, this expression of aesthetic yearning is something more than a critical "complaint" about representation ("what's going on here?"). It is a practical demand: the political question of who does, who can, and who wants to be able to "take pictures" has pointedly been raised.

Afterthoughts on Political Correctness

Does this make *Dragon* a "politically correct" film? I don't think so. A feminist so inclined could have merciless fun with its gendered division of labor, and like many other anti-racist US martial arts films (for example, Richard W. Munchkin's extraordinary *Blood and Steel: Ring of Fire 2*, indeed almost anything starring Don "The Dragon" Wilson), *Dragon* has little interest in negotiating more complex roles for Asian or black women. *No Retreat No Surrender* is certainly not PC; with a fat boy, a black boy with a great sense of rhythm, and a hulking Russian bear, its palette of stereotypes is no more shaded by sensitivity about "difference" than that of *Breakfast at Tiffany's*—or, for that matter, *Fist of Fury* and its immedi-

ate model, Wang Yu's *The Chinese Boxer* (1970), in which simian Japanese graze their knuckles on the ground.

My argument is not about whether a film or a genre "is" whatever we mean by PC. I'm suggesting on the contrary that "PC" is a term that can't settle on a stable content, a smooth spectrum of complaints, a single "orthodoxy" or dogma. Like any good insult it is slippery but not meaningless: whether we like the term or not it continues to be in use, and terms in use make meaning. I suspect it has come to name a critical *technique* practiced by and across many different kinds of audiences—restrictive and bureaucratic in some instances, creative and anarchic in others. Whether the term itself will have currency for much longer, I have no idea. However, I am sure of at least one thing: the questions raised in *Dragon's* scene of PC revolt are not only of academic interest, and they will not go away.

The assumption that every film can be usefully "read" for its performance of social issues certainly is an academic idea, more attuned to the needs of an education and publishing industry than to the economy of popular entertainment. This doesn't make it a bad idea, but its provenance helps to explain the aura of extremism successfully attached to PC in the media, and so inappropriate to a film like *Dragon*. Academic debates about representation generally *are* more "extreme," and sometimes more reductive, than those which arise in socially diffuse moments of aesthetic and ethical revulsion. Popular debates occur sporadically, when enough people are enough annoyed to make a fuss, or to bother responding when someone else does. Academic debates occur on principle: it *must be possible*, our training tells us, to look at this film this way. This interpretive drive can be creative (the technique of "queering" is its liveliest recent manifestation) but also blinkered and narrow in its relentlessness; hence the direct hit scored by Robert Hughes's (1993, p. 72) famous potshot, "the world changes more widely, deeply, thrillingly than at any moment since 1917, perhaps since 1848, and the American academic left keeps fretting about how phallogocentricity is inscribed in Dickens's portrayal of Little Nell."

However, these modes of discussion are not sealed off from each other, not least because the training of filmmakers as well as bureaucrats,

teachers, and critics now takes place, like the shaping of subjectivities, in a world where fantasy makes money and images have force. The economic redefinition of art and entertainment as news—serious news (Morris, 2000)—is inexorably redistributing the desire and the power to criticize make-believe in this society; while it is true that only a mandarin caste of critics spends much of its time “interrogating” texts, it is no longer true that only mandarins ask textual questions. This is a wide, deep, thrilling change in the world which Robert Hughes has missed. *If* only academics still angst about Little Nell (and I have my doubts about that), fretting over phallogocentricity is now a popular occupation.



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3

Deprovincializing the Middle Ages

Sharon Kinoshita

In 1978, Edward Said defined Orientalism as, among other things, a style of thought based on “an ontological and epistemological distinction” between East and West, “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.” Though focusing primarily on the strategic use of knowledge as power in the age of European expansionism, he repeatedly gestures towards what he implies is Orientalism’s very long history, stretching from Aeschylus to Silvestre de Sacy. For Said, the proto-Orientalism of the Middle Ages is concretized in the representation of Mohammed as a disseminator of false revelation, “the epitome of lechery, debauchery, sodomy [and] treacheries.” And Said suggests that Canto 28 of the *Inferno*, when Dante places Mohammed in the eighth circle of Hell, exemplifies the structural continuities of an unchanging Western discourse of demonization and domination, “an instance of the schematic, almost cosmological inevitability with which Islam and its designated representatives are creatures of Western geographical, historical, and above all, moral apprehension.”¹

In the wake of *Orientalism*, many critics generally sympathetic to Said’s project called into question the rigidity of his binary construct. While noting Said’s effectiveness isolating and discrediting an array of stereotypes—“the eternal and unchanging East, the sexually insatiable Arab, the ‘feminine’ exotic, the teeming marketplace, corrupt despotism, mystical religiosity”—James Clifford summed up Said’s critical method as “associative, sometimes brilliant, sometimes forced, and in the end numbingly repetitive,” resulting in a “tendency to *dichotomize* the human continuum into we-they contrasts and to *essentialize* the resultant ‘other’—to speak of the oriental mind, for example, to even generalize about ‘Islam’ or ‘the Arabs.’”² Dennis Porter argued for the specificity of the literary instance and the possibility of a counter-hegemonic, alternative canon.³ Lisa Lowe, Jenny Sharpe, Inderpal Grewal, Anne McClintock, and others pointed out the centrality of gender in the workings of Colonial

1. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978), pp. 1–3, 62, 68–69.

2. James Clifford, “On Orientalism,” in *Predicaments of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 255–76 (at 258). In a more hostile critique, Aijaz Ahmad attacks what he reads as Said’s unrepentant humanism.

3. Dennis Porter, “Orientalism and Its Problems” in Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, Margaret Iversen and Diane Loxley (eds.), *The Politics of Theory. Proceedings of the Essex Sociology of Literature Conference, University of Essex* (Colchester, 1983), pp. 179–193. His examples are Marco Polo’s *Travels* and T. E. Lawrence’s *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, though the version of the essay that appears in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 150–161, drops the Polo example.

4. Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991); Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Inderpal Grewal, *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire, and the Cultures of Travel* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996); and Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

5. On Said's place in the development of Colonial Discourse Studies see, for example, Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism, The New Critical Idiom* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 43–51, and Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), ch. 26.

6. Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Random House, 1993), p. xii.

7. Edward W. Said, "The Clash of Ignorance," *The Nation*, October 22, 2001, pp. 11–13.

8. The bibliography on the transmission of Arabic thought to the Latin West is a long one. Peter O'Brien usefully collates the assessments of the Arabic contribution to medieval European thought found in standard histories in "Islamic Civilisation's Role in the Waning of the European Middle Ages," *The Medieval History Journal* 2:2 (1999), pp. 387–404.

Discourse.⁴ In part, the field of post-colonial studies could be seen as an effort to nuance our understanding of Orientalism as a history and a discursive structure underpinning the colonial and post-colonial moments.⁵ In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said himself expanded the geographical, historical, and discursive scope of his earlier argument in ways that made it "not just a sequel to *Orientalism* but an attempt to do something else."⁶ And in an article published in the immediate aftermath of 11 September 2001, Said challenged Samuel Huntington's (in)famous thesis of the Clash of Civilizations as an ideology that

wants to make 'civilizations' and 'identities' into what they are not: shut-down, sealed-off entities that have been purged of the myriad currents and counter-currents that animate human history, and that over centuries have made it possible for that history not only to contain wars of religion and imperial conquest but also to be one of exchange, cross-fertilization and sharing. This far less visible history is ignored in the rush to highlight the ludicrously compressed and constricted warfare that 'the clash of civilizations' argues is the reality.⁷

But what of the Middle Ages? Later on in the same article, Said answers the question "What is so threatening?" about the Muslim presence in Europe and the United States by evoking a specifically medieval historical trauma:

Buried in the collective culture are memories of the first great Arab-Islamic conquests, which began in the seventh century and which, as the celebrated Belgian historian Henri Pirenne wrote in his landmark book *Mohammed and Charlemagne* (1939), shattered once and for all the ancient unity of the Mediterranean, destroyed the Christian-Roman synthesis and gave rise to a new civilization dominated by northern powers (Germany and Carolingian France) whose mission, he seemed to be saying, is to resume defense of the "West" against its historical-cultural enemies. What Pirenne left out, alas, is that in the creation of this new line of defense the West drew on the humanism, science, philosophy, sociology and historiography of Islam, which had already interposed itself between Charlemagne's world and classical antiquity.⁸ Islam is inside from the start, as even Dante, great enemy of

Mohammed, had to concede when he placed the Prophet at the very heart of his *Inferno*.

On the one hand, one is struck by Said's self-revisionism: Dante's representation of Mohammed is no longer a synecdoche for medieval Europe's demonization of Islam but an acknowledgment, however unwilling, of the degree of the latter's influence on the former, bearing out Said's anti-Huntingtonian affirmation that "there are closer ties between apparently warring civilizations than most of us would like to believe." On the other, his citation of Pirenne, as we shall see, largely reproduces his reading of 1978. In the remainder of this essay, I examine the place of the medieval in current discourses of post-colonial theory and globalization, arguing that the tendency to "other" the Middle Ages prematurely shuts down important avenues in our understanding of the history of "the West."

Part I reviews Said's 1978 representation of medieval Europe and subsequent reactions to it. Part II looks at the constitutive role that nineteenth-century nationalism and Orientalism played in the foundation of medieval study and its critical consequences. Part III explores what it might mean to de-link our thinking on the European Middle Ages from this nineteenth-century legacy. Finally, Part IV turns to the question, not simply of the value of post-colonial theory for medieval studies, but of the importance of medieval studies to contemporary discussions of post-colonialism and globalization.

I

At the heart of *Orientalism* is a curious tension between history and structure. On the one hand, the book purports to offer a genealogy of Orientalism from its emergence in classical antiquity to its ascendancy in the age of colonial expansion. Yet in many of Said's formulations, "Europe" and "the Orient" function as essentialized cultures that seem to preexist the discourse that purportedly constructs them. "The Orient was almost a *European* invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences," the object of a "European imaginative geography" that begins with Aeschylus.⁹

9. Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 1, 57 (emphasis added).



10. Said, *Orientalism*, p. 58.

11. Kathleen Davis, "Time Behind the Veil: The Media, the Middle Ages, and Orientalism Now" in *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (New York: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 105–122 (at 111–113).



Though in *theory* Said acknowledges “Europe” or “the West” to be as much a construct as “the Orient” or “the East,” in *practice* he treats it, if not as an “inert fact of nature,” then as an entity with a history so long as to be virtually timeless:

Consider how the Orient, and in particular the Near Orient, became known in the West as its great complementary opposite since antiquity. There were the Bible and the rise of Christianity; there were travelers like Marco Polo who charted the trade routes and patterned a regulated system of commercial exchange . . . ; there were fabulists like Mandeville; there were the redoubtable conquering Eastern movements, principally Islam, of course; there were the militant pilgrims, chiefly the Crusaders. Altogether *an internally structured archive is built up* from the literature that belongs to these experiences. Out of this comes a restricted number of typical encapsulations: the journey, the history, the fable, the stereotype, the polemical confrontation. *These are the lenses through which the Orient is experienced, and they shape the language, perception, and form of the encounter between East and West.*¹⁰

This quick jump from the Bible to Marco Polo and Mandeville is of course meant to illustrate Said’s point on the tenacity of Orientalism as an unchanging discourse of fixed style and meaning. At the same time, as Kathleen Davis points out, this collapse of temporal, geographical, cultural, and discursive difference effectively “empt[ies] out the Middle Ages as a category with its own history,” transforming it into a “an inert, purely textual space . . . untainted by any experiential intercourse with the East” in a manner symptomatic of the widespread modern “othering” of the medieval. The problem, Davis continues, is that “Said’s dichotomy . . . instates a core ‘reality’ that privileges and solidifies the very discourses he criticizes. If we grant with Said that medieval Europe’s system of representing Islam is purely antiempirical, based not on any experience with Islam but only on a fully closed, self-generating tradition, then we privilege Europe as an absolutely self-constituting object.”¹¹

The one event that both disrupts and crystallizes this history of continuity is the rise of Islam:

The European encounter with the Orient, and specifically with Islam, strengthened this system of representing the Orient and, as has been suggested by Henri Pirenne, turned Islam into the very epitome of an outsider against which the whole of European civilization from the Middle Ages on was founded. The decline of the Roman Empire as a result of the barbarian invasions had the paradoxical effect of incorporating barbarian ways into Roman and Mediterranean culture, Romania; whereas, Pirenne argues, the consequence of the Islamic invasions beginning in the seventh century was to move the center of European culture away from the Mediterranean, which was then an Arab province, and towards the North. . . . Europe was shut in on itself: the Orient, when it was not merely a place in which one traded, was culturally, intellectually, spiritually *outside* Europe and European civilization, which, in Pirenne's words, became "one great Christian community, coterminous with the *ecclesia*. . . . The Occident was now living its own life."¹²

In this passage we easily recognize the picture evoked in the 2001 *Nation* article quoted earlier. Yet curiously, while in *Orientalism* the works of political figures like Balfour or Cromer, intellectuals like Lane or Renan, and men of letters like Lamartine or Flaubert all come in for careful critical scrutiny, Pirenne's characterization of the Middle Ages is taken not as symptomatic of his time and discursive space but as a transparent account of Muslim-Christian relations from the seventh century forward. It is as if Said's trenchant critique of Orientalism is bought at the price of what we might call "Medievalism"—itself a widespread phenomenon. As Gregory Stone has written:

In contemporary public discourse the adjective "medieval" functions—when it does not just mean "barbaric" pure and simple—as a synonym for "intolerant," "self-centered," "narrow-minded," "dogmatic," "doctrinaire," "mentally inflexible," "fascist," "cruel." Medieval Europeans were those people who, out of an ignorance of alternative ways and possibilities caused by a paucity of encounters with others, thought they were always right.¹³

The result is the "emptying out of the Middle Ages as a category with its own history" that Kathleen Davis identifies as part of "a strategy with a long modern and imperial genealogy: it paradoxically claims the Middle

12. Said, *Orientalism*.

13. Gregory B. Stone, "The Age of Others," *Medieval Encounters* 2:2 (1996), pp. 155–163.

14. Kathleen Davis, "Time Behind the Veil," p. 112.

15. Samir Amin, *Eurocentrism*, trans. Russell Moore (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989), pp. 74–75. On the ruptures of the European sixteenth century, see Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1974).

16. Dennis Porter, "Orientalism and Its Problems," pp. 184–185. (See note 3.)

17. Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), p. 54; orig. *Discours sur le colonialisme* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1955). Césaire here explicitly cites the crusader Jean de Joinville, biographer of the saint-king Louis IX of France.

18. "Thus when King Offa of Mercia (a contemporary of Charlemagne) struck a gold coin in the year 774, he modeled it after an 'Abbasid dinar: his name, in Latin letters, was accompanied by a legend in Arabic, and the date stamped on the coin was that of the Hegira," p. 157. Robert S. Lopez, "Mohammed and Charlemagne: A Revision," *Speculum* 18:1 (1943), pp. 14–38 (at 30). The 'Abbasids were the dynasty of Caliphs who ruled the Muslim world from Baghdad between 750 and 1258.

Ages as both the origin of a progressive history and as an inert, sealed-off space *before* the movement of history."¹⁴

In contrast to Said's emphasis on Orientalism's "sheer knitted-together strength" and "redoubtable durability," other critics underscore its historical specificity as a modern, colonial discourse. For Egyptian theorist Samir Amin, for example, the assertion of an intrinsic European superiority of the kind underlying Orientalism becomes imaginable only with the global expansion of European commercial capitalism in the long sixteenth century. Thus when Dante places Mohammed in Hell, it is not, as Said would have it, a moment of "Eurocentrism" but simply an example of the "banal provincialism" to be found wherever one culture encounters a group it perceives as its cultural Other; what we (mis)take for medieval instances of Orientalism are expressions of ignorance and fear in a time "before European hegemony."¹⁵

Dennis Porter elaborates: "In the era before European ascendancy the assumption of European superiority is not automatic even where the form of literary representation involved is that of European subject to Eastern object, of observer to observed. In the late thirteenth century, it was the European who was in awe of Eastern power and Eastern armies and not vice versa."¹⁶

And to Said's vision of a Christian Europe "shut in on itself," one can counterpose Aimé Césaire's assertion that the thirteenth-century knight "who fought Islam but respected it, had a better chance of *knowing* it than do our contemporaries (even if they have a smattering of ethnographic literature), who despise it."¹⁷

Acknowledging the historical complexity of the Middle Ages—examining its political, economic, and cultural practices as well as its ideological pronouncements—unsettles the picture of its monolithic and monologic Orientalism. As early as 1943, Robert Lopez challenged Pirenne's thesis of the dire consequence of the rise of Islam, emphasizing instead continuities of contract and trade, and the degree to which Islamic (like Byzantine) forms functioned as a prestige culture susceptible of admiration and imitation.¹⁸ Other scholars self-consciously play against the Orientalist grain. In his analysis of queenship in the crusader kingdom of Jerusalem, for



example, Bernard Hamilton writes that the Muslim world “was clearly shocked by the degree of social freedom which western women enjoyed.” However, he immediately disrupts this familiar orientalist binarism—an enlightened West versus a backwards East—by adding that Arab sources “reacted to women with political power much as misogynist dons did to the first generation of women undergraduates, by affecting not to notice them.”¹⁹

II

Like the “Orient” and often linked to it, the Middle Ages was one of the nineteenth century’s abiding obsessions.²⁰ Already in 1829, after noting “*Au siècle de Louis XIV on était helléniste, maintenant on est orientaliste*,” Victor Hugo goes on to compare the seduction of the Orient to that exerted by the Middle Ages: “*Là, en effet, tout est grand, riche, fécond, comme dans le Moyen Age, cette autre mer de poésie*.”²¹ The historical and structural parallels between them make it no surprise, then, that Medievalism and Orientalism were conscripted to similar roles in the construction of Modernity. Catherine Brown succinctly makes this point by taking a paragraph from Said and substituting “Medievalism” for “Orientalism,” “Middle Ages” for “Orient,” and “the present” for “Europe”:

For decades the Medievalists had spoken about the Middle Ages, they had translated texts, they had explained civilizations, religions, dynasties, cultures, mentalities—as academic objects screened off from the present by virtue of their inimitable foreignness. The Medievalist was an expert . . . whose job in society was to interpret the Middle Ages for his compatriots. The relationship between Medievalist and Middle Ages was essentially hermeneutical: standing before a distant, barely understandable civilization or cultural monument, the Medievalist scholar reduced the obscurity by translating, sympathetically portraying, inwardly grasping the hard-to-reach object.²²

One preoccupation of the emerging field of “post-colonial” medievalism has been precisely to excavate the nineteenth-century roots of our discipline, revealing the mutual imbrication of medieval studies, colonialism, and nationalism. Kathleen Biddick, for example, has shown how the “cleavage in the Victorian intelligentsia around the response to Governor Eyre’s handling of the Morant Bay Rebellion in

19. Bernard Hamilton, “Women in the Crusader States: the Queens of Jerusalem, 1100–1190” in *Medieval Women*, ed. D. Baker (Oxford, 1978), p. 143; repr. *Crusaders, Cathars and the Holy Places* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 1999).

20. Said refers to the “virtual epidemic of Orientalism affecting every major poet, essayist, and philosopher of the period” (*Orientalism*, p. 51). Among the medievalizing examples he cites are Walter Scott’s crusades novel, *The Talisman*, and Disraeli’s *Tancred* (*Orientalism*, p. 99). In the visual arts, Eugène Delacroix’s “Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople” (1840) evokes the Westerners’ sack of the Eastern Christian capital in 1204. On the role of the crusades in the nineteenth-century imaginary, see Elizabeth Siberry, “Images of the Crusades in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries” in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Crusades*, ed. Jonathan Riley-Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 365–385.

21. Preface to “Les Orientales,” Victor Hugo, *Odes et ballades—Les Orientales* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1968), p. 322, emphasis added. “In the century of Louis XIV one was a Hellenist, now one is an Orientalist. . . . There, in effect, everything is large, rich, fertile, like in the Middle Ages, that other sea of poetry.”

22. Catherine Brown, “In the Middle,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 30:3 (2000), p. 549. The passage she is modifying comes from Said, *Orientalism*, p. 222.

23. Goldwin Smith, the Regius Professor of History at Oxford University, was a member of the liberal Jamaica Committee, which wanted Eyre to be tried for his actions. Attacked for his position, he resigned his professorship in 1866 and was replaced by William Stubbs, who presided over the professionalization of medieval history as the study of the long-dead past. Goldwin, for his part, crossed to the United States, where he took up a post (1868) at Cornell University. Kathleen Biddick, *The Shock of Medievalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 5–9. On the Eyre case, see Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 11. In 1997, one could still write that “the study of Chaucer, to a surprising extent, still works within the foundational, nationalist parameters established by Victorian England.” This is part of David Wallace’s critique of the Anglocentrism of medieval English studies in his *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. xiii.

24. See Sharon Kinoshita, “Pagans are Wrong and Christians are Right’: Alterity, Gender, and Nation in the *Chanson de Roland*,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31:1 (2001), pp. 79–111 (at 80–81).

25. Compare the editor’s introduction to *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, in which Jeffrey Jerome Cohen specifies that one of the volume’s explicit goals is to demonstrate “the violences and internal colonizations upon which Englishness was founded.” Thus the volume’s “disproportionately large” focus on England is presented as “a deliberate choice, accomplished because England has such a tight grip on the critical imaginary of North American medievalists (and postcolonial theorists).” Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, “Midcolonial,” *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, p. 8.

26. This has to do with what some medievalists have seen as a kind of epistemic rupture within

Jamaica in 1865”—for Paul Gilroy a key moment in the construction of “England and Englishness”—decisively shaped the institutional history of medieval studies on both sides of the Atlantic.²³ In France, the canonization of the *Song of Roland* as the French national epic took shape in the 1870s, in the aftermath of France’s defeat in the Franco-Prussian war and the intensification of colonial rule in Algeria.²⁴

How could or should this revelation of the nineteenth-century roots of medieval studies affect our critical practice? One strain of post-colonial medievalism has focused on exposing premodern genealogies of the ideologies informing Western Europe’s nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonial expansionism, discerning the proto-Orientalism and racial binaries in epic and romance representations of pagans and “Saracens,” or in the nascent discourses of nationalism in late medieval England.²⁵ Such analyses fit comfortably within Said’s vision of Orientalism’s long history, and—for reasons I don’t have time to develop here—tend to cluster in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.²⁶ At its most extreme, this emphasis on continuity results in the total collapse of historical difference: “In [the tenth- or eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon] *Wonders of the East*, India is identical to the India depicted by Forster, a place of mystery and imagination that does not make any sense.”²⁷ Conversely, other medievalists have focused on drawing out the *differences* between the medieval and the modern—largely in an attempt to undo nineteenth-century categories that, for all our efforts at deconstruction and historicization, continue to haunt our critical readings. Robert Bartlett, for example, has argued that the high Middle Ages lacked a biological notion of race.²⁸ Where we might expect racial designations, medieval texts tend to take religion as a primary marker of difference.²⁹ This is not to say that medieval people did not notice somatic variation—simply that the will to equate skin color or other “racial” features with significant difference was far from automatic. In the mid-tenth century, the Persian traveler Naser-e Khosraw depicts the inhabitants of Andalusia (Muslim Iberia) as having “white skin and red hair. Most of them have cat-eyes like Slavs.”³⁰ Three centuries later, the Franciscan friar William of Rubruck (in current-day Belgium), seeking out the Great Khan at the behest of Louis IX of France, describes two

Mongols he meets as “dark like Spaniards” but then renders Batu, khan of the Golden Horde, as “similar in size to Sir John of Beaumont (may his soul rest in peace).”³¹

The absence of a biological discourse of race in the high Middle Ages is of course the logical corollary of recent demonstrations that race is a phenomenon of modernity, a social construction of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A closely related issue concerns the linking of race and national or proto-national identities. As medievalists have shown, many of the “barbarian” tribes whose names we take as ethnic markers were in fact “the product, not of blood, but of history.”³² Patrick Geary makes this point emphatically in his recent book, *The Myth of Nations*. In wake of the resurgent ethnic nationalisms and neo-racism of the 1990s, he condemns the “pseudo-history” that assumes the peoples of Europe to be “distinct, stable and objectively identifiable social and cultural units, and that they are distinguished by language, religion, custom, and national character, which are unambiguous and immutable.” In opposition to the alarm sounded by right-wing politicians at the spectacle of “thousands of rioting Albanian refugees” in Brindisi or “Romanian gypsies begging in the streets” of Berlin, he notes that “in the history of Europe, such mass movements have been the rule rather than the exception. The present populations of Europe, with their many languages, traditions, and cultural and political identities, are the result of these waves of migrations.” To nationalist distortions of the medieval past as the foundational moment of ethnogenesis, Geary counterposes a textured history showing “ethnic” groups like the Huns to have been tribal confederations based more on political affiliation than blood or kinship.³³ “Names of peoples may seem familiar after a thousand years, but the social, cultural, and political realities covered by these names were radically different from what they are today. For this reason we need a new understanding of the peoples of Europe, especially in that formative period of European identity that was the first millennium.” Historians, he poignantly concludes, “have a duty to speak out, even if they are certain to be ignored.”³⁴

Despite these careful and historically specific reconstructions, however, categories like race and nation continue to exert a hold over our

the Middle Ages themselves, with the early thirteenth century ushering in a proto-Foucauldian mentality of discipline, punishment, taxonomies, and standardization. See Sharon Kinoshita, *Medieval Boundaries: Rethinking Difference in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), pp. 2–3 and 135–138. This late medieval regime is what R. I. Moore has termed a “persecuting society” in *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987).

27. Andrea Rossi-Reder, “Wonders of the Beast: India in Classical and Medieval Literature,” in *Marvels, Monsters, and Miracles: Studies in the Medieval and Early Modern Imaginations*, ed. Timothy S. Jones and David A. Sprunger, *Studies in Medieval Culture* 42 (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2002), pp. 53–66 (at 66).

28. In the Middle Ages, peoples were distinguished not by biological essence but by language, law, “dress, domestic rituals, dietary habits, hair-styles and a host of other habitual practices.” The key feature of this cultural concept of difference is that, unlike race, such attributes could be changed “not only from one generation to the next, but even within an individual lifetime.” See Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change 950–1350* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), chapters 8–9, esp. pp. 197–198.

29. John Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

30. Andalusia itself he describes as “a large and mountainous province where it snows and freezes . . . It is ‘under’ the Mediterranean.” *Naser-e Khosraw’s Book of Travels (Safarnama)*, trans. W. M. Thackston, Jr., *Persian Heritage Series* 36 (New York: Persian Heritage Foundation [see; In an Antique Land, 360—copied.], 1986), p. 43.

31. Christopher Dawson, *Mission to Asia*, Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 127, 143. Lest anyone doubt the way medieval studies is inflected by modern political concerns, see Dawson's preface (originally published in 1955), where he describes William of Rubruck as traveling through Constantinople and the Crimea "rather than entering the Mongol world through the *Iron Curtain* of Eastern Europe and Russia" (p. xxii, emphasis added). Likewise, in the Penguin edition of Marco Polo's *Travels*, first published in 1958, translator Ronald Latham refers to the "iron curtain" that the "meteoric rise of Islam . . . interposed . . . between West and East" (p. 8).

32. Marjorie Chibnall in *The Normans, The Peoples of Europe* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 3.

33. As Chibnall writes about the Normans: "the *gens Normannorum* of the chroniclers . . . were of exceptionally mixed blood," their identity determined by "allegiance to a leader, not ethnic unity" (*The Normans*, pp. 3–4). David Morgan makes a similar point about the Mongols in *The Mongols, The Peoples of Europe* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 89–90. Morgan gives the example of the Persian-speaking "Hazara" of central Afghanistan, whose name—far from being an ethnic designation—derives from the Persian word for "a thousand," reflecting the decimal organization characteristic of Central Asian armies like that of the Mongols.

34. Patrick Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), esp. pp. 7, 9, 10, 11, 13. In England, the study of the Middle Ages is also inseparable from the long genealogy of the ideology of "Anglo-Saxonism." See Allen Frantzen, *Desire For Origins: New Language, Old English, and Teaching the Tradition* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Clare A. Simmons, *Reversing the Conquest: History and Myth in Nineteenth-*

thought, as is evident in the persistent way they pervade our analyses—the way that race is frequently reinscribed in readings of medieval discourses of religious difference. A recent analysis characterizes the *Song of Roland* as:

. . . one of the most violent and widely diffused pieces of anti-Muslim literature in the years surrounding the First Crusade. Here the religious alterity of the Saracen *Abisme*, who "fears not God, the Son of Saint Mary," is writ large on his countenance: "Black is that man as molten pitch that seethes." Roland himself gazes upon other such "misbegotten men," who appear "more black than ink is on the pen, / With no part white but their teeth." Samir Marzouki has gone so far as to argue that for the *Roland* author skin color was "*un indice moral ainsi qu'un indice social*" [a moral as well as a social indicator], in which the Saracen, "*hâlé par le soleil, était considéré comme laid et par conséquent immoral*" [tanned by the sun was considered ugly and therefore immoral].³⁵

In the portrait of *Abisme* (French for "abyss"), we encounter a disturbing equation between skin color and a Saracen disdain for "the Son of Saint Mary"—a somatization of perceived religious and cultural difference.³⁶ Yet to take this as representative of the *Roland's* view of Islam is highly misleading, ignoring its wide array of physical and cultural types, from the bristle-backed Mycenes, to the seductively handsome Margariz of Seville, to the Saracen king's son, Jurfaleu the Blond, and his nephew, who bears the distinctively Germanic name Aëlroth.³⁷ The notion that in medieval epic Saracens are systematically, or even predominantly, racialized as black is, in other words, a distortion produced by selective quotation that risks hardening into the self-fulfilling prophecy of a sheer knitted-together discourse.³⁸ In medieval French epic, for example, the stock figure of the Saracen princess is indistinguishable from any beautiful woman of high station. This absence of racializing markers has sometimes been read as an ethnocentric erasure of racial and cultural difference.³⁹ But impulse to correlate religious faith with somatic features, I have argued elsewhere, reveals more about modern presuppositions than about lived medieval realities, as Naser-e Khosraw's evocation of white-skinned, red-haired Spanish Muslims shows.⁴⁰

Any cursory look at the Middle Ages also disturbs (or should disturb) the modern reflex of taking the nation-state as a default category of analysis. This is apparent politically—in the way the medieval Crown of Aragon, for example, assembled a dynastic confederation spanning non-contiguous territories belonging to several modern nations—but also culturally, as in the way the nascent vernaculars of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were not yet carriers of national identity.⁴¹ Versions of Old French, for example, were spoken north of the Loire, in Anglo-Norman England, in the kingdom of Sicily, and as a literal *lingua franca* across the Mediterranean, but not in southern France, the land of *langue d’oc* (Occitanian). In the mid-thirteenth century, French was “at once a national and a supranational language” of “prestige and dominance.” Thus Brunetto Latini composed his *Livres dou Tresor* in French “*por çou que la parole est plus delitable et plus commune a tous langages*”—“because that language is more delightful and more widespread than all others.”⁴² Likewise, when Rustichello of Pisa and Marco Polo met in a Genoese prison, the former transcribed the tale of the latter’s travels in French rather than in Italian. As Rustichello’s career as a romance writer exemplifies, the choice of a vernacular was often strongly linked to genre: Richard the Lionheart, king of England but also duke of Aquitaine, composed lyric poetry in both Old French and Occitanian, while Alfonso X of Castile composed his *Cantigas de Santa Maria* in Galician. And, in a multilingual *tour de force*, the early thirteenth-century troubadour Raimon de Vaqueiras composed a “descort” with successive stanzas in Old French, Provençal, Catalan, Portuguese, and Italian.⁴³

As many of the examples given above indicate, medieval Iberia is in fact a privileged site from which to disrupt reductive notions of the “European” Middle Ages. “There is little ‘orientalism’ in medieval Spain’s posturing toward the Moors; neither is there an overriding compulsion towards abjection, but rather a pragmatic give-and-take that lines itself up only exceptionally along the battlelines of crusade.”⁴⁴ In the *Cantar de Mio Cid*—retrospectively constructed as the Spanish national epic—the protagonist’s most troublesome enemies are in fact his sons-in-law, the counts of Carrión, his most dependable ally the noble Moor Abengalbón, and the text’s most “oriental” figure the French bishop Jerome, “*de parte de*

Century British Literature (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990); and Hugh A. MacDougall, *Racial Myth in English History: Trojans, Teutons, and Anglo-Saxons* (Hanover, PA: University Press of New England, 1982).

35. Bruce Holsinger, “The Color of Salvation: Desire, Death, and the Second Crusade in Bernard of Clairvaux’s *Sermons on the Song of Songs*” in *The Tongue of the Father: Gender and Ideology in Twelfth-Century Latin*, ed. David Townsend and Andrew Taylor (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), pp. 156–186 (at 170).

36. In point of fact, both Jesus and Mary are of course revered figures in Islamic tradition.

37. Sharon Kinoshita, “Pagans are Wrong,” pp. 82–83 (see note 24).

38. For William Chester Jordan, the risks involved “in regarding medieval attitudes toward people of different ‘races’ as ‘racist’” outweigh the benefits. See “Why ‘Race’?”, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31:1 (2001), pp. 165, 168.

39. Jacqueline de Weever, *Sheba’s Daughters: Whitening and Demonizing the Saracen Woman in Medieval French Epic* (New York: Garland, 1998), esp. chap. 1.

40. Sharon Kinoshita, “The Romance of Miscegenation: Negotiating Identities in *La Fille du comte de Pontieu*,” in *Postcolonial Moves: Medieval Through Modern*, ed. Patricia Clare Ingham and Michelle R. Warren (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 111–131 (at 118–119).

41. On linguistic complexity in the Middle Ages, see Geary, *Myth of Nations* (note 34 above), pp. 37–39: “Only the horrors of the twentieth century have created the illusion that language and ethnicity could or should be mappable.”

42. Kevin Brownlee, “The Conflicted Genealogy of Cultural Authority: Italian Responses to French Cultural Dominance in *Il Tesoretto*,

Il Fiore, and *La Commedia*" in *Generation and Degeneration: Tropes of Reproduction in Literature and History from Antiquity through Early Modern Europe*, ed. Valeria Finucci and Kevin Brownlee (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), pp. 262–286 (at 266). For Brownlee, Dante's *Commedia* represents a "profoundly aggressive" claim on behalf of the new Italian literary vernacular, one that "strategically ignores the fact of French cultural primacy in the vernacular" (286).

43. See H. J. Chaytor, *From Script to Print: An Introduction to Medieval Vernacular Literature* (New York: October House, 1967), especially chapter 3, "Language and Nationality." On the emergence of the *Lingua Franca* as a "contact vernacular," particularly in the Eastern Mediterranean, see Henry and Renee Kahane, "*Lingua Franca: The Story of a Term*," *Romance Philology* 30:1 (1976), pp. 25–41.

44. Gregory S. Hutcheson, "The Sodomitic Moor: Queerness in the Narrative of *Reconquista*" in *Queering the Middle Ages*, ed. Glenn Burger and Steven F. Kruger, *Medieval Cultures* 27 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), pp. 99–122 (at 104).

45. "De parte de orient vino vn coronado / El obispo don ierom[e] so nombre es l[amado]," "from the east came a mitred one; his name is Bishop Jerome." *Cantar de Mio Cid*, ed. Francisco A. Marcos Marín (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1997), ll. 1288–89.

46. "Coming out of Exile" in *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, p. 49, n. 16, Kathleen Biddick fleetingly alludes to "the important . . . questions at issue in recent work on religious and ethnic groups and economic history in medieval Iberia, which have rich implications for recent work on postcolonial translanguing practices" (she refers to the work of Thomas E. Burman, Olivia Remie Constable, Mark D. Meyerson, and David Nirenberg), only to say she is not going to address them. In his important study

orient," whom the Cid appoints to the newly conquered see of Valencia.⁴⁵ Despite this, Iberia is at best addressed only in passing in some central works of the emerging field of post-colonial medievalism.⁴⁶ The dictum that "Europe ends at the Pyrenees" becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy: the Iberian peninsula is not "European" because "Europe" is defined as a culture much smaller than the continent bearing this name.

Nor is it only medieval Iberia that provides such examples. To return to our point of departure: Dante—so central to Said's conception of the European Middle Ages—is susceptible to other readings as well. As Reed Way Dasenbrock writes:

[I]f there is a history of "Orientalism," there is also a history of "counter-Orientalism," of discourse which seeks to break down the structure of opposition between self and other which Orientalism helps to construct. Said's work itself makes no sense without the possibility of this "counter-discourse" which breaks down the rigid oppositions he criticizes and seeks to modify. I would argue that Dante's placement of Saladin in the first circle [of the *Inferno*] should be seen less as a foundational gesture of Orientalism than a foundational gesture of a "Counter-Orientalism." The Other is not denied human attributes: the Other is praised here for helping to create the very culture which Said imagines Dante opposing to that Other.

Dasenbrock concedes that "Said is in large measure right to discern in the Western tradition of representing Islam a discursive system in which Islam is presented as a demonized 'Other.'" But he locates that work of demonization in the literary (and nationalizing) epics of Tasso, Camoens, and Spenser—three *sixteenth-century* poems "for which Said's critique has genuine relevance."⁴⁷

III

In a talk entitled "On Globalism, Again" presented at the 2002 conference "Postcolonial Studies and Beyond," Ali Behdad—analyzing the theoretical belatedness of academic discourse of globalism—notes that, despite the "scale and speed of the current global flow . . . the flow itself is rather old, as is the discourse of novelty itself." Where Enrique Dussel and Homi

Bhabha “locate the advent of ‘global culture’ in 1492 with Columbus’s so-called discovery of America,” Behdad invokes Janet Abu-Lughod’s “surprisingly forgotten text” *Before European Hegemony* as the source of “compelling historical evidence for the existence of a complex and sophisticated world system in the thirteenth century.”⁴⁸ He calls for “a new set of historical inquiries” that would, among other things, produce a genealogy of the historical formation of globalism.⁴⁹

The world system mapped by Abu-Lughod may already be discerned in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, in the “Mediterranean Society” reconstructed by historian S. D. Goitein from the accidental archive of the Cairo Geniza.⁵⁰ A huge cache of letters, marriage contracts, bills of divorce, legal deeds, court records, business accounts, wills, inventories, horoscopes, and children’s writing exercises (written mostly in Judeo-Arabic) “discovered” by Western scholars in the late nineteenth century, these *geniza* records offer a glimpse of a multicultural and multiconfessional world in which Jewish merchants based in Fatimid Egypt maintained networks of trading partners and correspondents stretching from Almería in the west to the Malabar coast of India in the east. Goitein’s work has served as an important source of inspiration for the post-colonial novelist Amitav Ghosh, who, in his ethnography-cum-memoir *In an Antique Land*, contrasts the fluidity of medieval categories of difference with the straight lines and unforgiving rules of History with a capital “H.”⁵¹ These ancient records are also central to the project of poet-scholar-translator Ammiel Alcalay in his *After Jews and Arabs*, who writes: “One of the most striking aspects of the *geniza* world is the extent to which people, goods, and ideas continued to travel freely over a vast and incredibly diverse geographical area, despite political conflicts, wars, civil wars, invasions, unstable or tyrannical rulers, natural disasters, epidemics, and any and all other possible obstacles, whether human or divine.”⁵²

Historians chronicling these multiethnic, multiconfessional societies often make a point of reminding us that they did not last; such moments of coexistence, they imply, are insignificant anomalies in a larger sea of genocidal intolerance. One historian of Norman Sicily, after noting that the “mixture of religions and cultures found in the twelfth-century

“Medieval Studies, Postcolonial Studies, and the Genealogies of Critique,” *Speculum* 77 (2002), pp. 1195–1227, Bruce W. Holsinger includes several bibliographical items relating to Iberia in a footnote, but does not address Iberia’s role in Postcolonial Medievalism.

47. Reed Way Dasenbrock, “Saladin, Confucius, and the Status of the Other in Dante and Pound,” *Dante e Pound: Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi «Dante e Pound», Ravenna, 8–10 Settembre 1995*, ed. Maria Luisa Ardizzone (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1998), pp. 63–76 (at 74). On the counter-discourse of tolerance, see Cary J. Nederman, *Worlds of Difference: European Discourses of Toleration, c. 1100–c. 1550* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).

48. *Before European Hegemony* offers a synoptic view of the period from 1250 to 1350, when Ghent and Bruges, Genoa and Venice, and the fair towns of Champagne constituted an “archipelago of towns” linked to a “world system”—enabled by the *pax mongolica*—stretching from Europe and the Mediterranean through Central Asia to China and the Indies. Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System AD 1250–1350* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

49. Ali Behdad, “On Globalism, Again,” *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 25–28 April 2002. I thank Ali Behdad for sending me the text of his talk.

50. The *geniza* was a tower, once common in medieval synagogues, used to store unwanted documents until they could be properly buried, since no writing bearing God’s name could be destroyed. See S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, 5 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967–88), I, pp. 1–16.

51. In a *tour de force* of Subaltern Studies, Ghosh is able (with a little poetic license) to reconstruct

to a remarkable extent the lives of a twelfth-century Indian slave named Bomma, as well as his master, the Arabic-speaking Jewish trader Abraham ben Yiju. Amitav Ghosh, *In an Antique Land: History in the Guise of a Traveler's Tale* (New York: Random House, 1992). Ghosh, in turn, is an important figure for James Clifford in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 1–2, 4–6, 276. Kathleen Biddick criticizes what she interprets as Ghosh's overly sentimental representation of medieval slavery. See her "Translating the Foreskin" in *Queering the Middle Ages*, pp. 193–212 (at 198–204).

52. For Alcalay, Goitein's sensitivity to "the range of human and cultural interaction between Jews and Arabs in the Levant makes it a fertile, resilient, and antithetical point of reference in the face of the unchecked assumptions and 'logical minimalizations' that everywhere circumscribe the present scene." Ammiel Alcalay, *After Jews and Arabs: Remaking Levantine Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 130, 132.

53. Donald Matthew, *The Norman Kingdom of Sicily* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 112–113.

54. Joan-Pau Rubiès, "Marco Polo's India and the Latin Christian Tradition," in *Travel and Ethnology in the Renaissance: South India Through European Eyes, 1250–1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 35–83 (at 36).

55. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p. 259. On Said's use of this quotation, see Clifford, "On Orientalism," p. 264, and Kathleen Biddick, "Coming Out of Exile: Dante on the Orient Express," in *Postcolonial Middle Ages*, pp. 35–52 (at 37–38).

southern kingdom has excited the interest and admiration of the modern imagination," hastens to add: "The multicultural dimension of the southern kingdom was . . . only a transitory phenomenon, and it is unlikely that there was ever any genuine interest in fostering intercultural relations or protecting minority cultures."⁵³ This seems to me a rather odd instance of the Intentional Fallacy, as if multiculturalism "counts" only where it is self-consciously theorized. Such assessments, moreover, capitulate too quickly to a teleological view of the inexorability of History: but for our historical myopia and "chronocentrism," there is, after all, no reason to dismiss the long twelfth century as less significant or complex than the nineteenth.

What these examples reveal, I think, is the capital importance of attention to *context*, whether chronological, geographical, social, cultural, or even generic. Joan-Pau Rubiès notes how much the modern perception of medieval representations of the other draws on a pictorial tradition localizable in space and time to late medieval northern France—to the exclusion of a nuanced reading of the texts these images accompany:

[W]e must seek to distance ourselves from the commonplace that the Orient was represented in the Middle Ages as a land of marvels populated by a collection of monstrous races, and its corollary that this 'medieval view of the other', influenced by classical authors like Pliny and Solinus and built around medieval re-workings of Greek themes such as the Alexander romance, reflects something fundamental about the medieval mentality.

In fact, "rather than determining a simplistic and all-encompassing duality, crusade and mission generated novel experiences and eventually gave form to discourses which were original, in some ways even revolutionary."⁵⁴ Indeed, for all the reductionism of Said's vision of the Middle Ages, his favorite quotation—the line he so poignantly and repeatedly cites—comes from the twelfth-century philosopher Hugh of St. Victor: "The man who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is as a foreign land."⁵⁵ This emphasis on cosmopolitanism and exile is not surprising in the man who will go on to entitle

his memoir *Out of Place* and who will refer to Cairo—the place he spent the majority of youth—as “a city I always liked yet in which I never felt I belonged.”⁵⁶ Yet during the years of Said’s childhood, traces of Goitein’s *geniza* world certainly lingered in the eastern Mediterranean—as, for example, in the story of Leila Ahmed’s beloved Nanny, a French-speaking Croatian who, when widowed in the 1910s, made her way to Istanbul, “the capital of what was still the Ottoman Empire, a familiar landmark in people’s consciousness, as it had been for generations,” before eventually coming to Cairo.⁵⁷ In the polyglot and multiconfessional Mediterranean of Ahmed’s childhood, we recognize something of the *geniza* world of the eleventh and twelfth centuries (anachronistically?) resisting the epistemologically comforting cookie cutter of modern national, religious, and ethnic difference.

Conclusions

What I hope to have demonstrated through these examples is that to lose sight of the specificity of the Middle Ages is to lose sight of the specificity of Modernity as well. Delinking the study of medieval texts from the nineteenth-century obsession with nationalism and colonial expansion makes visible aspects of the premodern, which in turn unsettle the unreflective construction of modernity over and against an inert medieval Other. Interestingly, this is something that novelists seem, in advance of critics and theorists, to have understood: historical fiction set in the Middle Ages has become a place to explore the complexities of Muslim-Jewish-“European” relations.⁵⁸ These heterogeneous and contestatory Middle Ages—before European hegemony, before nation-states, and before national vernaculars⁵⁹—challenge us to put into practice our avowed critical desire to see beyond the binary, to encounter an “Other” whose alterity may reside precisely in its different conception of difference. Such historical work gives texture to our understanding of what *Orientalism* has taught us: that “Europe” and “the West” are not geographical entities given in advance, but ideological constructs with their own deeply complicated histories of conquest, colonization, and acculturation.

56. Edward W. Said, *Out of Place: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1999), p. 43.

57. Leila Ahmed, *A Border Passage: From Cairo to America—A Woman’s Journey* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999; repr. Penguin, 2000), p. 59.

58. See, for example, Amin Maalouf, *Léon l’Africain* (Paris: J. C. Lattès, 1986), translated as *Leo Africanus*, trans. Peter Sluglett (London: New Amsterdam Press, 1992), and Tariq Ali’s historical quartet: *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* (London: Verso, 1993) on the fall of Granada in 1492; *The Book of Saladin* (London: Verso, 1998), which a jacket blurb by Edward Said describes as “a narrative for our time, haunted by distant events and characters who are closer to us than we dreamed”; *The Stone Woman* (London: Verso, 2000); and *A Sultan in Palermo* (New York: Verso, 2005). Episodes from the history of the crusades serve as the occasion for epistemological speculations in Maria Corti, *L’Ora di tutti* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1962), in English as *Otranto*, trans. Jessie Bright (New York: Italica Press, 1993); José Saramago, *Historia do Cerco de Lisboa: Romance* (Lisbon: Caminho, 1989), in English as *The History of the Siege of Lisbon*, trans. Giovanni Pontiero (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1996). See also Evan S. Connell, *Deus lo Volt! Chronicle of the Crusades* (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 2000), and A. B. Yehoshua, *Journey to the End of the Millennium: A Novel of the Middle Ages*, trans. Nicholas de Lange (New York: Doubleday, 1999).

59. Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System AD 1250–1350* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).



4

The World Sixties

Christopher Leigh Connery

The map of the world Sixties would have battle sites and action points—Algiers 1957, Bissau 1959, Watts 1965, Mexico City 1968, Saigon 1975—trajectories, linkages, alliances—Black Panthers with Algeria, Italy, South Africa; Mao to Berlin, Oakland, and Havana; Bandung to Sri Lanka, Egypt, and Senegal. It would map the slogans of metaphoric and ideological co-presences—“Vietnam is in our factories,” “Viva Che”—and the rhetoric and syntax of the big-character posters combating revisionism and extolling people’s war that traveled from China to Calcutta, Boston, and Paris. The politics of the Sixties—and here I refer to the long Sixties, beginning with the rise of third-worldism as a political force at Dien Bien Phu (1954) or Bandung (1955), and ending with the mid-Seventies conjuncture of the end of the post-War expansion (1973–74), the September 11 bombings ending the Allende regime (1973), the end of the Vietnam War (1975), the death of Mao (1976)¹—were always fully worlded, whether we refer to the widest scale of conflict—third-world vs. first-world imperialism—or to the political, intellectual, and material links among those who challenged the capitalist order in word, heart, or deed.

The world Sixties were the time of the politics of *we*—the *we* that claimed victories in Algiers and Saigon, that spoke itself in the widest, most inspiring range of worlded imagining. *We*, that point of enunciation, is very much at stake in the present time. The assaults on the social product, on the commons—in its material, spatial, imaginative, and financial forms, the assault on the vast accumulation of social property, on the material bases on which this worlded *we* is said: this is the Bush project, the Putin project, the privatization project worldwide.

Anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian, anti-colonialist, and anti-imperialist movements were worlded long ago. Those conjunctures marked by the First, Second, and Third Internationals were as worldwide in scope, in linkages, and in inspiration as the Sixties was to be. The density of linkage in those earlier periods easily refutes the claim that the Sixties new media

1. The long Sixties basically follows Jameson’s periodization, in Fredric Jameson, “Periodizing the Sixties” and Fredric Jameson, Anders Stephanson, and Cornel West, “A Very Partial Chronology,” in Sohnya Sayres, Anders Stephanson, Stanley Aronowitz, and Fredric Jameson, eds. *The Sixties Without Apology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1984), pp. 178–215. Jameson’s article remains, in my view, the strongest conceptualization of the Sixties. Further references to this article will be in the text as “Periodizing.”



were the instrumental forces in guaranteeing a new level of revolutionary or oppositional internationalism. The Sixties trajectories forged some new paths, and followed many old ones. For the struggles that world capitalism engenders, if truly engaged with the antagonist, will always be worldwide in scope, even if the links forged are not always visible to all participants. Many have argued, for example, and with some reason, that during the Cultural Revolution China was more isolated from the world than at any time in recent history. But I will argue below that Cultural Revolution Maoism was a fully worlded presence, and not only to those outside China.

Here I must insist on the particularity of the Sixties. This was not the coordinated worldedness of the Comintern, which marked some of those earlier moments, nor was it the worldedness called for today by left strategists of the new International, from the World Social Forum to formations further to the left. The worldedness I claim for the Sixties is one of links and of co-presence; it is a worlded claim for periodization, and a periodization with global stakes: the awakening sense of global possibility, of a different future.

The relationality that activated this worldwide we, that furnished oppositional politics with a chain of connection and co-presence, was equality. Equality has been a goal at the heart of liberatory politics for two hundred years. Since the assault on the Sixties began, equality has been subject to a series of ideological attacks and reversals, some successful and some not, in a battle which has been joined again, by the Bush administration, with unprecedented ferocity.

A worlded Sixties links the movements and struggles of that era to the long history of struggle, movement, and oppositional organization that has coexisted with capital's ever more penetrating reach; and it also serves as another scene of possibility, another set of conjunctures, a lens through which we can reflect on change and transformation, on the dialectics of success and failure, and on the current situation. And what is the current situation? Globalization, as we all know. This latest, 1990s worldedness, though, began as a victory for the right. The collapse of the socialist regimes meant that there was no outside, no limit to capital's

flow; in the famous dictum of Margaret Thatcher, “no alternative.” All of our questions, all of our struggles, our total context, became, in this rhetoric, “global.”

The left is still working out its relationship to this new stage. In contrast to the new forms of hopefulness signaled in works such as Hardt and Negri’s *Empire*, some of the left’s most important analysts of global phenomena (Wallerstein and Amin, for example) are far more pessimistic. This pessimism is a forceful presence in Eric Hobsbawm’s 1994 *Age of Extremes*,² the last word of which is “darkness,” a quality that grows as his narrative reaches its terminus. But the darkness has not been total. The collapse of the authoritarian regimes of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe brought some liberatory energy to some sectors of their populations—this relief was in many cases temporary and in nearly all cases a measured one. And the post-1978 market reforms in China, too, represent an experiment, more hybrid in quality than is often realized, whose outcome is not predictable. But in general, the becoming global of the 1990s diminished rather than opened a sense of global possibility.³ In that sense, Fukuyama’s *End of History*, which subsequent events proved wrong in many of its assumptions and conclusions, well marked the tenor of that juncture: the sense of an ending was dominant. If the Bush regime’s departure from the 1990s neo-liberal consolidation has the odd effect of making one nostalgic for the Nineties, it has altered our sense of the future, from Fukuyama’s prediction of a world that is unchanging, and uninteresting, to one that is simply changing for the worse. And to be sure, Fukuyama’s prediction that human history had seen the end of all beginnings was already a profoundly pessimistic one. On the left, the concept of anti-globalization, characterizing the new social movements that came to prominence in Seattle, Genoa, and elsewhere, had a short life. A wide range of organizations and spokespersons on the left, perhaps recalling the long history of oppositional internationalism, sought, as the Nineties advanced, to embrace the global terrain and the global reach of possibility, rather than concede it *a priori* to capital. “Anti-globalization” was over. Another globalization, an alternative globalization, a real International, was possible. This embrace of new possibility, a renewed politics of the

2. The first UK edition is titled without the definite article, a point commented upon by Perry Anderson in his important review. Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914–91* (London: Michael Joseph, 1994). The US edition was titled *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914&-1991* (New York: Vintage, 1996). Perry Anderson, “Confronting Defeat,” *London Review of Books*, vol. 24, no. 20 (October 17, 2002).

3. Michael Denning’s argument, which I engage later in this essay, is one of several that sees post-1989 globalism as a new era of possibility for a real global cultural front. His “age of three worlds” thesis de-emphasizes the global character of Sixties movements. Michael Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds* (New York: Verso, 2004).

future, is further ground for linking the new conception of struggle to those of the earlier period.

“Global” was never really an adequate term for post-1989 capitalism. In this age of niche marketing, production-on-demand, and flexible outsourcing, there is something crude and massive about the global *per se*. The real contours of what has passed for the new globality have by now become too clear, suggesting not only an unprecedented acceleration of the unevenness that has always characterized capitalist space, but a new overtness, in the ideological sphere, of global differentiation, wherein large sectors of the human population and their living space are classified as irrelevant or surplus. Nineties globalization was, from the perspective of dominant capitalist power, the time of negative interpellation: global capital brought large sectors of the population wholly under its dominion, but as negative presences: without hope, future, or alternative. In this respect, the now vanished era of modernization theory and the discourse of development, from which the world is in all other respects lucky to be delivered, seems almost utopian, given the now widespread evidence of its failure. The writing out of large sectors of the globe was already evident in the late Cold War years: the tough-guy *realpolitik* of Kissinger’s dismissal of the entire African continent marked the end of the era of the African proxy war, though not, certainly, out of any regard for the welfare of the African people, who still live with the legacy of those wars.

The global character of capitalist-socialist conflict was not always to the disadvantage of oppressed peoples and nations. The USSR, Cuba, and the People’s Republic of China pointed continually to the US treatment of African Americans and Native Americans as indicative of the real character of US power, and US government concessions to those groups during the long Sixties were made with an attentiveness to the global signifying power of civil rights progress or regress. In Latin America, checking the power of Cuba could not be accomplished solely through alliance with military dictatorships, but required some promise, no matter how hollow, of “progress” as well. During the Cold War years, the United States ultimately failed to build anything in Africa quite as impressive socially as the Tanzania-Zambia railway, constructed by Chinese workers with Chinese

government support in the early 1970s, but there was still some recognition that the battle for hearts and minds was a real battle, with adversaries and stakes. Post-Cold War, the United States became more and more openly indifferent to global hearts. It remains to be seen whether the current talk of the spread of “democracy,” whose sole content is the electoral process itself, will buy the dominant power any time.

The post-1989 period has seen an unrelenting process of global triage: for every state, region, social sector, or industry taken into the fold of globalization, huge numbers have been given nothing: the US poor and underemployed, largely African-American, as well as third-world peasants, many of whose migrant populations fuel the growth of the new “planet of slums,” Mike Davis’s term for the sprawling growths of impoverished populations in the world’s largest cities—Lagos, Jakarta, Dhaka, Mumbai—as well as in former secondary towns such as Douala, Bamako, and Belém.⁴ Within advanced capitalist economies, this logic of separation insinuates itself into the minutiae of daily life’s transactions. Compulsory participation in multi-leveled consumption has fueled recent US economic growth, albeit at the cost of massive middle-class indebtedness. This intensive marketing of the goods of the New Economy is reserved, however, for those able to assume the debt: more massive penetration of the haves, through stimulated demand and reclassification of necessities, coupled with disregard for the have-nots. Nineties globalization, then, has been Janus-faced: globalization for capital, separation and anti-globalization for humanity.

Will this result, though the cunning of history, in a truly globalized oppositional force? Let’s hope so. But the dominant discourses of globalization—the boosterism, the advertising images, as well as the regnant academic mythologies of linkage, hybridity, and imbrication—all mask the fact that, outside the regimes of the market and abstract labor, in terms of a global social project, or even a total frame of reference, humanity’s integration is at a remarkably low ebb. Systemic challenges to the dominant arrangement are particularly weak. Reexamining the world Sixties could help in the imagination of global possibility, of global potentiality, of a global project: the world Sixties against the global Nineties.

4. See Mike Davis, “Planet of Slums,” *New Left Review* 26 (May/April 2004), pp. 5–34. See also the text on which Davis bases much of his article: UN-Habitat, *The Challenge of the Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements: 2003* (London: Earthscan, 2003).

5. "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture," *Social Text* 1 (Winter 1979), pp. 130–148; "The Politics of Theory: Ideological Positions in the Postmodernism Debate," *New German Critique* 33 (Fall 1984), pp. 53–65; "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 29(1) (1984), pp. 55–73; "Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* 146 (July–August 1984), pp. 52–92; Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity* (New York: Verso, 2002). For "Periodizing the Sixties" see note 1.

Periodization

Among contemporary thinkers, Fredric Jameson has made the strongest theoretical and political claims for historical periodization, and it is significant that these claims have been made from the left. Periodization was a concern in Jameson's work present in strong form in 1979 and 1981, coming to fruition in 1984, which saw the publication of three articles on postmodernism, notably "Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," as well as "Periodizing the Sixties." The work on periodization reached a sustained theoretical elaboration in his 2002 *A Singular Modernity*.⁵ Jameson's Sixties article, as well as the postmodernism pieces, adapted Mandel's periodization of late capitalism, marking the early Seventies as the onset of the period of contraction, or B-phase, in the long Kondratieff wave that began in the 1940s, a wave whose A-phase carried capitalism, in Mandel's analysis, to a qualitatively new stage: lateness, which shared something of Adorno's lateness as well.

Adorno's and Mandel's periodization of late capitalism mark a degree of capitalist penetration whose systemic, social, and economic effects are baleful, but their work has also been important to oppositional imagination. Outside the realm of the aesthetic—art history has long had the most sustained discourse of periodization—periodization's political stakes are clear: periodization allows beginnings and endings, change and possibility. These are useful structurings of the political imagination in times like these (2005), when the spaces of hope seem so eroded.

If hope or, more modestly, a sense of possibility is what we want, what can we learn from, what can we do with the stories that Sixties periodization allows to be told? Jameson's Sixties is unified by the common objective situation of capitalism, and his narrative is disjunctive. The Sixties, after all, marked a rare concurrence of capitalist expansion and systemic revolt. The capacity of the Sixties to offer to the political scene new subject positions, new modes of signification, new thought, new politics, new circuits of imagination and inspiration is born of a kind of superstructural leap: propelled by the momentum of A-phase expansion, the historical dynamic allows or inspires multiple yet articulated sites of emergence and

opposition, which surpass, in their energy, the very economic substrate that formed their condition of possibility.

The Sixties were in that sense an immense and inflationary issuing of superstructural credit: a universal abandonment of the referential gold standard, an extraordinary printing up of ever more devalued signifiers. With the end of the Sixties, with the world economic crisis, all the old infrastructural bills then slowly came due once more; and the Eighties will be characterized by an effort, on a world scale, to proletarianize all those unbound social forces which gave the Sixties their energy, by an extension of class struggle, in other words, into the farthest reaches of the globe as well as the most minute configurations of local institutions (such as the university system). The unifying force here is the new vocation of a henceforth global capitalism, which may also be expected to unify the unequal, fragmented, or local resistances to the process. ("Periodizing," p. 208).

History post-Eighties took a different turn, whose ultimate character is still not clear. What I find important in Jameson's periodization of the Sixties, though, is the very disjuncture between the political/cultural and the economic. What this means to the imagination of and possibilities for systemic change is still unclear. The end of the Sixties seemed to Jameson to prefigure a recombination of these separated strata, with perhaps a reemergence of opposition along more clearly economic lines. Other Marxists, such as Henri Lefebvre and those he has influenced, particularly in the area of uneven development, focus less on the single economic dominant and more on the "lags" in capitalist temporality, those differentials between overdeveloped and underdeveloped elements in the social sphere, which can often be productive of explosions, crises, or other vectors of change. The lag is what must be kept in mind when considering another, better known corollary to Jameson's periodization of the Sixties, in the article's second sentence:

The following sketch starts from position that History is necessity, that the Sixties had to happen the way it did, and that its opportunities and failures were inextricably intertwined, marked by the objective constraints and openings of a determinate historical situation, of which I thus wish to offer a tentative and provisional model. ("Periodizing," p. 178)



History as necessity is far from determinism: it is, in an important way, its opposite. What “had to happen” was the fact of the entire combination, the totality of forces, whose interrelations consisted of lag, disjuncture, and unexpected openings. Jameson’s argument in the Sixties essay shares many features of his postmodernism essays. The classic example of the piece’s periodizing reasoning is found in the juxtaposed readings of the fate of autonomous art in Wallace Stevens, and of Guevarist revolutionary strategy as elaborated in Régis Debray’s theory of the revolutionary *foco*, the small guerrilla band in a liberated zone, whose achievements and example could spread far beyond the limitations of its size. As one would expect in an argument for periodization, both the high-modernist aesthetic and revolutionary strategy are shown to partake of a homologous cultural, rather than explicitly political logic.

But when we shift from periodization and historiography to the sphere of the political itself, a somewhat different terrain emerges. Jameson has been mistakenly read as a kind of “advocate” for postmodern aesthetic and cultural practice, simply by virtue of naming it. The equivalence of the “endlessly elaborating poem” and the *foco* is a logical one, but it would be impossible to mistake his political energies in the Sixties work: “periodizing the Sixties” gives primary place to the eventfulness of Sixties rebellion, in the Third World and elsewhere. Although *foco* and Stevens’s high-modernist autonomism reach similar historical dead ends, the spread of the *foco* is defeated in struggle, by forces in the world; it does not die by the self-destructive force of its own content. The Sixties were, ultimately, a different kind of promise: their beginning signaled the eruption of energies and impulses that would never be exhausted as long as injustice and inequality reign; their end was not an end to those energies, but the passing of an oppositional dominant, whose energies and whose newly developed forms remain available to future conjunctures: the Sixties adds new forms to the *longue durée* of revolution and refusal, coexistent with capitalism itself.

When we are considering the history of revolt and refusal, whether of individuals, classes, subject positions, nations, or other social groups, another set of politics enters the dominant historiographical field, and that is the contest over the very existence of opposition. Histories have

been cleansed of their bad subjects for generations, and the Sixties is no exception: since the mid-Seventies, a range of forces worldwide has sought to erase the Sixties, in discourse and in deed. US conservative politics have since the Nixon presidency been open about the intention to bury the Sixties; the post-1978 Chinese state has defined itself against the Cultural Revolution, about which it has largely prohibited discussion. Kristin Ross's *May '68 and Its Afterlives* is a comprehensive analysis of the range of forces in French political and intellectual life that have had at their core the forgetting, trivialization, or containment of the French explosion. In Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America, the buried histories of Sixties social and revolutionary movements, and the buried histories of their brutal repressions, have limned the politics of intellectual life for decades. The presence of the Sixties, in the authoritarian, neo-liberal, or imperial variants of postmodern hegemonies, is always a politicized presence, a challenged and a challenging presence.

Eric Hobsbawm's *Age of Extremes* has emerged as an authoritative version of twentieth-century history. It too is written from the left, and it too is a periodizing text, structured around a particular narrative. Hobsbawm divides the "short twentieth century" into three periods: "the age of catastrophe," 1914–1945; "the golden age" of postwar expansion, 1945 to the early Seventies; and "the landslide," the crisis decades following the mid-Seventies decline in the advanced capitalist economies. The short twentieth century itself is framed by the coexistence of the Soviet Union and the capitalist powers. The Bolshevik Revolution, for Hobsbawm, stands as the twentieth-century's significant revolution, and all other revolutionary energies—third-world, Chinese, and Sixties—are comparatively insignificant. The Bolshevik Revolution's importance for Hobsbawm lies not merely in what it accomplished in Russia, and in the defeat of fascist Germany. The character of Golden Age capitalism in the West was shaped by its social democratic contract and its Keynesian admixture of centralized planning. Both of these were correctives to the excesses that had produced the Great Slump, and both took some part of their dynamic from socialist values. As the landslide approached, both sides lost their dynamism. What wrecked the USSR was *détente*—an entry into a world

6. Regis Debray, *Modeste contribution aux discours et cérémonies officielles du dixième anniversaire [de mai 68]* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1978). A shortened version of this text was published in English as "A Modest Contribution to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Tenth Anniversary." *New Left Review* I, 115 (May-June 1979), pp. 45-65. Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c. 1958-c. 1974* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

system on what ultimately could only be losing terms, with the foregone opportunity to carry out internal systemic reforms in a de-linked Socialist bloc. What damaged capitalism, claims Hobsbawm, was the emergence of an unfettered, uninhibited, advanced capitalism, following the triumph of the individual and the decline of class and other social formations in the Sixties. The pure capitalism that was to be ideologized as neo-liberalism reopened itself to the dynamics of crisis to which earlier capitalism had been subject, and from which "planning" had provided a provisional way out.

As we take for granted the air we breathe, and which makes possible all our activities, so capitalism took for granted the atmosphere in which it operated, and which it had inherited from the past. It only discovered how essential it had been when the air became thin. In other words, capitalism had succeeded because it was not just capitalist. It was the cultural revolution of the last third of the century that began to erode the inherited historical assets of capitalism and to demonstrate the difficulties of operating without them. . . . The market claimed to triumph as its nakedness and inadequacy could no longer be concealed. (*Age*, p. 343)

Hobsbawm emphasizes something important in capitalism's dynamic: the capacity to absorb elements and modes outside itself, whether from the Soviet Union, from "nature," or from workers' sociality. But his demarcations are revelatory, too. Hobsbawm places post-World War II third-world revolution within an earlier or other historical dynamic—peasant rebellions or anti-colonial uprisings—and, even more than many historians, disconnects its temporality from the first-world Sixties. In his representation of 1968 and first-world anti-systemic movements, he is not wholly unsympathetic, understanding the fundamentally unsatisfactory character of capitalist social existence. Yet in large part, his narrative is the same as Regis Debray's "Modest Contribution to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Tenth Anniversary," or Arthur Marwick's bid for historiographical authority, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c. 1958-c. 1974* (1998, 903 pp.).⁶ Debray's influential essay, written while still in his third-worldist phase, figured first-world youth rebellions as a kind of advanced guard for the fashioning of the

autonomous, neo-liberal subject, whereby the libidinal pleasures of revolt transferred easily into the libidinal pleasures of consumption. Marwick writes of a Sixties that changed everything—sexual mores, popular culture, fashion, religion, the family, intergenerational relations—everything except capitalism and the nature of political authority. The familiarity of the narrative of always-already cooptation—Heath and Potter’s *Nation of Rebels: Why Counterculture Became Consumer Culture* (HarperBusiness, 2004) and Thomas Frank’s *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago, 1998)—is a sign of the strength of what is an ideologically driven distinctive temporal vision. Hobsbawm sees first-world Sixties rebellion as coincident with the demise of class antagonism itself, a demise figured in the massification of culture across the economic scale and, more importantly, in the end of first-world industrial working-class identity as such, the end of the period “of the domination of ‘us’ over ‘I.’” (*Age*, p. 306) This story, of the end of the class subject and the rise of other subjectivities, is a familiar one in other versions of oppositional politics, in Foucault, Laclau and Mouffe, and elsewhere. But it is a story that can only be told with particular spatial demarcations. The United States, for example, with its particular class structure, fits uneasily into this picture. But more importantly, for Hobsbawm’s, Debray’s, and Marwick’s stories to be told, the first-world Sixties needed to be divorced from the third-world Sixties. This has political consequences.

In a revolutionary situation, in the midst of a revolutionary event, there is always a suffusion of possibility, an opening to the shining through of the future, and any politics of the future will be a political figuring of the temporal itself. Alain Badiou has referred to the “faithfulness to the event”: May ’68, of course, but also the Sixties more broadly is the time of eventfulness, an eventfulness that right-wing pseudo-events—September 11, now—exist to obscure. A periodization of the Sixties that is to foreground the presence of possibility, to keep the hope of a utopian future alive, and to forestall the narratives that see the Eighties, the Nineties, even the present as the Sixties’ future, as its end result, as the work the Sixties did unawares (history’s cunning)—such a periodization must have at its core logic not causality, progression, or even succession, but

7. For abstract time, see Georg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. Rodney Livingstone, trans. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971), pp. 90 ff.

the radical co-presence of its component elements. This co-presence—of Vietnam in Calcutta and Oakland; the versions of the Chinese Cultural Revolution in Havana and Paris—not only worked to break up the global system of separation, it was a claim for a new time.

Jameson clarified the political stakes in periodization *per se* in the Sixties and postmodernism essays, which he wrote in the 1980s. This 2007 worlding of the Sixties, written at a time when the Sixties has entered that intermediate zone, passing from memory to history—and that might, in many ways, be a fortunate thing—is not simply a respatialization of the temporal category, but rather a gesture towards what I would identify as the Sixties politics of temporality, a politics visible in multiple locations, multiple political projects, and explicitly posed against a variety of dominant temporal structures. Sixties time was, in so many of its registers, a stand against given time, against capitalist time, against abstract time.⁷ This is the temporality of the third-world revolutionary project that sought a bridge to a liberatory nationhood, one not paced to the temporality of development or modernization; the revolutionary skipping of classical Marxist stages, in Cuba and in the China of the Great Leap Forward. It is the temporality of the anti-revisionist struggles in China and elsewhere, against what seemed an entropic law of bureaucracy-fueled decay of the revolution; and in the overdeveloped world, the confounding or abandoning of the prescribed paces of the staged life: from school, to specialization, to apprenticeship, to worker, and even to boss. Even the revolutions within revolutions were revolts against backsliding, against the reemergence of capitalist time in moments of flagging revolutionary energy. The worlded Sixties is also Sixties time.

“Two, Three, Many Vietnams”

The era of third-world revolution fits uneasily into any of the dominant periodizations, and one must guard against all frames that deny the Third World its own history on its own terms. Periodization will always be relational, selective, and political: never absolute. Decolonization and peasant wars have their *longue durée*, and one could argue that my mid-Seventies terminus—omitting Nicaragua, El Salvador, the release of Mandela

and the end of South African apartheid in the Eighties and Nineties, and, more recently, the FARC in Colombia, the CPP in the Philippines, and ongoing struggles in Palestine—is in certain respects arbitrary. The mid-Seventies onset of what Hobsbawm terms “the landslide” is centered on the advanced capitalist regions; East Asia’s temporality of boom and bust would have a different dynamic⁸ and might contribute to a different periodization, albeit one with different political stakes. 1989—the collapse of the socialist world—looms large in the periodizing logic of many recent thinkers: Hardt and Negri, and especially Michael Denning, in his *Culture in the Age of the Three Worlds*, where 1945–1989 forms one coherent period, highlighting what he sees as the very different terrain of resistance following the 1989 “crisis of the three deals—The Keynesian Deal, the Stalinist Deal, and the third-world nationalist Deal.”⁹ In Denning’s vision, Chiapas is the significant nodal point, where the seizure of state power is no longer the primary *telos*, and where Genoa and Seattle prefigure the new combination. Time will tell the extent to which the character of anti-capitalist struggle has changed, and what breaks and continuities will prove to have been most significant for our current condition.

While the Tricontinental Conference of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, held in Havana in January 1966, could be said to represent the world Sixties conjuncture,¹⁰ the strong argument for the world Sixties, a third-world-centered Sixties, an argument that Che Guevara made in his address to the conference, remains the fact of the American War in Vietnam. The nature of the emergent post-World War II capitalist world order, whose rules, institutions, and regimens were being drafted in Washington, Wall Street, and Cambridge, was, over the course of the Fifties and Sixties, becoming clear to the world. Vietnam resisted this order and became the relay, the reference point, for worldwide refusal.

Satyajit Ray’s 1970 film *Pratidwandi* (*The Adversary*), based on the Bengali novel by Sunil Ganguly (*Gangopadhyaya*), is set in Calcutta during the hot period of Naxalite urban politics, when, following the defeat of the peasant uprising in the rural sector, radical and China-inspired revolutionary politics had shifted to Calcutta itself. Siddhartha Chowdhury, the film’s relatively apolitical protagonist, meanders through a city punctu-

8. The most important treatment of the crisis remains Robert Brenner, *The Boom and the Bust: The US in the World Economy* (London: Verso, 2002). For a critique of Hobsbawm’s periodization based on third-world and East Asian growth timelines, see Perry Anderson, “Confronting Defeat.” There are many critiques of the third-world concept *tout court*. Probably the best remains Arif Dirlik, *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997). I periodize the 1974–1989 period, giving centrality to East Asian economic growth, in Christopher Connery, “Pacific Rim Discourse: The US Global Imaginary in the Late Cold War Years,” *boundary 2* 21, no. 1 (Spring 1994), pp. 30–57.

9. The original reference is to the Midnight Notes Collective. Michael Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds* (New York: Verso, 2004), p. 46.

10. Robert Young sees in the Tricontinental Conference the birth of the postcolonial subject, and dates postcolonial critique—he prefers the word tricontinentalism to postcolonialism—to that Sixties moment. Robert Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (London: Blackwell, 2001), esp. pp. 212 ff.

ated by explosions and political action. In the film's first scene, he arrives for a job interview at the Botanical Survey of India, presided over by three bored managers. Early in the interview, when the officious interviewers ask him a question that referred to "independence," Siddhartha asks them to whose independence they refer. "Our independence," one official admonishes. The interview ends as follows:

Interviewer: What do you regard as the most outstanding and significant event of the last decade?

Siddhartha: The . . . war in Vietnam, sir.

Interviewer: More significant than the landing on the moon?

Siddhartha: I think so, sir.

Interviewer: Could you tell us why you think so?

Siddhartha: Because the moon landing . . . You see. We . . . we . . . weren't entirely unprepared for the moon landing. We . . . we . . . we knew it had to come sometime. We knew about the space flight, the great advances in space technology . . . so we knew it had to happen. I'm not saying it wasn't a remarkable achievement, but it wasn't unpredictable. The fact that they did land on the moon . . .

Interviewer: Do you think the war in Vietnam was unpredictable?

Siddhartha: Not the war itself, but what it has revealed about the Vietnamese people; about their extraordinary power of resistance. Ordinary people. Peasants. And no one knew they had it in them. This isn't a matter of technology, it's just plain human courage. And it . . . takes your breath away.

Interviewer: Are you a communist?

Siddhartha: I . . . I don't think one has to be one in order to admire Vietnam, sir.

Interviewer: That doesn't answer my question. However, you may go now.

The earlier question about independence underscores the issue of the postwar nation-state form, and suggests why the issue of state power had

such resonance. What kind of nation would the new nations be? Who would determine the nature and political character of the new states?¹¹ The Kennedy and Johnson administrations' involvement in Vietnam was a new kind of imperialism, an imperialism that sought not direct rule, as in the old imperialisms, but a new world order, an application of the "New Frontier's" rationalist model to a global state system,¹² a system that would parcel the capitalist world into a structure of regional hegemonies (Japan, Germany, Mexico, Brazil) under a central US hegemon. The system would mandate in the new states an integrated industrial and rural development, with civil society and governmental institutions designed to accommodate the state economy to the international order. Siddhartha's question to his interviewers—whose independence?—pointed to the unresolved character of postwar national self-determination. Vietnam's answer—not the United States' independence, but our independence—inspired the world. The incremental failure of the initial Kennedy-Johnson plan—"middle ways," strategic hamlets, and proxy politics all fell victim to "local realities"—was not on its own sufficient to discredit the efficacy of the US model. That discrediting, that defeat, happened in armed struggle.

It would be impossible to overestimate the importance that Vietnam held for revolutionaries and activists around the globe, in the Third World as well as the First, and as Ray's film documents, not only to activists. US technological, industrial, and financial superiority, its command of global futurity, and its willingness to project its power on a global scale, were always accompanied by a relentless message of inevitability. Although it was Khrushchev who declared "we will bury you," that was in fact the daily message that the United States bombed, broadcast, and bullied into the world. This was a battle joined everywhere, but ground zero was Vietnam. Vietnam was the battleground, but also the model, as Che Guevara's *Message to the Tricontinental*, a widely circulated pamphlet whose injunction is the title of this section, makes clear.¹³

But what did "many Vietnams" actually mean? World socialism, as the Cold War domino imaginary would have it? A series of anti-Stalinist, anti-bureaucratic alternatives to capitalism, as Marcuse claimed?¹⁴ A dominant left analysis of the Vietnamese side of the war held that it was conditioned

11. The significant presence of the "new states" is an important dimension of the period, and the utopian character of the emergence of Sixties-era new states stands in marked contrast to the literature around the emergence of the post-Soviet new states. For a still-useful typology of the new states, see Clifford Geertz, "After the Revolution: The Fate of Nationalism in the New States," and "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States," in Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

12. There is considerable literature on the nature of US imperialism in Vietnam. The concept of liberal imperialism as I use it is taken from Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

13. Che Guevara, *Message to the Tricontinental: "Create two, three . . . many Vietnams."* Havana: Executive Secretariat of the Organization of the Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (OSPAAAL). April 16, 1967. The text can be viewed at www.marxists.org/archive/guevara/1967/04/16.htm. It was published in English.

14. Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969).

15. Frances Fitzgerald, in *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam* (New York: Little, Brown, and Co., 1972), and in her earlier journalism on which this book was based, was an important voice for the anti-Cold War interpretation. Her work drew on that of the French orientalist Paul Mus, who taught Southeast Asian studies at Yale in the Sixties. Today, much of what Fitzgerald wrote about “Vietnamese character” seems dated in its essentialism, though the political character of that essentialism was quite different then.

by purely national factors, either “civil war” between competing national interests, or as part of a long history of Vietnamese nationalist anti-imperialism. Overwhelmingly, in global discourses of solidarity with the Vietnamese war, the national character of the war is affirmed. “The Vietnamese people,” and their struggles, were the objects of left identification, in the Third World and the First. Socialism—the organization of national social life—was generally understood not as the national component of a global political project, but as the form of self-determination aimed at eliminating exploitation, inequality, and a rationality imposed from the outside, in a world where the force of exploitation and inequality had a name: the United States. On the left, this amounted to a kind of domino theory in reverse: the spread of socialism in the Third World was always concretized at the local or national levels, but it constituted real and symbolic cumulative roll-back against the power that sought global unity on its own terms. In the first-world left, the war in Vietnam was primarily understood as a conflict between Vietnamese self-determination and US global imperialism. On one level, the argument for the local, national character of the conflict was an argument against the Cold War consensus in the United States, which saw North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front, as well as Cuba, as simply proxy expressions of the force of global communism.¹⁵ The inspirational force of the Vietnamese revolution did not derive primarily from specifically Vietnamese revolutionary practice. More important, ultimately, than the writings of Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap, which circulated widely during the Sixties in European-language editions published by the Foreign Languages Publishing House in Hanoi, was the actuality of Vietnam—its very existence against a globalized US power. In this sense, the nation was not a diminished sphere. Rather, it represented the engagement of struggle on the level of the everyday, where the inroads of capitalist domination were actually felt. Vietnamese communism was overwhelmingly national in its orientation, but the force of its oppositional power, its actualization of the Great Refusal, had a significance that was international, and multiple. If the United States could be resisted in that place, it could be resisted elsewhere. Multiplicity—two, three, many—was on the side of the anti-United States forces.

The Guevara had been deeply hostile to the United States from his pre-revolutionary days, and his writings were among those instrumental in naming the United States as the primary enemy of liberatory energies. But what kind of enemy did the Vietnam War reveal the United States to be? We find in Guevara too the deep admiration for the courage of the Vietnamese people, and the conviction that US imperialism, not totalitarianism of any kind, was the main enemy of liberty and social justice. Guevara's pamphlet was illustrative of the particular character of the worlded Vietnamese war: the way Vietnam was figured simultaneously in its seriality and its specificity. Like many of Guevara's writings, the pamphlet evokes José Martí, using Martí's phrase "Our America" to indicate the coming theater in the anti-United States world struggle, and the place within it of the Cuban revolution. The US line on Latin America—"We will not allow another Cuba"¹⁶—underscores this dominant logic of seriality: just as, from the US standpoint, Cuban exemplarity must not be allowed to spread in Latin America, Guevara's Vietnam is the situation that must be multiplied. The inspirational character of Vietnam, throughout the resistance but particularly after the Tet offensive in 1968, was significant throughout the Third World—for India, for the revolt in the Philippines, for Cuba, for other Latin American revolutionaries, and for Red Guards in the Chinese Cultural Revolution, small bands of whom traveled to Vietnam to join the fight. Not only did the war show that resistance was possible, but it underscored a conviction about Sixties struggles worldwide, an insight repeated in Chinese publications on US imperialism, that the war in Vietnam was further revelation of the weakness of the newest version of the imperial project: that the United States was a "paper tiger."

Although the Tet offensive in early 1968 was a huge military defeat for the North Vietnamese and the NLF, it transformed the conflict into one of total war. As Jeremi Suri points out in *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente*, Tet marked the real end of the ideology of "liberal empire," the US ability to portray its presence as oriented toward development, toward the fashioning of South Vietnam as an exemplary bulwark against communism. Now it was full-scale technowar, salvation through destruction.¹⁷ With the sheer violence of Tet and its bloody after-

16. This and other quotations are from the Web version of Guevara's pamphlet.

17. Suri, op. cit., pp. 161 ff. (See note 12.) For the idea of technowar, and a clear demonstration that the US war in Vietnam was in no way a "limited war," see James Gibson. *The Perfect War: Technowar in Vietnam* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly, 1986).

18. Jeremy Varon, *Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 10.

19. Jorge Volpi, *La Imaginación y el Poder: Una Historia Intelectual de 1968* (Mexico DF: Biblioteca Era, 1998).

math—My Lai, Rolling Thunder—came the worldwide cry to “bring the war home.” Bringing the war home—the phrase originated in the Weatherman leadership of the Students for a Democratic Society—had multiple registers, and represented a significant internationalization of the Vietnam conflict. It was a project that sought, through a turning of the citizenry against the nation, a dismantlement of the core capitalist states by a massive refusal of participation, a massive dropping out of the “we” that had been the ideologized expression of first-world national purpose. It was also a manifesto for pure, existential opposition: by simply existing in defiance, outside the system, left opposition was repeating the facticity of Vietnam, an ungovernability within the terms of the new world order. For some, in Europe and the United States, it meant the turn to armed struggle, a turn which, applying the logic of Debray’s *foco*, found its political efficacy, as Jeremy Varon puts it, “simply in existing,” rather than in tactical success or failure.¹⁸ Bringing the war home worked: domestic opposition made further escalation difficult, and hastened the pullout of US forces from Vietnam. It brought European states to the verge of political crisis, threatening the post-World War II structure of alliances.

The ability to imaginatively inhabit the Vietnam War, to see its local resonances around the world, was a significant unifying element of the world Sixties. In Mexico, for example, the generation of 1968 struggled against not only the long history of United States–Mexican conflict, but against what many saw, in a newly worlded imaginary, as the repetition of the Vietnam War in Mexico itself.¹⁹ The Vietnam War, in the end, did not multiply, and the United States continued to pursue its hegemonic aims in different ways. But the Vietnamese victory, though hardly acknowledged as such, and the domestic opposition the war engendered, had been a defeat for the US consensus. In Jeremi Suri’s analysis, the period of east-west détente which came in the Seventies marked a global management of political crisis, a settlement pursued by powers more concerned about internal, domestic opposition than about great power rivalry. The forces arrayed against “many Vietnams” were considerable, but the political terrain had shifted. US weaknesses exposed during the Vietnam War have not been bandaged over. This exemplarity of Vietnam remains.

Global Maoism

Each of the twentieth century's revolutions changed our understanding of the nature and historicity of revolution, and altered thinking about the spatial and temporal character of revolutionary possibility. The existence of these revolutions, particularly the successful ones, became part of oppositional thought worldwide, entering ideologies, struggles, and discourses. Ho Chi Minh, nationalist though he was, framed much of his revolutionary rhetoric and strategy in the terms of "People's War," whose model was China. But Maoism, and the Chinese 1960s, remain an uneasy presence in left discourse, particularly in the West. It is easier to find sympathetic analyses of the Cultural Revolution in China itself, whose post-Mao government is largely based on a repudiation of the Cultural Revolution.²⁰ Hobsbawm's *Age of Extremes* refers to the Cultural Revolution as "madness" (p. 260); among leftist intellectuals of almost all stripes, it marks the extreme that should not have been reached. In the dominant version of revolutionary memory in the United States, the Sixties mass movement was badly damaged by Maoist groups such as the Progressive Labor Party or the Revolutionary Communist Party, whose furious sectarianism, and whose grim, joyless, anti-countercultural energies sapped any mass appeal that the revolutionary left could have had.²¹ And then there were the geopolitical consequences of China's identification of the USSR as main imperialist enemy in the world. This split had enormous and largely negative consequences. Just as the long Sixties were over, for example, China took the US side against the *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (MPLA) in Angola, contributing to the buildup of Savimbi's forces that condemned that country to nearly three decades of civil war. One could indeed link Maoism to a narrative of failure and defeat, and there are doubtless elements of global Maoism that in retrospect proved to have been dead ends. Soviet-oriented communist parties were damaged worldwide by the Maoist current.

Did this, in some way, contribute to the great debacle of 1989? Perhaps. Many chroniclers of the Sixties have succumbed to the temptation to view Maoism, particularly Cultural Revolution Maoism, as the devil's music, one that sent all who danced with it to hell. But let's be wary of

20. Although much direct positive evaluation of the Cultural Revolution is not publishable in contemporary China, sympathetic politics can be found in radical and left critics associated with Chinese rural reform. On the new rural movements, see the forthcoming work of Alexander Day, PhD candidate in history at the University of California Santa Cruz.

21. Max Elbaum, in an important history of the US left, writes from a position far to the left of, say, Todd Gitlin, whose *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* is a negative model of Sixties history. In Elbaum's view, the embrace of and presence of Maoism was a primary cause of the waning of revolutionary energy in the United States. Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che* (New York: Verso, 2002).

22. The founding of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) in 1969 signaled the orientation of the revolutionary movement away from the USSR and toward China.

23. The quotation is from Shu Riping and is cited in Arif Dirlik, "Modernism and Antimodernism in Mao Zedong's Marxism," in Arif Dirlik, Paul Healy, and Nick Knight, eds., *Critical Perspectives on Mao Zedong's Thought* (Amherst, New York: Humanity Books, 1997), p. 68. The anthology, and Dirlik's essay in particular, are very important reconsiderations of Maoism, including global Maoism. The reference to "military Marxism" is in another essay in that volume: Liu Kang, "The Legacy of Mao and Althusser: Problematics of Dialectics, Alternative Modernity, and Cultural Revolution."

24. For the Philippine case, see Benedict Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 92–93.

the politics of causality and roads not taken. Global Maoism was a central political element of the world Sixties, and a reframing of its world presence is consequential. Under global Maoism, I would include the following: revolutionary movements in Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines.²² Guinea-Bissau, West Bengal, Nepal, Cuba, Peru, Uruguay, to name just a few; in the United States not just the Progressive Labor Party, but the Black Panthers, Weather Underground, late SDS; in France, besides the Maoist parties, the *Gauche Proletarienne*, the intellectuals around the journal *Tel Quel* in the early Seventies, and radical trade unionists. More important than specific parties or named movements, though, is a set of dispositions and tendencies that informed political life and liberatory dreams across a broad spectrum.

Maoism has been broadly defined as the sinification of Marxism—*makesizhuyide zhongguo hua*, "the integration of universal principles of Marxism with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution," or as Li Zehou has described it, a military Marxism, grounded in the specific situation of guerrilla or revolutionary war, a set of tactics, strategies, where practice is not application of theory but anterior to theory.²³ The primary texts of this Maoism—"Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan" (1927), "On Practice and On Contradiction" (1937), "On New Democracy" (1941). and "Talks at the Yanan Forum on Literature and Art" (1941)—are texts written within and from the situation of guerrilla war. This experiential character of Maoism was also reflected in the nature of its global spread. Emulation of the Chinese revolution was not primarily through the medium of Maoist theoretical texts. Journalism was just as important—that of Agnes Smedley and Anna Louise Strong, for example, but especially that of Edgar Snow, whose 1937 *Red Star Over China* was translated into many languages, and served as a revolutionary manual for the Hukbalahap rebellion in the Philippines, and for Che Guevara in Cuba.²⁴ It is tautological, but not inaccurate, to equate Maoism with the practice of the Chinese revolution: stance, practice, tactic, position, situation, revolution—these are the applicable terms. Arif Dirlik has called Mao's relationship to the world, Mao's empiricism, "the empiricism of an activist who constructs knowledge in the process of reconstructing

the world with revolutionary goals”—an appropriate and useful description of Maoism, but which needs the qualification that that reconstruction has a national rather than a properly global scope.

So in its simplest form, the question What is Maoism? can be answered as: the practice of the Chinese Revolution. And Global Maoism? I will enumerate some of its qualities and modalities below. But its enabling condition is also the fact of the Chinese Revolution, which I would like to date from 1921 to 1976, marked most saliently by the founding of the People's Republic in 1949 and the Cultural Revolution. Of course, the actuality of Maoism, as a global or even as a Chinese phenomenon, does not begin to coalesce until after 1949, after the revolution during which most of what was to prove the textual content of Maoism was written. On one level it is paradoxical, but it is also true to the praxis character of Maoism, that Maoism, in a way similar to the world-significance of the Vietnamese war, was globalized as a specific, situated practice. It was globalized without being universalized, a “theory” if we can still call it that, whose effectivity was praxis. Maoism becomes equated with global revolutionary praxis, as a concrete global event—through a logic that is in key respects a kind of universalism in reverse.

The logic of the situation is not a new element in Marxism, nor was praxis at all absent in Marxism. Indeed, as Fredric Jameson suggested, the relationship between a revolutionary situation and revolutionary theory was central to twentieth-century Marxism:

In retrospect, it can be suggested that much of left dialectics, from 1917 onwards, was generated by the conceptual dilemmas offered by precisely this conflict between the particular and the universal, between a specific historical fact or datum—the Soviet Union, with its own local and national requirements, and the universalism of a left class politics which aims at abolishing even the specificity of class itself, and lays claim to a general validity across national borders.²⁵

China introduced a new element into this dialectic. Although the Chinese Communist party had long given a positive evaluation to Stalin, worldwide reactions to the phenomena associated with Stalinism

25. Fredric Jameson, *Brecht and Method* (London: Verso, 1998), p. 111.



had consolidated a critique of the Soviet Union as a place where the revolution had come to a premature end, a place to which younger, third-world revolutions—China, Cuba, Vietnam—were counterposed.

The fundamental content of Maoism is the fact of the revolution itself—revolutionary praxis in China. This is constitutive of what are generally taken to be global Maoism’s primary “theoretical” components:

1. Practice itself was central, and was the central determinant of revolutionary identity. When Che Guevara writes, “The duty of a revolutionary is to make revolution,” he is articulating this access to identity through practice. Guevara often wrote that one of the important lessons he learned from the US-backed coup in Guatemala in 1954—which under the parliamentary socialist Arbenz government had been a center of Latin American third-world revolutionary internationalism and where he met Castro—was that “political power comes out of the barrel of a gun,” that there is no revolution without revolution. The *Quotations of Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, probably the most widely printed and widely read political text during the world Sixties, is a register of the formal praxis character of revolutionary ideology. These quotations, drawn largely from pre-World War II writings and arranged topically, were meant in their very material existence—small, single-hand-held books with waterproof covers and easy-to-read typescript—to facilitate the material insertion of theory into practical activity. Their oracular form was designed to encourage recitation and applicability. The *Quotations* suggested that a theoretical formulation was not to find its truth in textual adumbration, but in direct application.
2. Contradiction and the levels of contradiction formed an analytical means for a strategic understanding of a particular historical conjuncture, often at the level of the nation state, but including those characteristics that are perhaps generalizable to the level of the “underdeveloped world,” as developed in the essay “On New Democracy.” This concept, widely thought to be the most important component of Maoism and to be the essence of Mao’s original contribution to Marxist thought, is essential to a praxis-oriented project. The correct

identification of the primary contradictions, at the local level, would prevent party cadres from forcing circumstances into conformity with some abstract model. Practice, then, is the key link, to which I would add, in adducing Maoism's global and to some extent even national effectivity, the following characteristics which, as will be clear, are not all meant to be considered at the same level.

3. Thirdness. By this I refer to the Third World as Mao conceived it—neither developed capitalist nor Soviet-bloc. Politically speaking, a sector of the world population with no material interest in the current state of affairs. I say thirdness instead of third-worldism, a concept I wish to subsume under thirdness, because of the appeal of Maoism—in revolutionary or potentially revolutionary situations in much of Western Europe, India, and even the United States—as an alternative to Soviet-oriented communist parties. Third-worldism reaches its historical moment at Bandung, and Zhou Enlai was the victor in the contest between him and Jawaharlal Nehru for third-world ideological hegemony. The theory of Soviet Socialist imperialism was never a coherent one—but Maoism's "thirdness" allowed the Soviet Union to stand in for failure, revisionism, or revolutionary death. We could even view this thirdness as a new ontology, the anti-death space of "revolutionary immortality," in Robert Jay Lifton's terms.²⁶
4. Anti-revisionism, a related concept. Maoism isn't the only position associated with opposition to bureaucratic and revisionist tendencies. The Trotskyist vocabulary of de-formation covers similar ground. Cultural Revolution Maoism's vocabulary of anti-revisionism was of particular global salience. During the height of the Cultural Revolution, 1966–68, very little news of China entered the world. But in Europe particularly, the anti-Lin anti-Confucius movement, which occurred when many European left intellectuals and communists visited China, provided a widely adopted vocabulary and position. This has its caricaturable dimensions, and anti-revisionist sectarianism is recalled with fondness by few on the left today, but it gave revolutionary currency to the examination of daily-life practices. Who was a revolutionary and who a revisionist? Who was with the people

26. Robert Jay Lifton, *Revolutionary Immortality: Mao Tse-tung and the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (New York: Penguin, 1970).

and who was with the pigs? These questions, asked worldwide, were questions that Maoism put on the agenda.

5. The centrality of the peasantry. Mao did not invent peasant rebellions, as a practice or as a concept, and the revolutionary capacity of the peasantry was present across a variety of marxisms before Mao addressed the subject. Neither Franz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* nor Indian Subaltern Studies, though, would have taken the forms they took without Mao's articulation of a peasant-centered revolution. It's worth remembering that the Subaltern Studies project had its origins in the Naxalbari rebellions in Eastern India in the 1960s. The Naxalite movement was explicitly Maoist, down to Kanu Sanyal's "Report on the Peasant Movement in the Terai," which is directly modeled on Mao's Hunan report of 1927. On another and perhaps more important level, China's revolution remains the one successful peasant-identified revolution in world history. As some of the recent work of Ken Pomeranz suggests, what the emergent field of World History might describe as the primary fact of the history of the nineteenth and the twentieth century is a global war waged against the peasantry, with the People's Republic of China as the significant global exception to the conclusion of that war.
6. The idea of the liberated zone, or the base area. The establishment of a liberated zone, which in some of its more abstract 1960s forms could refer to the mind itself, was associated with the Maoism of the Jingangshan and the Yanan base areas. The base area introduced a spatial dimension into revolutionary theory and praxis that was a persistent figure, and of great strategic importance, in India, Cuba, the Philippines, Malaysia, Burma, Vietnam, and elsewhere.
7. The devaluation of intellectuals. This is really a subset of the discussion above of praxis and revolutionary identity, and functions at the level of class authority and of style. This was not a universal feature of global Maoism; Brecht's Maoist disparagement of what he called the TUIs, *tellekt uell in*—the ideological classes—would certainly have included US polemicists in the Maoist parties such as the Progressive

Labor Party or the Revolutionary Communist Party. Global Maoism made it difficult, however, for revolutionary authority to be instantiated in the subject position of the intellectual.

8. Cultural Revolution. In Europe and North America, the sphere of the cultural was where much revolutionary energy and activity was directed, and the Cultural Revolution in China was a central point of reference, even though its actual content was incompletely understood. Mao's work directly shaped Sixties Euro-Anglo-American theories of the cultural, and its relation both to class and to revolutionary politics. As important as the intellectual filiation, though, is the fact of the Cultural Revolution, the fact that it had been given a name. One of the purported "failures" of the global 1960s is its confinement to the sphere of the cultural, and it is commonplace to devalue the achievements of the Sixties as "merely cultural." This is an intellectual battle that is still being waged.
9. Voluntarism. This, and related concepts, are normally pejorative, and Marxists largely share the belief that over-reliance on the force of will and belief have been destructive to the revolutionary project. Mao's own writings, of course, have nowhere the programmatic of voluntarism—he explicitly condemns it—but ultimately we can say that all praxis has its origination in the will, and that voluntarism is on one level simply the will to rebel. The Maoist concept of self-reliance—*zili gengsheng*, properly translated as reconstruction through one's own efforts—was central to the third-worldist project of de-linking. In Ghana under Ike Achaempong in 1973, it was still possible to mobilize the population for "Operation Feed Yourself," opening up urban and other spaces to food production, often by collectivities. Voluntaristic self-reliance was a refusal of modernization's temporality, a refusal of developmentalism and dependency: it was an immediate and situated opening into the future. Marcuse's Great Refusal, shouted to capital in Europe and North America, is a related gesture of will. Voluntarism will produce excess: it will be antagonistic to reality, and in the logic of success and failure, it will often be deemed a tactical and strategic er-

ror. Yet if what is desirable, in this day, is a politics that refuses the logic of success and failure, it might be useful to acknowledge the inseparability of some version of voluntarism with the utopian impulse itself.

The Cultural Revolution spread in China in remarkable ways. In 1981 I visited a small, quite isolated town on the Yangtze River in Sichuan province: few of its residents had ever left it. When I asked some young men whether the Cultural Revolution had taken place there—the Cultural Revolution was largely an urban and town phenomenon, leaving many agricultural villages untouched—I was assured that it had. How, I asked, had it reached the town? “We heard about it on the radio, and did it here, too,” was the reply—a massive translation of the vocabulary of revolution and anti-revisionism, crafted in Beijing and Shanghai, into local situations: traveling praxis. Global Maoism was the internationalization of the Chinese revolutionary experience, and in this respect had much in common with the Vietnamese revolution’s serial character. It was also a powerful language of world-making. One could begin from nowhere, from a situation, like Mao’s peasants, that was “poor and blank,” and reconstruct humanity again, from anew. That sense of beginning was powerfully felt in Detroit, the Sierra Maestre, in Guinea, and in the ghetto of Oakland. Maoism posited a new temporality, a rejection of the measurements of capitalist time and an embrace of the apocalypse: humanity would change into something else; nothing would exist forever. And it was about speed: stages of development would be skipped in the Great Leap Forward. Out of the swirling vortex of the Cultural Revolution, where old habits, old social relations, and the old world disappeared, the new society would arrive fully formed.

The Work of the World

Hobsbawm and many others found it paradoxical that the Sixties rebellions in the over-developed world took place during a time of nearly full employment. The postwar expansion was at its height, and the Fordist guarantees could not have seemed more solid: employment, salary, consumption. There were significant fissures, of course. African Americans and other minorities in the United States and elsewhere in the over-

developed world had not shared equally in the Fordist settlement, whose family-based single-wage-earner logic also relegated most women to subordinate or unpaid positions.

Perhaps it was the best, ideologically speaking, that the compulsory labor system could manage. But for those inside and outside its promise, it was unacceptable. Across the over-developed world, the futures thus offered to the young were refused. A cold look at the world revealed a built environment, urbanisms, transportation networks, and educational, social, political and economic institutions that were the products of enormous human labor and tremendous productivity, but not the world that many in society had wanted. The explosion of world-making energy in third-world revolution signaled that world-making and re-making was possible; construction and reconstruction could be placed on the imaginative agenda. In the advanced capitalist societies, that meant revolt against the logics of separation, alienation, and instrumentalization that the compulsory labor regime, with the cooperation of educational institutions, political parties, and trade unions across the political spectrum, had cemented into place.

In 2005, it is clear that the work regime has failed: the mass of the human population lies outside it, with no real hope of integration into its logic. To some today, the demand for total employment seems to be the utopian demand, one that exposes capital's inability to deliver a social solution on its own terms. But perhaps a more cogently utopian demand would be for the end of work as we know it. The politics of anti-work were central to the struggles of the world Sixties and constitute an important part of the period's legacy. Viewing a range of struggles through the lens of anti-work is a fruitful conceptual experiment.

By the height of the post-World War II expansion, it was clear that human societies could reproduce themselves without the endless toil of their masses. Without being articulated into a coherent political program, but rather realized at the level of daily life, the possibility of life not organized around compulsory labor deeply shaped life in the socialist world. During the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the dictum to "put politics in command" radically altered the content of daily life, in schools, factories, and government work units. Political discussion, study, and meetings

27. Lynn T. White, *Unstately Power. Vol. 1: Local Causes of China's Economic Reforms. Vol. 2: Local Causes of China's Intellectual, Legal, and Governmental Reform* (Armonk, NY: M. A. Sharpe, 1998).

took up much of what could hardly be called a “work week.” Published autobiographical records of Cultural Revolution life, whatever their political position, attest to these hours, and to the equally long hours spent in idleness. Visitors to China during the Maoist period, especially those (like me in 1976) with Stakhanovite expectations, were often amazed at the casual attitude toward work and industriousness: so many discussions, so much tea drinking, so much sitting around in the factories. It took an American factory worker traveling with my group to point out that in his view the absence of hustle, bustle, and constant activity was a better way for factory work to be carried out. Right-wing condemnation of this wasted time, this time lost to the sort of economic growth and development that has characterized post-1978 China, takes today’s 70-hour southern Chinese work weeks as the norm, as the basis for China’s current productivity. The productive legacy of nonwork in China, and in other socialist countries, is more complicated, and may not be as simple as the growth advocates suggest. Lynn White has convincingly shown that local social networks developed during the Cultural Revolution gave the late Seventies and Eighties reform and growth much of their momentum.²⁷ His book demonstrates the productivity of social organization and the ways the organizational gains from this politicization could serve a variety of productive functions.

Linking this politicization to capitalist-style high-productivity growth, however, should not suggest that such a development was the only course that Cultural Revolution nonwork could take. For putting “politics in command” was also the actualization of a non-productivist mode of social being; it was, in terms of lived experience, a critique of work as such, despite the later use to which politicized networks were put. The Cultural Revolution’s “Great Link-up” (*da chuanlian*), when hundreds of thousands of Red Guards and other young revolutionaries were given free transportation, food, and lodging in cross-country wanderings, was a mass mobilization of nonwork, and it is a movement that is viewed with considerable nostalgia by its veterans. The Great Link-up was only one of the experiments that mobilized the country’s infrastructure for purposes other than speeded-up productivity. It gave to many of its participants an enduring sense of life’s possibilities.

The socialist bloc had never instilled in its citizens the “work ethic” that twentieth-century industrial capitalism, with the help of the trade unions, was able to ideologize. Self-exploitative industriousness was a virtue common to socialist state cinema and other mass media, but it was rarely achieved in lived experience. It was to be expected that the decoupling of compulsory work from the more strict regime of abstract time and its management that obtained under capitalism produced a different relationship to labor. Yet neither was the socialist bloc politically able to ideologize an alternative relationship to labor: nonwork thus had a negative rather than positive character. What obtained there was a system of compulsory labor whose overemphasis on compulsion was matched, or made tolerable perhaps, by an underemphasis on labor. But the nonwork ethic also spread into the citizenry’s will to participate in the political or military life of their states, a problem that over the course of the Fifties and Sixties grew particularly acute. It was thus for many reasons unlikely that an alternate political program could be built on this foundation.

Yet in Czechoslovakia, Dubček’s Action Program, published in May 1968 and approved by Brezhnev, initially promised to be a new way forward, a new way to mobilize society by allowing broader social forces to participate in the determination of the social and political agenda. What doomed Dubček’s program was its conflict with the state logic of coercion, on the one side, and the power of Western-oriented dissidents, who demanded Western-style democracy, on the other. Readers in the capitalist world sometimes forget that the initial impulse of Prague Spring was not in the direction of capitalism, but of a renewed socialism. Ultimately, the socialist bloc was unable to build positively and innovatively on its externality to the regime of capitalist-style compulsory labor, an externality that could have provided a base on which radical alternatives to this regime could have been constructed. This failure to reform socialism from within, combined with concerns about a dissatisfied and potentially rebellious urban populace, led the socialist states to détente, with further integration into capitalist cultures of production and consumption.²⁸ This integration produced structural contradictions that were ultimately untenable, leading to the collapse of 1989. Robert Kurz, in a series of books

28. This idea of détente as a reaction to internal dissidence is the thesis of Jeremi Suri (see note 12).

29. Robert Kurz, *Der Kollaps der Modernisierung: vom Zusammenbruch des Kasernensozialismus zur Krise der Weltökonomie* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1994). A selection of Kurz's work in English translation, including the *Manifesto Against Labor* by Kurz and the *Krisis* group, of which he was a part until recently, can be found at www.exit-online.org. More recently, Wolfgang Engler has proposed a politics for a post-work society in Germany, in his book whose translated title would be *Citizens Without Work: For a Radical Restructuring of Society*. Wolfgang Engler, *Bürger, ohne Arbeit: Für eine radikale Neugestaltung der Gesellschaft* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2005).

30. Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

31. Georg Lukacs (see note 7) makes a case for the spatialization of capitalist time and counterposes abstract time to "history." Moishe Postone critiques the idealism inherent in this dichotomy and makes a strong case for including "history" as a component of capitalist time. Yet I think that that linkage was precisely what was at stake in the Sixties rebellions. See Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), especially chapters five and eight.

32. Kristin Ross cites Peter Dews, who makes the claim that the arrival of US and UK countercultural modes and styles into France and Italy marks a waning of political energies. Kristin Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2002), p. 13.

and articles, has suggested that the fall of the socialist bloc around 1989 was the first collapse of a compulsory labor society, and that the collapse of the work-society in that region was a prefiguration of its coming collapse in the capitalist West, a collapse that was already evident in oppositional politics in the 1960s.²⁹

In that the Sixties struggles in the overdeveloped world were about the content of life, the work regime was the ultimate horizon of life's content, the total content of society. Anti-work politics found their clearest expression, theoretically and on the streets, in France, and the Situationists provided its most memorable movements and slogans, many of which, as Greil Marcus has shown, became important in Sixties countercultural expression in the United States and the United Kingdom.³⁰ But anti-work was a latent content in many other struggles, and it was a message that would ultimately reach the masses in Sixties popular culture. In the overdeveloped world, when the Vietnam War was brought home, when the Cultural Revolution was waged in these streets, the content of daily life was among the primary stakes. The broad politics of anti-work, the refusal of abstract time, was a characteristic of what I referred to earlier as Sixties time, a relation to the future, to history, and to co-presence. It marked a challenge to a fundamental pillar of capitalist temporal organization, and thus to history itself.³¹

The question of the Sixties counterculture in the overdeveloped world has long been a vexing one. The usual impulse on the theoretical left is to downplay its importance, to accentuate the gap between real politics and that sphere of the everyday whose common denomination—lifestyle—is always encumbered with the taint of commodification, reification, and the marketplace of style.³² As I have outlined earlier, those historians and commentators such as Arthur Marwick who want to minimize or critique the political significance of Sixties counterculture are also eager to emphasize its positive contributions by tracking its impact within capitalism.

It should be clear by this point that I want to include under the sign of the Sixties the widest range of political, revolutionary, social, and cultural opposition, including the counterculture, and that I believe that narratives of the counterculture which stress commercialization, dumbing-down

of content, and massification should not obscure the source of much of Sixties popular countercultural energy in opposition and refusal, in, to use John Holloway's term, "the scream."³³ The counterculture achieved near hegemonic status in English-language massified popular culture, and brought into the mainstream its roots in the long histories of refusal and resistance: Diggers and Ranters, William Blake, Boxcar Bertha, the Wobblies, and early twentieth-century anarchism, the folk surrealism of the "Invisible Republic," the Beats. That these mostly marginal currents were brought into a culture industry that reached tens of millions, proclaiming an end to work on Maggie's farm and strawberry fields forever, is a victory, an inroad, not simple co-optation.³⁴ Twentieth-century capitalism proved remarkably capable of incorporating modalities and energies from its outside, and marketing's embrace of certain countercultural modalities is no exception. This could be a sign of capitalism's bloodless vampiric weakness as much as its strength. The Sixties in the overdeveloped world put pleasure and ecstatic excess into broad social and cultural play, and Arthur Marwick is right to stress the profoundly transformative character of that moment. The culture industry responded with impressive dynamism, and proved able to satisfy the libidinal explosions that came in its wake.

But Marwick and critics like him are wrongly confident that capitalism's dynamism, according to some predictable rhythm of explosion and containment, ensures the perpetual manageability of those energies. As consensus cracks, as gruesomely anachronistic experiments like the G.W. Bush presidency expose the fundamental irrationality of the system, as market-ideological promotion of the "ownership society" leaves its subjects with nothing worthwhile to own, it will be more and more important for a different dynamic to emerge, one that can draw on humanity's long history of refusal, of which the world Sixties was a shining moment.



Many thanks to Antonis Balasopoulos, Jon Beller, Johanna Isaacson, Mary Scott, and Rob Wilson for their helpful comments on drafts of this essay.

33. John Holloway, *Change the World Without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today* (London: Pluto, 2002), pp. 1–11.

34. The invisible republic is a reference to Greil Marcus's book by that name on Bob Dylan and the long tradition of American folk surrealism exemplified in the Henry Smith folkways anthology. Greil Marcus. *Invisible Republic: Bob Dylan's Basement Tapes* (New York: Henry Holt, 1997).



5

Taiwan and Club 51:

On the Culture of US Imperialism

Kuan-Hsing Chen

In the middle of 1996, during a period of cross-straits tension, “An Open Letter to the Social Elite of Taiwan” was distributed. The letter was signed by Chou Wei-lin, for a group named Club 51. Next to the signature was an emblem in seal style, comprising a map of Taiwan in the center with the English-language slogans “Statehood for Taiwan—Save Taiwan—Say Yes to America.”¹ The Club was unknown at the time. But whenever there was a chance to disseminate its ideas thereafter, the Club would be on the street.

In early 1999, when the controversy over relations between Taiwan and the People’s Republic of China broke out again, Club 51 could be found protesting in front of the American Institute—the equivalent of the US embassy on the island—against Washington’s ambiguous stance. It might have been thought that the Club was there to demand American intervention in the Taiwan Straits to counter the threat of an attack from the mainland. But no, it was more radical than that. The captions at the top of the first page of its Open Letter 51 called for a “Taiwan State-Building Movement (*jian-zhou yundong*)” to “let Taiwan join the United States of America” as the 51st State, so as to “Guarantee Taiwan’s Security, Stability, Prosperity, Liberty and Democracy.”

Founded on the Fourth of July, 1994, by fifty-one intellectuals and businessmen with American experience, the Club had grown to some five hundred supporting members by 1996. Since then it has not generated any large movement but has been quite visible in the media. Its chief animator, Chou Wei-lin, who always wears American yuppie-style dress, often with an American flag printed on his T-shirt, has law degrees from universities in Taiwan and the United States, is a former activist of the Taiwan independence movement, and an extremely articulate writer and speaker. Taiwan’s leading newspaper, *China Times*, devoted a full-page

1. All quotes provided in this essay are from the letter, dated March 6, 1996, unless specified. Translations are mine.



2. For detailed coverage, see Chang (1996).
References listed at the end of the essay.

interview to him and to his Club's ideas in May 1996, and he has appeared on various TV and radio call-in shows.²

In 1998, encouraged by both sympathetic and antagonistic reactions to the Club's programme, Chou published a highly imaginative work to substantiate his arguments and lay out his moment of utopia. It is entitled *A Date with the US—the Ultimate Resolution of Taiwan's Future: Taiwan becomes a State of the US in 2013; Say Yes to America*. In it, Chou advocates a two-stage strategy. First, Taiwan becomes a trust territory, along Puerto Rican lines; then it seeks full statehood, along Hawaiian lines. Eventually, on January 1, 2013, a splendid sunny day, Taiwan becomes the fifty-first state of the USA. All Chinese names are changed forthwith: Yuan to Adams, Kong to Cohen, Chen to Dunn, Ding to Dean, Zhou to Jefferson. All cities and districts acquire new place-names: Taiwan becomes Formosa again, while Taipei becomes Cambridge, Taichung Dalton, Kaohsiung Fairfax, and Hsinchu Talcom. Among the newly elected forty-six members of Congress representing Taiwan, twenty-two are fluent in English; of these, fourteen are first- or second-generation mainlanders, and eight are natives, all educated in the United States. Here are to be found the next generation of leading politicians, including James C. Stevens, Jr. (Song Zhengyuan, son of ex-governor James Soong), and Vincent W. Lane (son of former Vice President and current Chairman of the Kuomintang, Chan Lian). On this fortunate day, the Taiwanese finally have “a sense of belonging, a sense of certainty, a sense of direction and a sense of security.” (Chou 1998, p. 324)

What is the significance of *Club 51*? Let me make clear that I have no personal investment in the Club or its positions. But I also wish to caution that the moralizing tendency of the nationalist left or right will not be helpful to bring out the issues at stake. In our part of the world, it has been a frequent practice to jump quickly to moral judgement in social controversies, foreclosing the possibility of critical reflection that might help us to understand better the real psychic forces at work in our societies. To either quickly cast the Club aside or to endorse its position misses the point. In the Taiwan context, the political-cultural importance of Club 51, however marginal it might be organizationally, is to open up

an alternative space of imagination for Taiwan's "statehood," beyond the stalemate and banality of separatism vs. integrationism, independence versus unification, which has shaped political life on all levels and in different spheres, for the past two decades.³

More curiously, the Club's radicalness lies in its movement away from the "national independence movement," in that the Club articulates a new position that no longer claims the traditional form of national sovereignty, relinquishing Taiwan's ambiguous claims for national sovereignty, proposing to be simply part of another nation-state, the United States. The seemingly trivial switch in word, from *jian guo* ("nation-state" building) to *jian zhou* ("state" building), signals a wholly new imaginative modality for the anti-colonial nationalist tradition of the third-world independence movement. Its form of identification might remind us of France's *départements d'outremer* or, indeed, pre-statehood Hawai'i; but its timing at the turn of the twenty-first century does seem to indicate an emerging new condition, beyond earlier historical moments of decolonization. There is another reason for such an impression. The impulses behind Club 51 are not confined to Taiwan. Comparable sentiments can be found in Manila and Okinawa, in Seoul and Micronesia, not to speak of Canada or Australia. How does one account for them? *What can we learn from Club 51?*

Although a summary report on Club 51 is not the intent here, I do think Club 51 could help to provide a useful way to address "worlding" issues related to what I would call the incorporation of the American imaginary in East Asia, the post-WWII effect of "the culture of US imperialism" in conjunction with the wider context of what one might describe as a new structure of feeling, "insecurity due to global uncertainty,"⁴ as an effect of "globalization." This is decisively marked by the lingering character of the Cold War, or by the process of what I would call de-Cold-War-ization.

To situate the problematic in another context, post-colonial studies has called upon us to take on once again the study of imperialism in new ways. These new directions in imperialism studies move beyond the old anti-colonial nationalist/nativist position, which often sits on the line of civilization-race-nation-ethnicity, failing to adopt a globalist position, which often endorses forms of transnationalism or cosmopolitanism

3. For instance, in recent discussions on the cross-strait relation on the Internet, Club 51's idea has been cited as representing a political option.

4. Chou's 1998 book is "dedicated to the People on Taiwan who have no senses of security and certainty."

5. I feel this is the only strategy available to me, out of various experiences of being frustrated by being misunderstood; hence to explicate one's own position in relation to other possible ones. However, there are other strategies. My friend Sun Ge prefers not to talk about positions and isms; she operates by addressing specific issues.

6. Chua, Beng Huat, "Introduction," in Chua ed., *Consuming Asia*, London: Routledge, 2000.

that ironically continue the civilizational-racial-national-ethnic line of practices and imagination.

How does one begin to articulate a position beyond these two unacceptable standpoints?⁵ At the least, this new critical position will begin, as a point of departure for re-examining the question of cultural subjectivity in the process of encounters, by recognizing imperialism as an historical force operating from within, rather than simply being imposed from without. In our part of the world, within various critical circles, especially those on the left, the United States has always been regarded as an outsider, outside our cultural psyche, outside our national subjectivity. But after a century of work to set up the United States as the dominant "referent point," it is no longer justifiable to consider the United States as still exterior to our histories. As far as I know, with perhaps the exception of the Philippines, the study of US imperialism as internal, internalized, and interior cultural forces within Asia is a neglected area of study. It needs to be brought to the forefront of critical debate and even recognition. Without such analysis, the complexity of contemporary cultural subjectivity of "Asian," in different locales, cannot be properly explained.

To be more precise, Club 51 in this paper is understood as an instance of the structural configuration of post-World War II US hegemony throughout the world, and in particular, of US cultural penetration of East Asia, now reconfigured into the highly ideologically charged context of globalization, within which the notion of nation-state takes on different meaning, since the previously unchallengeable assumption of national sovereignty can no longer perform its old function. As Chua Beng Huat notes in his introduction to a book on consumption in Asia, "things American" have served as primary objects of identification, though how this "object relation" works in local histories varies.⁶ There is a need, then, to find new critical languages and positions to address such issues, positions that go beyond nationalist common sense.

Taiwan, USA

The Taiwanese background, of course, is a very specific one, and it colors the fantasies of Club 51 throughout. The central arguments of

the Club are highlighted, point by point, in the first paragraphs of its Letter of 1996:

If Club 51 cannot awaken the Taiwanese elite in time to give up such selfish and short-sighted practices as individual immigration, and to support instead the proposal of “Taiwan’s State-Building Movement” for collective identification and naturalization into the United States, within a few years Taiwan will not be able to escape the appalling fate of “Hong-Kongization.” Even if it could avoid this, it will be permanently beset by Beijing’s psychological warfare, plunging it into economic recession, falling confidence, and social unrest.

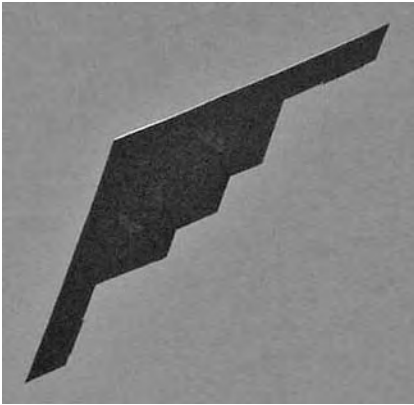
Conjuring up the specter of Hong Kong on the eve of its handover to China in 1997 is calculated, of course, to trigger fear and insecurity in the Letter’s target audience. But the Club’s appeal does not just rest on demonizing the Communist threat to Taiwan. It also offers an attractive alternative to panicky individual exodus abroad. “Once Taiwan becomes another state in the United States, we will be in America right here, and Taiwanese will not have to dwell in other places throughout the world as a minority of minorities in local societies.” The ingenuity of the Club’s proposal lies in its radical resolution of the deadlock over Taiwanese independence. The message is: let us give up our own nation-state, with its hopelessly ambiguous status, and join instead another of our choice. State-building (*jian zhou*) will then no longer require endless, impossible and unsuccessful efforts to join the United Nations. We will just have to deal with one nation. Our halfway Americanization during the past fifty years in Taiwan can advance to a full new nationality. This vision is pitched not just to the elite, but to everyone living on the island. It answers to a general desire to “stay at home” at this moment in history, as the economic success of Taiwan has drawn numbers of emigrants back to the island, after bad experiences of being discriminated against abroad—“the minority of minorities.” The Letter goes on:

When Beijing announced its “missile rehearsals” to threaten the Presidential election in Taiwan, our Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs called upon the Director of the American Institute, begging the United States

to uphold justice for Taiwan. Any clear-sighted person knows that Taiwan cannot survive without US protection. If the United States does not defend the principles of justice, “the Republic of China in Taiwan” might soon become “the Republic of China in Los Angeles.”

Here the United States figures as a power whose mission is to maintain the principles of global justice, without which the Republic of China would dissolve into something else. In the Taiwanese context, the Club’s gesture is provocative, even iconoclastic. For although everyone knows that the island is indeed under American protection, this is never publicly admitted by state leadership. It simply remains the unspoken assumption that frames and encircles the activity of all the political parties—the Kuomintang typically seeking “help” from the Republicans, and the Democratic Progressive Party from the Democrats. Questions such as whether Taiwan could survive without the US military shield, or without the mainland Chinese market, have never been and can never be debated in the public arena, least of all during Presidential election campaigns. Hence the effect of the Club’s blunt use of the term “begging”: activity appropriate to sub-colonial status in the bilateral relation with America. The Club’s pragmatic realism cancels out all rhetorical pretensions of national dignity. It does so in the name of “survival,” an issue overriding any theoretical claim to state sovereignty.

Particularly striking in this respect is the final sentence of the passage just quoted. It projects a scenario. If Taiwan were forced to become part of China, then something like a refugee government would be set up in Los Angeles. But why Los Angeles? A chain of equivalents has somehow effortlessly shifted categories and borders, from the quasi nation-state of Taiwan to the global city of Los Angeles, magnet for Asian and Latino migration. But the shift in the imaginary is by no means ungrounded. From the 1960s to the 1990s, if the United States has been the prime land of emigration for Taiwanese, Los Angeles has been the site of the largest concentration of middle-class immigrants from the island. For the Taiwanese imaginary, Taiwan has long been “inside” Los Angeles, as an integral part of the city; the large residential community of Monterey Park is widely known as Little Taipei. Conversely, Los Angeles has also



been “inside” Taiwan, as an integral part of its life. The teenage rock band, LA Boys, all of whose members grew up in Los Angeles and can no longer speak Taiwanese or Mandarin, has now returned home, becoming one of the island’s most popular groups. So it is easy to imagine Los Angeles housing a Republic of China government in exile.

In March 2000, during the Presidential election campaign in Taiwan, all our satellite news channels set up “call-in” interactive programs to attract audiences, vital for ratings and advertising revenues. TVBS, a rather popular station, placed the physical site of its call-in across the ocean in Los Angeles. Actually, this was a rather natural choice. On the screen, supporters of the three Presidential candidates—the Democratic Progressive Party’s Chen Shui-bian, the Kuomintang’s Lian Chan, and the People First’s James Soong—were divided into groups, identifiable by the different colors of their campaign jackets. The intensity of the enthusiasms and antagonisms expressed by these supporters was amazingly strong, more than anything one could find back home. They all wished to proclaim the fact that their own candidate was the real representative of New Taiwan, and his rivals were fakes—a typical tic of ethnic nationalism. Yet when asked by their TV host what constituted the “New Taiwanese,” they all agreed that “real New Taiwanese are those who live in Taiwan and are committed to Taiwan.” How do we explain this paradox?

Such supporters were in fact probably more involved in the election battle than most of those who actually live in the geographical space of Taiwan. They spared no means to further their respective causes: financial donations, persuasion of others to go home and vote (airlines supporting particular candidates offered discount tickets), debates with opponents, etc. They acted as if they themselves were the “real new Taiwanese who live in Taiwan, and are committed to Taiwan.” In effect, for them Los Angeles *was* already part of Taiwan. The physical distance between the island and the city was abolished by the televisual screen and the national imaginary it sustains.

This phenomenon is not, of course, uniquely Taiwanese in form. It is typical of many immigrant communities, who physically reside in different parts of the world but in every other respect live “at home”: reading

domestic newspapers, watching satellite news sent from home, consuming exactly the same goods and foods in the supermarkets and restaurant chains set up by domestic enterprises, worrying more about changing governments in the world at home than about those they have to live under; splitting and forming new alliances when home political parties split and form new parties.

Stuffed to Death by Hamburgers

How does the Letter handle possible objections to its program? Here is what it says:

If you hear accomplices of the Chinese Communists cursing Club 51 as "slaves of a subject nation," "traitors to the Han people," running dogs of American imperialism, please argue back that national identity is based neither on blood descent nor threat of military force. Like the Chiang family, which has German, Russian and Japanese blood, we have the "right" to choose to be American or German, and to live in New York or San Francisco.

This interesting passage makes it clear that the Club is well-prepared for the kinds of disobliging expressions it is likely to attract and has thought through its line of response to them. Anticipating likely directions of attack, it recruits and instructs the respectable "you" (*nin*) to whom it appeals in how to debate with "accomplices of Chinese Communism." Its counter-argument is impeccably anti-essentialist, rejecting common descent as a basis for national identification. Boldly, it invokes the international marriages of the supposedly evil Chiang (Kai-shek) family as a reference point to legitimate the free choice of nationality. Less clear, of course, is why only "American" and "German" are mentioned as identities of preference, and Russian or Japanese silently discarded. Indeed, Germany itself seems little more than a flourish, when the choice of cities is confined to the United States.

Why this selectivity? The answer is offered a little later, when a dictum of Professor Lee Hsiao-fung's is quoted: "We would rather be stuffed to death by the hamburgers of American imperialism than shot to death by the machine-guns of Chinese Communist imperialism." The Club comments: "All

of us try desperately to stay out of reach of China, and all of us nourish a deeply hidden ‘American dream’ in our mind.” It goes on to spell out what lies behind hamburger heaven: “America is the pinnacle of the Earth, a powerful, resourceful, democratic society, a land of certainty and security.” Here, courageously displayed, is what could be termed the open secret of the “deeply hidden American dream” in the psyche of Taiwanese *nouveaux riches* longing for an impossible assimilation to the US middle class.

Conversely, it would be a mistake in turn to essentialize this dream. Towards the end of the Letter, we read:

If the Chinese break everyone’s glasses [sc. confound expectations] and build a free, democratic, universally prosperous, happy land on Earth, while America becomes a poor, devastated inferno, the people of the state of Taiwan can always peacefully promote a movement to ‘unite Taiwan and China,’ without any fear of suppression by American military force. In short, once Taiwan becomes a state of America, the door to either ‘Taiwanese independence’ or ‘reunification with China’ will not be closed, because America is a free and democratic country.

The logic of choice could not be clearer: economic success is the criterion for selecting national belonging. So we can keep the door open to China or any society rich and powerful enough to guarantee “freedom, democracy and wealth,” since the American State is such that if one day we change our mind and wish to leave it, that will be fine—it would make no objection. The Club appears not to have heard of the US Civil War, but that hardly matters, since it is so unlikely that anyone’s glasses will be broken anyway. The point is that this proposal dispenses with national loyalty. What is involved is pure calculation of interest. The Letter is alert to the kind of resistance this may provoke:

Although you cannot immediately accept our case on an emotional level, we believe that on a rational level, you cannot deny that our new proposal for Taiwan’s future is the only solution to real crisis of our society.

To be effective, the Club must take account of nationalist sentiment rooted in a great deal of historical experience. It understands that the

7. In a recent forum held in Taipei, a young man with a Min-nan accent, confessing his disappointment with the performance of the new Democratic Progressive Party government, expressed the same sentiment.

8. The term was coined by my friend Huang Zhi-xiang, a prime-time TV scriptwriter for the “Big Eunuch and Little Carpenter” series, broadcast back in 1994.

intended readers of its Letter are likely to feel very uneasy, “on an emotional level,” at the idea of simply becoming American. Although in practice lots of Taiwanese have as individuals become naturalized as US, Australian, or Canadian citizens, to demand that everyone become American here and now is likely to offend people’s collective pride. So the Club urges its target audience to operate “rationally,” casting aside irrelevant emotional-moral-historical baggage, and acknowledge that there is no better way out than its proposal. Of course, its appeal to rationality has its own “emotional” bottom line, in the calculated drive for prosperity and security. This can also play on a sense of regret for the past. The feeling that “we would be better off if we were still under Japanese rule” is quite widespread among an elder generation that lived through the colonial period, and is not confined to them.⁷ Tacitly, the Club’s message to these people is: don’t let’s miss our chance again, for we can make a rational choice to substitute the Americans for the Japanese.

After laying out its central arguments, the letter moves into a detailed narrative. It begins with an attempt to bring out a mood of insecurity produced by military threat, suggesting that at this moment, even if there is no danger of “communist army” occupation of Taiwan, there are no means to protect Taiwan from damage. Then the critical question could be posed: “Who can we count on (*zhi-wang*) to protect the life and freedom of Taiwan’s people? Taiwan’s armed forces?” To simplify the narrative structure, the entire story hinges on the logic of fear: the threat of military force will lead to war; the result of war is destruction of life and accumulated wealth; and hence the need for a guaranteed protection mechanism, that is, to be part of the United States.

If we look over the whole tenor of the Club’s Letter, what we find at work is a “radical plural opportunism” (*jijin duoyuan jihuishuyi*).⁸ I use the term without derogatory connotation. What it denotes is a non-essentialist, pragmatic, open-ended position, on the lookout to seize any opportunity for self-interest across a range of fronts, however radical one or other such move might be. The imperative is to jump, without much moral baggage, quickly and deftly onto whatever vehicle promises to advance one’s wealth and security. Operating within a conservative political

society, in which critical forces lack the density to propose radical alternatives, this kind of outlook can be found in all corners of Taiwanese society—in politics, business, civil society, and NGOs. One could even say that it is a general characteristic of Taiwanese, or perhaps any, capitalism.

Still, there is little doubt that current global conditions provide particularly fertile soil for such opportunism. Club 51 cannot be understood simply as the product of a fear of war in the Taiwan Straits or a colonial aspiration to American modernity. It also reflects a more general uncertainty about where the world is heading, dramatized by protests against the World Trade Organization and other reactions against globalization. No analysis can confidently figure out the Club's overall effects and implications for the future world, although there is no difficulty in perceiving that gaps between countries and classes are likely to widen. In this environment, a strategy of leaning to the strongest party—"the watermelon tilts toward the bigger half," in our Taiwanese expression—makes middle-class sense. It is this background that explains why Chou Wei-lin's book is "dedicated to the people of Taiwan who have no sense of security and certainty." (Chou 1998, p. 2) Rather than illustrating any epochal decline of the nation-state, Club 51 is evidence for the rise of identification—imaginary, symbolic, and real—with the strongest State, the single world power today.

East Asian Varieties of the Imperial and Post-Colonial

US power is still under-analyzed, at least in Asia. This has something to do with the way post-colonial studies—where one would expect to find critical probing of it—have over-privileged "English" experiences. This has partly reflected the personal histories of key proponents of the post-colonial programme, who mostly came out of the English (ex-) colonies. But it has also been due to the peculiarities of American imperial expansion itself. Indeed, once the analytical focus is shifted to different geo-colonial sites, such as East Asia, other imperial forces come to the forefront. Prior to the nineteenth century, the Chinese empire was dominant. In the twentieth century, Japanese colonialism in the first half and US neo-imperialism in the second were the most important influences on local-national cultural formations.



Although some argue that Mainland China should be exempted from this Japan/US complex, my own observation is quite the opposite: the United States has been the dominant imaginary figure against which “China” has constructed itself since the 1980s. When in the 1990s the Chinese Communist Party state launched the policy to be “in tune with the world” (*yu shijie jiegui*), the “world” actually meant the United States. While literature on the history of Japanese colonialism has been abundant, and the attempt of Japanese intellectuals to “decolonialize” and to take on wartime responsibility has been quite visible (Hanasaki 2000), studies on US imperialism and its cultural impacts in East Asia seem to be less common, not to mention the near-absence in American critical circles of discussions on rethinking the damages done to the world by American imperialism. Since the February 2001 US/UK (Bush/Blair) attack on Iraq reveals the continuing strength of imperialism in these centers, the absence of larger self-reflexive movements to resist imperial nationalism, or to interrogate the constant complicities between critical intellectuals and the imperial State, will facilitate its future recurrence.

How does one account for this lack of study of US imperialism? The easiest but least satisfying way to answer the question is to deny the imperial status of the United States: the hegemony of the United States has been established through “leadership” and through achievement of global consent, rather than through imposing force, military and otherwise. This argument immediately crumbles if we bring up the obvious US military presence in Asia, despite resistance groups’ attempt to remove them, not to mention other unilateral US actions in the Gulf, Iraq, or Kosovo. The denial can be more subtle. In the introduction to *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, an important intervention into the national tradition of American studies, Amy Kaplan succinctly explains such denial (Kaplan 1993, p. 17):

Most current studies of imperial and postcolonial culture . . . tend to omit discussion of the United States as an imperial power. The history of American imperialism strains the definition of the postcolonial, which implies a temporal development (from “colonial” to “post”) that relies heavily on the spatial coordinates of European empires, in their formal acqui-

sition of territories and subsequent history of decolonization and national independence. How would this Eurocentric notion of postcoloniality apply to the history of American imperialism, which often does not fit this model?⁹

This is a general reason why the American empire has escaped the kind of scrutiny that European empires are now retrospectively undergoing. But there is a second reason specific to East Asia. In this part of the world, above all, there was a direct relay between an older kind of colonialism and new Cold War structures after 1945. Here the United States took over from former territorial empires and established a vast arc of strategic protectorates, mobilized to form a defensive bloc against Communism. In many parts of East Asia there was a direct handover from Japanese imperialism to the United States, and ever since the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Japanese state itself has lived in the permanent shadow of the American. Cho Hee-yeon has described the character of the South Korean regime set up by the United States when it divided the country in terms that apply equally well to Taiwan or to South Vietnam: authoritarian, developmentalist, statist, and anti-Communist (Cho 2000). While Japan was given a democratic constitution, a mailed fist of the occupation regime was used to make sure that the Right would remain perpetually in power, so the result was not very different. Fear of Communism was used very effectively to rule out of court any question of imperialism in the domination of Big Brother, despite the existence of mainstream anti-American sentiment and tradition across the region—with the exception of Taiwan.

Cold War Legacies

In East Asia, consequently, the decolonization that unfolded elsewhere after World War II never occurred. Instead, a Cold War system effectively took over the structures of colonialism, intercepting any possibility of decolonization taking place. For fifty years the predominant world view and traditions of popular knowledge were generated out of systems of power and production at the intersection of colonialism and the Cold War. The cultural effects of this half-century have been part of our local histories and subjectivities, and cannot be easily erased. Of course, the end of the Cold War was formally announced more than a decade ago.

9. Kaplan's strategy is to reconnect "United States nation-building and empire-building as historically coterminous and mutually defining." Her argument seems to have struck home. By 1998, "Empire and Imperialism" had become the theme of the Annual Conference of the Association of American Studies.

There can be no doubting the reality of the changes this has brought to Europe and America. The USSR has disappeared, Germany has been unified, Eastern Europe is safely in the bosom of capital once more. Ideologically, “the triumph of capitalism and the end of socialism” has become the dominant narrative in the West, now confidently extended into the ongoing epic of globalization, which has offered the framework for a new structure of feeling, in Raymond Williams’s sense, since the second half of the 1990s—rallying North American academics who had previously toyed with dangerous ideas of the postmodern or post-colonial, and comforting European intellectuals bent on the nostrums of a “Third Way.”

The situation has been very different in East Asia. Empirically, the Cold War structures of the region have been weakened, but by no means dismantled. Chinese Communism, unlike Russian, has not been overthrown, and Indochina has not gone the way of Eastern Europe. Korea remains divided, and Taiwan a garrison state. There is still no peace treaty between Japan and Russia. Of course, Sino-American relations are warm enough these days; the two Kims have met in Korea; the Kuomintang has lost power in Taiwan. But the very excitement generated by the 2000 summit in Pyongyang, and the subsequent heartbreaking scenes of family reunions in Korea, or jubilation at the downfall of the Kuomintang regime in Taiwan, speaks of the extent to which the dead weight of the Cold War is still an objective source of tension and frustration in East Asia. There is little radical discontinuity in the so-called post-Cold War politics of the area.

But even if the Cold War had come to an end in East Asia, it would be unrealistic to expect us to be freed from its mental legacy. Just as the formal end of colonialism did not overnight erase its cultural effects, so a Cold War formation of subjectivity remains with us. The postwar generation of intellectuals in South Korea and Taiwan was largely trained in the United States, and these people, deeply imbued with an American outlook, are now in power to implement another round of modernization. The deeper bases of Washington’s continuing hegemony in East Asia are, however, often misunderstood. For this is an imperialism of the worlding world whose long-term impact has depended not so much on obvious cultural apparatuses such as transnational media intervention, but rather on

a more complex process of negotiation and articulation between its political and economic power and local histories.¹⁰ Cultural studies of US imperialism in the region are only just starting to emerge, and it is important that they avoid the trap of counter-posing one (subaltern) nationalism to another (paramount) nationalism. But rather this “worlded” cultural studies should seek to maintain a critical internationalist perspective on the system of relations between them as a whole.

This has been the position of East Asian leftists who, for instance, attribute national disintegration solely to the fault of US imperialism, which is true, but not simply that. Further, the argument exaggerates the radical discontinuity in the so-called post-Cold War politics. Writing within the context of the 1948 Cheju Island massacre (also known as the 4.3 Event), Seong Nae Kim argues,

The 4.3 Event and its violent closure in massacre prefigured the Korean War in 1950, the ideological battle of the Cold War which ended in stalemate with the loss of millions of lives. Although the Cold War has ended, anti-Communist ideology continues to dominate state politics in South Korea and has effectively silenced much of the memory of the 4.3 Event. . . . Since the end of World War II, it could be said that Koreans have lived under “the state of emergency” for national unity and identity. This profound sense of emergency has served to justify state violence in both separate regimes of south and north Korea. . . . As it is described as “a microscope on the politics of postwar Korea,” the 4.3 Event remains stigmatized as a primal scene in the acceleration of Korean modernity, that is closely related to political violence of the state. (Kim 1996)

Taking clues from Kim’s warning not to exaggerate the post-Cold War discontinuity, and not to excuse the responsibility of the nationalist state and critical intellectuals, I shall argue that the effect of “colonial/imperial identification,” constructed partly by the Cold-War structure, accounts for the relative omission of US imperialism studies in the East Asia context. As the cultural study of US imperialism is only now still emerging, it is precisely here that a critical internationalist stand has to be maintained to avoid ending up in the nationalist trap in studies of “the culture of imperialism.”

10. For the sketch of a “geo-colonial historical materialism” to explain this kind of articulation, see Chen 1996, pp. 73–140.

Taiwanese Boy Bands and Hong Kong Movies

It is too often assumed that the new imperialism operates largely through an external imposition of its cultural products and ideologies on Third World societies, as if brain-washing them. Frequently cited examples are Hollywood or the American Top 40. Yet, however important these may have been originally, from the mid-1980s onwards not a few of the economies of the region have been strong enough to construct cultural industries of their own, capable of competing with American output. The result is that American mass cultural productions are only among a range of choices available to the younger population; the reign of their singularity has been broken. For some fifteen years now, Hong Kong films have captured the largest markets in various East Asian countries, and by the 1990s, the newest generations were no longer singing American pop songs in karaoke bars.

To understand the roots of American hegemony, we need to look elsewhere, and further back. Historically, “America” as a cultural imaginary has since the mid-nineteenth century never been outside “Asia,” just as “Asia” has never been outside “America.” Japan, after all, was first opened to the US state and capital in 1858, through the treaty-port system. Their impact thereafter, right through the inter-war period, is not to be understated. By the 1930s, there were local intellectuals who felt that “America” had become a constitutive element of Japanese identity itself, as a startling passage from Takanobu Murobuse’s novel *America*, published in 1929, makes clear:

Where could you find Japan not Americanized? How could Japan exist without America? And where could we escape from Americanization? I dare to even declare that America has become the world, Japan is nothing but America today.

In Korea too, Yoo Sun-Young has shown that during the same period the notion of American modernity fulfilled the function of a more worlded counter-imaginary against the grip of Japanese colonialism (Yoo 2000). This sense was not, of course, confined to East Asia. In the Antilles, Aimé Césaire was warning soon after the War of the illusions accompanying it:

I know that some of you, disgusted with Europe, with all that hideous mess which you did not witness by choice, are turning—oh! in no great numbers—toward America and getting used to looking upon that country as a possible liberator. “What a godsend!” you think. “The bulldozers! The massive investment of capital! The roads! The ports!”—“But American racism!”—“So what? European racism in the colonies has inured us to it!” And there we are, ready to run the great Yankee risk. So, once again, be careful! American domination—the only domination from which one never recovers. I mean from which one never recovers unscarred. (Césaire 1950/1972, p. 60)

Césaire did not explain why American domination would be the *only* irremediable form. But few listened to his admonition, least of all in East Asia. There, the most striking testimony to the enduring fixation with America is to be found in the People’s Republic of China, which was never directly under US influence. Since the 1980s, the US has been the dominant imaginary figure against which China constructs itself, the Other as totalized representative of the West. As a Mainland critic told a conference on popular culture in Beijing in 1999: “Today’s America is our tomorrow.” When the CCP launched its call to the nation to “join the mainstream,” no one doubted where that was: in the United States. Psychologically, America has become an “inside outsider” or “outside insider” against which slices of (national) identity and fragments of cultural subjectivity have been formed in differing national spaces.

This process has by no means always involved simple acceptance of US hegemony. To see the strength of the “American complex” in East Asia, one need only look at the current popularity of the “X Can Say No” phenomenon. After the big success of Ishihara and Morita’s “The Japan That Can Say No” came the popular “China Can Say No,” and even a “Taiwan Can Say No.” (Sung et al. 1996; Ker 1996) Unmistakably, the United States is the object-unity of this “No.” What it implies, of course, is the pre-existence of an indisputable “Yes.” Such refusals are a continuing sign of deep identification with what they deny but do not replace.

Americas of the Mind

The key to the sway of this American imperialism has lain in its ability to insert itself into the geo-colonial space as the imaginary figure of modernity. After World War II, the material power of the United States made it the central object of identification, and later dis-identification, as the neo-colonial master of the region. American systems of representation and modes of living infiltrated the space of the national-popular imaginary, redirecting its flows of psychic desire and cultural energy. This chain of movements still traverses the social body. American English became the first foreign language to be acquired; the United States became the routine—often only possible—space for graduate education; for state bureaucrats and oppositional intellectuals alike, the “American experience” became a reference point of their own legitimation. It would be anachronistic to apply Fanon’s dictum of the Sixties directly here—to suggest that Japanese, Koreans, Chinese, or Taiwanese “want to be American,” in the same sense that “the black man wants to be white.” (Fanon 1952/1967) But in cases like Club 51, as we have seen, it is difficult to deny that a similar theoretical logic is at work.

The complexity of the situation is the complexity of history, since historical traces never die out when faced with new conditions. Historical elements are culled from the past to justify the present, as in Club 51’s deployment of anti-communist sentiment as a surface expression of global fear. On the other hand, as a recrudescence form of nativism, “civilizationalism” has been gradually emerging. Cho Hae-Joang has succinctly analyzed the Confucian Revival Movement in Korea; Chua Beng Huat has pinpointed the Singaporean’s redrafting of state identification as Asian; and “Japan” is obviously undergoing a re-Asianization phase. (Cho 1995; Chua 1998, pp. 186–205) Of course, this “self-rediscovery” movement is connected to the regionalization of global capital, but it is once again more deeply grounded in reaction to the uneven world of colonial history.

The pronounced or unpronounced big *Other*, against which this Asian civilizationalist identity is defined, is the “West,” now represented by “America.” But once again, anti-Americanism is not just a return of the repressed in history, it is—as in the pro-American end of the Club 51—

a response to global uncertainty. *Disidentification* is meaningless without the prior existence of identification; one has to identify with something before launching one's disassociation. There is no point in ridiculing any of this, or its opposite. Both pro- and anti-American modes operate within the same space, defined by the same object. We have to recognize that "America" has not only been with us, but has been *inside our cultural subjectivity* and has been part of us, if we wish to honestly understand the cultural composite of the self or selves; that the United States has not merely defined our identities but has become the reference point of our cultural imaginary. And it is precisely by occupying this position of being the "reference point" or system of reference that "America" constitutes our subjectivity, and precisely because it's an imaginary referent point, it has become part of us.

When the United States—not the Philippines or Korea—is constantly cited as the exemplar to validate claims for democracy in Taiwan, it means that "we are American," in the sense that we are not (do not want to be) Korean or Filipino. They do not even enter our field of vision. To recognize this is the necessary starting point for us to move elsewhere. Unless the cultural imaginary of "America" can be deconstructed, and the United States as object of identification and dis-identification displaced, we are doomed to repeat the histories of colonialism taken over by the neo-imperial Cold War system—the vicious circle of colonization, decolonization and re-colonization will simply continue.

Neither burning effigies of America nor confecting spurious "Asian values" is a solution. What we need are rather alternative frameworks of reference. (Niranjana 2000) Since World War II, the flow of cultural influences has for the most part been in one direction only—from America to East Asia. Intellectual life offers an even starker illustration than the entertainment industry. US academic texts have travelled to, and are actively read and taught in, East Asian universities. Intellectual trends have largely reproduced fashions on American campuses. The reverse has never been the case. Worse, East Asian intellectuals are often only able to meet each other, if at all, at American conferences; and when such meetings do take place, "we" easily look down on each other, for some of us are

insufficiently abreast of the latest schools of thought in the West. Such is all too often the topic of conversation. There is little desire to read one another's work, or to find out what is being debated in the various local intellectual scenes; and there is no circulation of texts from other countries within bookshops of the region. Language differences are often the excuse.

But if we can read "English" texts published in the United States, why not read those published in Manila, Singapore, or Calcutta? The emergence of an inter-Asian public sphere, however tentative or modest, would be the beginning of that shift towards a multiplication of our frames of reference that is now needed to "world the world," as this collection calls for. Traffic among critical circles of intellectuals in its different societies has begun to quicken. New cross-border contacts and alliances are in the process of creation. Rather than in complete retreat, the Left—more precisely a new Left—seems to be on the move.

That said as context, the end of the Cold War, which has not yet ended in our inter-Asian part of the world, has paradoxically not had the same depressive effects on critical thinking as in Europe or North America. Although, here too, certain sectors of a once progressive opinion quickly adjusted to the wisdom of global capital and dropped any talk of socialism, among others there has been a concurrent sense of new hope. The gates to mutually prohibited zones are gradually being lifted in the region. What would be its effect? A celebration of hybridity? A retreat into nativist purity? Rather, part of a decolonization in motion, in which "Asia" and the "Third World" offer alternative sites of identification to multiply our selves. Let us hope the result differs from the radical plural opportunism of Club 51 and its like.

Right before the 1996 Presidential election, when the PRC launched missiles near Taiwan, a good amount of e-mail messages came to us from friends who, living outside Taiwan, were concerned by the crisis. These friends seemed to be more nervous than we were. In the middle of the crisis, there did not seem to be much that you could do. Life had to go on. This sense of powerlessness or indifference was then interpreted as evidence of Taiwanese maturity, its own people's ability to handle a crisis situation, this despite the fact that there was such a middle-class rush to

convert savings into US dollars, that City Bank in Taipei had to ship in cash to meet exceedingly anxious demand. In such an atmosphere of war risk, one could perhaps better understand that in Taiwan there is no position from which to even utter the term “US imperialism.” It is precisely here that we recall Seong Nae Kim’s (2000) analysis of Korean post-war modernity, where the foundational narrative has been anti-communism: the utterance of US imperialism will be immediately translated as identification with the communist regime across the strait.

The regulated binarism leaves no space to insert a critical formulation. The hidden “parental guidance” built over the past fifty years thus resembles the widely circulated claim: “If Taiwan were still under the Japanese, we are probably better off.” At the risk of arousing the anger of my friends in Taiwan, I will say once again that “Japan” and “America” have been *inside* our cultural subjectivity. What could be the critical effect of such recognition? I would take such recognition as part of the decolonization in motion, a point in which reactive anxiety can be turned into active forces. Let’s not “de-Americanize” ourselves. Rather we should continue to move towards “Asia” and the “Third World” in a new regional anti-imperialist formation.



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6

“But I Did Not Shoot the Deputy”: Dubbing the Yankee Frontier

Louis Chude-Sokei

The Americans might have traded for some of the meat but they carried no tantamount goods, and the disposition to exchange was foreign to them. And so these parties divided upon that midnight plain, each passing back the way the other had come, pursuing as all travelers must inversions without end upon other men’s journeys.

—Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian*,
or, *The Evening Redness in the West*

This essay evolved out of a series of versions composed and completed at various times over the past six to eight years; it also found itself subject to the vagaries of production on three separate occasions. Being fully aware of Jamaican music and popular culture’s relentless and obsessive drive for novelty and the radical changes in the music—if not the meanings—since the essay was conceived, this note is by way of an explanation of the dated-ness of its contemporary references.

I

“I Shot the Sheriff” is undoubtedly one of the most well-known songs in the tradition of Jamaican reggae. It has become a global anthem. The song has been made to contain within its echoes everything from the moral ambiguities at the end of America’s utopian Sixties—as in Eric Clapton’s hit 1974 version, recorded as a tacit apology to black fans after his support for a right-wing candidate as well as a series of racial epithets—to the disasters of Third World “independence” and the hurricanes of street violence it set loose on islands seemingly too small to contain so much blood.



1. Warren G. "I Shot the Sheriff." *Take a Look Over Your Shoulder* (Reality/Def Jam, 1997).

As if to remind us of its enduring significance to post-/neo-/omni-colonial discourse, the song's totemic power was also claimed by the omnivorous aesthetic of hip hop. Not only was it buried in the dense soundscape of Public Enemy's 1989 "Fight the Power," but it was more explicitly appropriated by second-tier "G-funk" collaborator Warren G (producer Dr. Dre's cousin) in 1997's apparently "gangsta" version. Where Bob Marley's version was empowered by the self-righteous fervor of Rastafarianism and emerges out of the aggressive masculinity of a generation too late for organized resistance, Warren G's version was empowered by the indignation of the black male lost in the rootless sprawl of a post-Civil Rights/post-Black Power (and increasingly post-hip hop) moment:

I shot the sheriff
I didn't shoot the deputy because I didn't have to
'Cause in this game they always trying to blast you
and leave it to the cops to find out who did the murder
they harass the wrong clan and arrest the wrong man.¹

In both versions the turn towards violence is justified and the black male subject, *already* a victim of systemic violence, is washed pure by the blood of resistance. This is a violence not only born out of innocence, but justified by it. Since the always metaphoric yet painfully real system (or "shit-stem" as the late great Peter Tosh always reminded us) is morally corrupt and philosophically wrong, it is incumbent upon black manhood to cleanse it with violence and thereby remove also the taint of a political impotence almost always expressed in sexual terms. Of course, where Bob Marley's speaker could claim also a greater metaphysical innocence rooted in his divine patrimony, Warren G's "gangsta" persona can claim no innocence outside of "this game." His destiny is played out in the crossfire, between positions that have no greater claim to truth and which rapidly shift and reveal themselves to be as corrupt as each other. In this case, the black male subject is always and necessarily "the wrong man"—and *that* is the only truth available.

However, now teetering on the edges of dominant negative stereotypes of African-American and Afro-Caribbean men, it is necessary to

clarify that this symbolic use of violence is not necessarily accompanied by a willingness to do violence. Nor is it a testimony to a greater predilection for violence; it is instead an exploration of a popular discourse in which these are the terms, the figures, and the icons. It is an example of signifying, in which hyperbolic speech and disturbing images are necessary in the attempt to articulate revolutionary desires without a revolutionary politics. Violence here—as René Girard would have it—is a language, a mode of speech. And to make the obligatory reference to Richard Slotkin’s masterful *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America*, this language of mythic violence is always deployed as regenerative, hence necessary if not inevitable.²

Jamaican scholar Carolyn Cooper argues in “Lyrical Gun’: Metaphor and Role Play in Jamaican Dancehall Culture” that references to guns in the rituals and music of reggae sound-system culture are largely symbolic and are not to be taken literally. As she points out, literal and simulated gunfire in dancehall culture have always functioned primarily as a salute to the verbal skill of the DJ/performer.³ Yet there is something more behind what Cooper calls the “modern-day, epic tradition” of dancehall gun-talk and its choice of symbols/sounds. Such discursive uses of violence within an oppressed and marginalized community are meant to challenge us to see cultural oppression in these epic and apocalyptic terms, rather than through nostalgia, sentiment, romance, and guilt—the language of liberal containment. Violent language conveys just what is at stake in these political and cultural encounters, as well as how deep the wounds of history are. After all, it is the *ur*-violence of the colonial/racist state that is at issue in all versions of “I Shot the Sheriff,” and the notion of violence as regenerative and redemptive is not exclusively the purview of the dominant power. But there is something else as well, to which this essay will eventually turn, despite its invisibility in Cooper’s work and its tense erasure in contemporary black diaspora discourses: the relationship between hyperbolic gun-talk and the fetishized presence of *actual* guns there on that “midnight plain” between Kingston and New York, London and Los Angeles.

One is reminded here of two texts which theorize the marginalized and the oppressed and their relationship to violence: Frantz Fanon’s

2. Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Atheneum, 1992).

3. Carolyn Cooper, “Lyrical Gun’: Metaphor and Role Play in Jamaican Dancehall Culture.” *The Massachusetts Review*, Autumn-Winter 1994, p. 434.

4. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), p. 41.

5. Frantz Fanon, p. 50.

The Wretched of the Earth and *Saint Genet* by Jean-Paul Sartre, whose personal and intellectual relationship to Fanon is well-known. In both of these texts, the claim on violence is a claim on history, and morality is merely the primary site of imbalanced power relations. In the former, the section “Concerning Violence” engages the problem of truth in a colonial situation and addresses the tricky set of ethical concerns around the “subaltern,” violence, colonization, and race. Because the colonialist represents the native as the “quintessence of evil,” as “not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values . . . the absolute evil,” the allegorical and historical struggle for the nation is simultaneously in the realm of ethics⁴—“In this colonialist context there is no truthful behavior: and the good is quite simply that which is evil for ‘them.’”⁵ Or as old-school Jamaican DJ Big Youth once put it, “In Babylon when you right, you wrong, and when you wrong, you right.”

Due to the need for the colonized to reverse these moral and ethical valuations and to assert instead the immorality of the colonial presence itself, violence is claimed as a moral statement and the colonizer’s selfish hoarding of bloodshed becomes part and parcel of a liberal economy in which the ability to do violence becomes universally legitimized as a sign of independence. In the post-colonial era—the era of American globalization—this reversal is marked by a liberalization of access to technologies of both sound reproduction and of violence, such as firearms. Most of these weapons had arrived in the anglophone Caribbean in the decades after the Cuban Revolution as the tail end of the Cold War played itself out in tropical climes. These were the decades where for Caribbean nations, “independence” meant simply that, right or wrong, you were forced to choose a side.

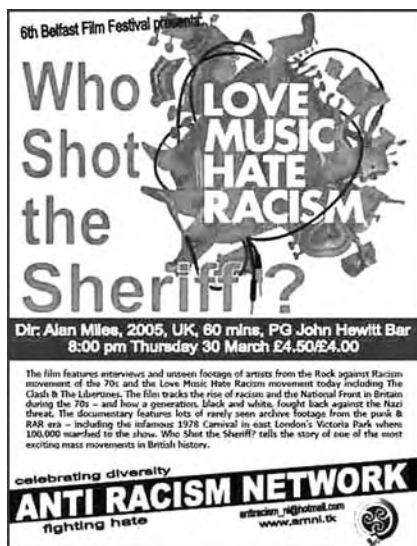
In Marley’s song Fanon’s reasoning is remixed for the post-/neo-colonial era, and black male criminality provides an alternate reading of dominant stereotypes of black men, of post-ideological “resistance,” and the often racialized discourses of crime. These ethical re-valuations are there throughout the entire corpus of militant Seventies reggae and, along with the tradition of 1970s “blaxploitation” films in America, help to provide the self-justifying ethical underpinning for much so-called “gangsta rap”—a term which may in fact be finally fading.

In “blaxploitation” films, for example, black street crime was linked directly to institutional racism and corruption, described as a form of resistance that manifested the blocked revolutionary impetus of a generation beheaded by assassinations and FBI intervention. This tradition of independent film-making (which remained independent until the success of the big-budget *Shaft* in 1971) is arguably the primary influence on a film that will be discussed presently: Trevor Rhone and Perry Henzell’s 1973 *The Harder They Come*, which, along with Marley’s song, is a set piece.

In addition to blaxploitation, *The Harder They Come* and “I Shot The Sheriff” arrived on the heels of the international boom in western genre films spearheaded by the Cinecitta studios in Italy. This is the aesthetic pedigree of what is the first black post-colonial western and the broad transnational cultural conversation that came with it.⁶ Black, obviously—but a *post-colonial western* in that it is in direct conversation with two disparate film traditions: blaxploitation and “spaghetti westerns,” both of which critiqued American culture and politics by reversing, rejecting, and revising its moral structures. These moral structures were explicitly linked to racism in the former and to the global cultural hegemony of the United States in the latter. After all, what allowed blaxploitation to work was the fact that even in the worst of the genre there was a brooding sense of systemic injustice allowing even the most uncomfortable viewer to sympathize with (or justify) the criminal. The Italian (and sometimes Spanish) westerns went far beyond binary reversals. The frontier represented in many of the films is not only psychological, but a landscape beyond the dusty borders of moral certitude or expansionist positivism. As critiques of America—in a visual dialect of its own filmic language—they are linked by these questions of violence, morality, and the intimate relationship between resistance and crime.

However, it is Jean-Paul Sartre’s classic text of moral and philosophical prestidigitation, *Saint Genet*, which provides us with this reading of crime as both liberation and resistance. It ultimately asks: isn’t a criminal produced by a venal system a revolutionary, if not a saint? Isn’t any act against the norms of a corrupt status quo a statement of resistance, if not purity? Dostoevsky’s Raskolnikov asks a version of this question and

6. Which is not to say the first *black* western. African-American cowboy films go back to the 1930s, featuring actors like Herb Jeffries, the “Bronze Buckaroo,” and bearing titles like *Harlem on the Prairie*.



puts it into praxis in *Crime and Punishment*. Richard Wright will, of course, racialize Dostoevsky in *Native Son* by stating the question in an explicitly Sartrean way there on the eve of his departure from Communist Party rationalizations. It is the question that Ivan/Rhygin is almost but not quite liberated by in *The Harder They Come* and which will help launch Bob Marley as spokesman for the black Third World. Indeed, it is at the heart of the excessively hyperbolic gestures of contemporary hip hop, which in this particular universe of moral reversal may in fact finally speak for the very general position of race in America. However, given that violence is a mode of speech, can we not address that question by remixing another, one that somehow bedeviled a generation of post-colonial studies via Gayatri Spivak: can the subaltern be guilty?

II

“I Shot the Sheriff” initially appeared on the 1973 album *Burnin’*, the last to feature the original lineup of the Wailers: Peter Tosh, Bunny Wailer, and Bob Marley. It occupies a unique position in the history of global popular culture for a number of reasons. First, it marked the arrival of Bob Marley on the international stage where he was meant to compete with the dominant genre of Rock and Roll, which had begun to silence the Jazz and Rhythm and Blues, which a generation before had provided Reggae with its cross-cultural nascence.

Second, as a sign of a transnational popular discourse where the “Third World” responds to the “First World” in the language of mass media, the album appears just when the overdeveloped world had shifted its axis of power. By 1973 the Caribbean had been made intimate by tourism and strategic by Fidel Castro; it became as important a site of culture, leisure, and post-colonial scrutiny as it once was a site of sugar and slave labor. Most importantly, the song was released when the moral structures of British imperial hegemony had ceded to the wildcat impulses of an American free-market “independence.” Power was now located within America’s overwhelming media sprawl, and aligned with its attendant notion of subjectivity without consequence.

The song’s power is primarily due to its use of allegory, in which a community far on the margins of the Western culture industry engages

in a critical re-imagining (a *versioning* or *dubbing*, in Jamaican terms) of a “First World” master text by appropriating both the technology of orality that is film and the technology of narrative that is genre. Beyond his charismatic stage presence and his immense musical talent, Marley’s greatest gift was perhaps his ability to transform incredibly local and micro-political metaphors from Jamaican rural culture into allegories that encompassed a restructured global hegemony. In this case American popular film becomes *dubbed* by Caribbean bush-knowledge as well as an increasingly gendered notion of neo-colonial resistance. “I Shot the Sheriff” is, after all, a response not simply to those who within its narrative accuse the speaker of homicide. It is a more general response to American popular culture via the American western movie, which in its more innocent phase—up until, say, the late 1960s—had always been a fairly obvious yet highly entertaining example of American propaganda masked in the structure of a morality play.

Looking back on the moment of its arrival, back when the Caribbean begins to re-invent itself as “modern” after centuries of slavery and colonization, the song functions in the realm of the cultural imaginary as a part of the political reconstruction and cultural reconfiguration of Jamaica after “independence.” But it was not alone in this borrowing of film allegories from the overdeveloped world. It was through the widespread use of the western in Jamaican popular culture at this time (in music, film, and that index of morality that is popular style) that the island’s masses made clear that their national destiny would be appended to America as it settled into its role as ambivalent imperial center. Through a popular culture newly empowered by what Paul Gilroy called the “alternate public sphere” of reggae sound-system culture—which was largely responsible for the shifting of cultural power from the elite to the grassroots—Jamaican culture imaginatively attached itself to America by way of the national creation myth that is the western.⁷ In creating this unasked-for synaptic intimacy, the island found space within American allegories to navigate and explore the conceptual and economic meanings of the “West,” the “frontier,” the “border,” as well as the various promises and challenges made by the relentlessly global and borderless technological signifying of America.

7. Paul Gilroy, *There 'Aint No Black In The Union Jack': The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987).

Again, the song emerges after the political rule of the British Empire had given way to the economic and cultural domination of the United States and the marketing of a “freedom” defined by mass-media saturation, commodity production, and technological superiority. It is an “independence” in which the old imperative of territorial domination had given way to a strategy of inexorably mediatized cultural presence. “I Shot the Sheriff” arrives after the residual hierarchies of a British-approximated social structure (aided and abetted by a local *pigmentocracy*) begins to give way to a popular sense of linguistic, ethnic, and cultural authenticity. The dialect of culture transforms in this period. Musical forms like ska, rocksteady, reggae, and dub are examples of this neo-/post-colonial shift, in which the distinct rhythms of the music and the attendant expressions of dialect mirror and map a changing sense of folk and working-class cultural—if not political—sovereignty. Though this cultural movement against colonization greatly emphasized its local “roots,” it was partly a product of an American liberal cultural economy that had since early in the twentieth century institutionalized and broadcast the vernacular as a sign of subversive populism. This was a nation that had come to international cultural power partly through the poetics and politics of broadcasting and through an increasing control and centralization of the airwaves.

This latter point cannot be stressed quite enough: the control over three primary inventions is crucial to the American century—radio, film, and the phonograph. In Jamaica on the eve and morning of “independence,” this complex series of transformations (BBC notwithstanding) was all manifested in the vernacular practices of reggae music and the techno-poetics of sound-system culture. It is in the sound-system culture that an alternative media complex was created, one that countered both the colonial imperatives of the BBC and its local island offshoots. An indigenous politics of hearing exists here in tandem with an indigenous attempt at technologizing the space of culture. Local sound-system operators/producers were not only instrumental in the development of local music; they were the ones who traveled back and forth to America for prized records to play for the ghetto masses on their “sounds.” They were also the ones who built their own recording studios and pressing plants,

and began to construct from the sound-system complex an entire popular culture based on their own manipulation and appropriation of the means of production. In keeping with the outlaw nature of this socially marginalized music and culture, legendary sound men like Duke Reid were known to arrive in dancehall sessions dressed as cowboys complete with bandoliers and loaded two-gun holsters. Without this alternative and local popular media, both “I Shot the Sheriff” and *The Harder They Come* could not have existed.

Caribbean writers of the generation of independence were also aware of both the politics of technology and the appeal of the western genre in colonial discourses of resistance and violence. Describing cinema as “a kind of fundamental magic,” George Lamming’s *The Pleasures of Exile* seeks the meanings of decolonization throughout the African Diaspora by using the American western to explore an Afro-Diasporic neo-colonial psyche:

The African’s reaction to films—I’m not speaking of the African intellectual—is an interesting example of the complete suspension of doubt. He reacts as a poet would like a reader to react to the illusion which the image at first creates. The echoes of the film remain.

. . . The boys will imitate the action of the horse, meaning the cowboy’s horse. They will show how the great saviour man came riding into town; what happened when the “bad men” noticed this stranger, never seen before.

The Western is completely relived; and since authenticity is demanded, more than one must be involved. The man who relates the film may ask another to stand opposite, and put his hand on his hip as though he were about to draw his pistol. So we have the Stranger-Man—who is dramatizing—and the “Bad Man” who didn’t see the film, but who gets an even better version of the problem. What happens next?

You need a sheriff, a bar, some horses. Above all, you need a girl. In the Western, this girl turns out to be the fruit and reward of the Stranger-Man’s virtue. But the African knows that she is really what the shooting is going to be about.⁸

Writing over a decade before “I Shot the Sheriff” was recorded, our poet of perpetual exile reads in the western film the drama of African

8. George Lamming, *The Pleasures of Exile* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1960), pp. 167–168. Italics added.

9. There was in fact an ultra-obscure Jamaican DJ who operated under the moniker “Lee Van Cleef” during the Seventies.

belonging, the performance of male identity in the context of colonial media, and the ritualized performance of violence. Lamming goes as far as to read the western simultaneously with Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, bringing together two allegories that to his mind are already conflated. Obviously Lamming’s knowledge of the western is pre-Cinécitta: he describes the “classical” form of the American western with its moral certitude and structural determinism. When he writes “saviour man” he is thinking about Tom Mix, John Wayne, Gary Cooper, and Randolph Scott. He is not thinking about Clint Eastwood, Franco Nero, or the truly great Lee Van Cleef, whom reggae producers would respectfully nickname “The Ugly One.”⁹ These latter icons would only make sense after “independence” had been given a chance to fail. However, the fact that Lamming describes the “Bad Man” as the character who questions the given or performed history—who provides a better *versioning* of the problem—evokes the very question of good and evil in the colonial *mise en scène*. The “Bad Man” is not the “quintessence of evil,” but he questions the performance of power and, in a classic Nietzschean gesture, allows for the reversal of values upon which history is founded.

In the above passage, the authenticity of “roots” at work in black island nationalism is transformed by that “complete suspension of doubt” which is never quite suspended, since it always questions the ambivalence and inconsistencies of colonial narratives and is rooted in its own sense of unwavering historical innocence. It is also never quite suspended since it acknowledges the primary artifice upon which the reality of the narrative and the performance of interpretation depend:

. . . for the film is an arrangement which begins with a bribe. We are cheated of life, since we know that there is no event in spite of all the incidents which we follow. We watch the cowboys, we hear the horses’ hooves, we thrill to the music of the vagrant guitar stringed with whiskey and smoke in a hole populated by tarts. We observe the efficiency of the rifles; the bullets and the cannibal wail of the Red Indians tear up the roots of our ears with a sound of terror. The cowboy has “got” his girl; and their first kiss is like the clap of volcanoes. Love has won its way through death; for many,

many enemies and Indians have been shot. We thrill to the killing because it is safe to do so. It is clear to us that all but a few have been killed; and yet no one has died.

There will be a wedding and the corpses will come . . . We cannot deny these things; hence the reality of the film which is an illusion.¹⁰

Lamming's notion of suspension emphasizes how engaged with the filmic illusion and narrative masking the colonized subject is. This critical engagement is a critical distance, that familiar "hermeneutics of suspicion" which then calls for a performance of the colonial narrative—a version, a doubling, a repetition with difference. Within that *dubbed* historical space, the colonized enacts through performance a poetics of racial *in-authenticity*—a politics of illusion that embraces style and myth not as truths, but as techniques. Such a performance allows and requires the mastery of multiple projections (the one on the screen and the one produced in response to the one on screen) and the performance of multiple authenticities (both projections being as authentic as a notion of "roots" which is itself performative). In Lamming's words, "since authenticity is demanded, *more than one must be involved.*"

The character Ivan from *The Harder They Come*—who will be renamed/dubbed Rhygin upon his baptism through violence—is here in the evocation of the history-less "Stranger-Man" and his *Doppelgänger*, the "Bad Man"; and the obsessive masculinity endemic to revolutionary nationalism is also there in Lamming's reference to the "Sheriff's virgin Miranda."¹¹ In perhaps one of the most awkward lines in *The Harder They Come*—and, with all due respect, possibly in all anglophone Caribbean literature—Michael Thelwell (who turned the movie into a novel in 1980) emphasizes the gun/phallus, history/myth apotheosis as Ivan becomes badman Rhygin: "Naked and gleaming like a newborn baby, his turgid penis standing out woman-slick and reeking of carnality, a pistol in either hand, Rhygin stepped out the door and truly into legend."¹² However, this particular transformation has nothing to do with the "Sheriff's virgin." In fact, this turgid line occurs after Rhygin has murdered the black prostitute-girlfriend of his arch-nemesis Jose, he who first seduced "country-

10. George Lamming, pp. 171–172.

11. George Lamming, p. 168.

12. Michael Thelwell. *The Harder They Come* (New York: Grove Press, 1980), p. 348.

13. Sylvia Wynter, "Beyond Miranda's Meanings: Un/silencing the 'Demonic Ground' of Caliban's 'Woman,'" in *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature*, Alison Donnell and Sarah Lawson Welsh, eds. (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

bwai" Ivan into the life of the streets and the herb trade, who first introduced him to the "fundamental magic" of the cinema, and who first betrayed him to the police. In terms of narrative parallels this murder is more akin to Bigger Thomas's murder of his black girlfriend "Bessie" in *Native Son*, the murder that is primarily marked by both Wright and the racism he critiques as secondary to the murder of the very white, very Miranda-esque Mary Dalton. But to the director's credit, it is important to note that in *The Harder They Come* this murder—if not the victim—is clearly significant, as it marks the moment when the audience is suddenly conflicted about the possible *meaning* of Rhygin's violence, and is suddenly vulnerable to him as a social threat while still praising him as folk hero and nascent revolutionary.

For Lamming to write that the colonized male "knows that she is really what the shooting is going to be about" is quite explicitly to say that race, morality, and resistance are ultimately and equally manifested in a discourse of sexuality. Indeed they require it, seeing that the virgin-purity of "Miranda" becomes merely a hyperbolic denial of the sodomy implied by the "Stranger-Man"/ "Bad Man" contest. This reading is consistent with Lamming's steady claim in *The Pleasures of Exile* that the spectatorial apparatus of West Indian subjectivity (its "way of seeing") is the child-product of both Caliban and Prospero. The (white) woman's body is once again figured as both the site of the black/white colonial contest and the primary audience in absentia; "she" functions as a mask for those sexual energies, enabling the discourse of domination and the discourse of resistance to share a sacred space "outside" Manichean difference: the space of patriarchy. And as Sylvia Wynter so crucially points out in her well-known "Beyond Miranda's Meanings: Un/silencing the 'Demonic Ground' of Caliban's 'Woman,'" this gendered colonial contest works not by the denial of Miranda, but by the fetishizing of her body as the only possible sexual "other" to both forms of patriarchy—native and colonial.¹³ In doing so, "she" serves to utterly erase the native woman as a representable possibility not only in *The Tempest*, but in the western genre film as well. Taking Wynter one step further, it is the structural absence of "Caliban's woman" and the hyperbolic presence of "the Sheriff's virgin" that makes

it possible for Lamming to move from Shakespeare to John Wayne, from *The Tempest* to *Rio Bravo* so seamlessly. It is that absence that allows Lamming to see in the American genre film the skeleton of mythic, universal archetypes.

Reading Lamming alongside the popular culture of the colonial/neo-colonial Caribbean emphasizes how the western genre had been established beyond the specific borders of Manifest Destiny and how it signified American globalization within the post-/neo-colonial imagination. Michael Thelwell's not-quite-a-novelization of *The Harder They Come* emphasizes this by way of its interest in the local drug trade as well as tourism, impotent revolutionaries, and the glories of violence. As Carolyn Cooper writes, the film and its novelization "illustrates the indigenization of this imported American culture of heroism and gun violence."¹⁴ It is the process of indigenization that "I Shot the Sheriff" signifies, and the questioning of given and dominant values implicit in that process of appropriation.

Although less optimistic about the poetic possibilities of a local deconstruction of dominant media images through indigenization, in 1962 V. S. Naipaul sees in Hollywood western and gangster films the transformation from empire to empire and the garish failures of a local independence. This quotation from his book *The Middle Passage* reads like an analysis of the theatre scenes in *The Harder They Come*, where the male characters in the audience perform and contest the meanings of the film in much the same way Lamming describes in *The Pleasures of Exile*:

Newspapers and radio were, however, only the ancillaries of the cinema, whose influence is incalculable. The Trinidadian audience actively participates in the action on the screen. . . . So the audience continually shouts advice and comments; it grunts at every blow in a fight; it roars with delight when the once-spurned hero returns wealthy and impeccably dressed (this is important) to revenge himself on his past tormentor; it grows derisive when the hero finally rejects and perhaps slaps the Hollywood 'bad' woman (of the *Leave It To Heaven* type). It responds, in short, to every stock situation of the American cinema. . . .

15. V. S. Naipaul, *The Middle Passage* (New York: Random House, 1962), pp. 58–61.

After thirty years of active participation in this sort of cinema, the Trinidadian, whether he sits in the pit or the house or the balcony, can respond only to the Hollywood formula. Nothing beyond the formula is understood, even when it comes from America; and nothing from outside America is worth considering. . . .

If curiosity is a characteristic of the cosmopolitan, the cosmopolitanism on which Trinidad prides itself is fraudulent. In the immigrant colonial society, with no standards of its own, subjected for years to the second-rate in newspapers, radio and cinema, minds are rigidly closed; and Trinidadians of all races and classes are remaking themselves in the image of the Hollywood B-Man. This is the full meaning of modernity in Trinidad.¹⁵

Yet there is much more to the politics of “remaking” than simple mimicry, and there is much more to simple mimicry than imitation. There is as much versioning and dubbing at work in Trinidadian parodic masquerade as there is in Jamaican music, where the lack of dominant industry copyright standards produced an aesthetic of perpetual re-fashioning and outright theft. Naipaul is aware of the active participation and the intense engagement of the Trinidadian audience yet, unlike Lamming, does not explore the contradictory gestures of mimicry and performance in a culture so absolutely committed to carnival. In a related point, Carolyn Cooper describes how “the persistence of this tradition of role play in contemporary Jamaican dancehall culture makes it difficult sometimes for outsiders . . . to accurately decode local cultural signs.”¹⁶ Although neither quite the outsider nor the insider, Naipaul’s noted disdain for the carnival complex serves to limit his reading of both mass media impact and the full meaning of modernity in Trinidad. This is a modernity in which masking and mimicry are produced by an engagement with illusion and artifice, not by a passive acquiescence to “the real.” The full meaning of *postmodernity* may also be here: in that desire for transformation that motivates the mimic, in that half-blind groping (as Wilson Harris would have it) for something entirely without depth or context which liberates by way of its utterly divine rootlessness. This “thing” is something inescapably modern, though not necessarily American,

although it presents itself in the language of America and wears the mask of cowboy foreign policy.

Naipaul does notice in *The Middle Passage*, however, the importance of violence in these films for the local audience and, as does Lamming, the significance of *male* violence in these cinematic representations of American globalization. But what is missing from both Lamming's and Naipaul's accounts is this: as the islands became awash in American commodities and surface textures, and as ideologically motivated political movements began to dissolve, revolutionary violence became linked to the assertion of black male subjectivity. As "independence" forecloses the national possibilities of revolution, violence becomes increasingly ritualized in the highly competitive world of sound systems and increasingly sublimated in the music. "I Shot the Sheriff" picks up the remaining echoes of these meanings and remixes them into prophetic questionings aimed at a masculinity adrift and isolated, without a revolution to justify and focus its anger. Manhood becomes suddenly an island, deracinated and illusive, stylish and forlorn. The song captures and presents in sound the era of the quintessential black urban cowboy/gangster/B-man figure in Jamaican popular culture—the *rude boy* immortalized in *The Harder They Come*, released a year before "I Shot The Sheriff" became a hit.

The film is formally and intentionally a "yard style" western, complete with showdowns, ritual face-offs, dutiful church girls, saloon wenches, bad-men, town sheriffs, bar fights, renegade capitalists, border-town revolutionaries, and acres of "loco weed." It is an example of what Christopher Frayling in his landmark study of Italian westerns calls a "critical cinema" which, using "an established cinematic tradition, and without shedding its popular character, can deconstruct and rearrange the images and themes which exemplify the reverence of puritan-liberal Hollywood westerns, the established bases of the genre."¹⁷ As a form of "critical cinema," *The Harder They Come* is *about* westerns and *about* America—or more precisely, about how America imagined itself and how those on the fringes of its projections re-imagined it while simultaneously re-imagining themselves through it. The primary mechanism of this "critical cinema" is that *poetic versioning* through ritual described by

16. Carolyn Cooper, "Lyrical Gun," p. 434.

17. Christopher Frayling, *Spaghetti Westerns: Cowboys and Europeans from Karl May to Sergio Leone* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1981), p. 160.

Lamming which interrogates, exorcises, and contains externally imposed values by performing and replicating them. This form of repetition and signifying serves to emphasize the distance between sound and echo, center and margin. It rewrites origins with a simulacra (an echo) produced by the history that was silenced by the primary sound in the first place.

Rhone and Henzell's film identifies yet criticizes the reversal of valuations engaged by Sartre, Fanon, and Richard Wright as it had come to define a popular post-/neo-colonialism in which the oppressed—however armed and however violent—are always justified by virtue of their subordinate position in an unjust system. The narrative movement of Ivan from country boy to rude boy to ambivalent revolutionary and finally to social menace forces the audience to question just how far these reversals can go and just how innocent a character like Ivan or Marley's narrator (or even Warren G's "gangsta" persona can be. Innocence, after all, is a form of freedom—yet if the latter is impossible, then the former can only be at best a noble claim, at worst a pose. Like Marley's song, the film fetishizes that metaphysical freedom which is either a description of political "independence" or a narcissistic substitute for it. However, it is the *impossibility* of this transcendental freedom that is the ultimate statement of both texts. What "I Shot the Sheriff" and *The Harder They Come* interrogate in their appropriation of the genre is what happens when the performance of outlawry becomes trapped by its fundamentally reactive and narcissistic pose. They ask what happens when what Jamaicans call *badmanism* refuses to remove the bloody mask of innocence for fear of questioning its own culpability.

III

The more intricate questions of ethics have largely been overshadowed by the raw power of *The Harder They Come* and its historical value. Bob Marley's song too has never been situated in this much larger context of both the moral/ethical reversals at work in the use of the western genre and the cowboy craze that swept island popular culture during the late Sixties and early Seventies. There will be more on this craze later because these Wild West images and metaphors are still a major part of Jamaican



music and vernacular style, even though westerns (films) are quite rare today. As is more commonly observed, *The Harder They Come* presents and criticizes the influence of American media on the poor, unemployed, and unemployable males who flocked to Kingston in the 1960s (and who still flock there). Marginalized by both sacred and secular institutions as both mythical figures in popular song and icons of youth style, rude boys existed outside a fragile status quo. Hoping to find some fulfillment in the experience of shanty-town urbanity, these men found in the explicitly male-centered universe of the western the narrative primacy lacking in a country with very little employment, an intransigent class system, and a church that although dominated by a male hierarchy was explicitly the social terrain of women. Films, music, and magazines occupied a sacred space for these men, allowed them to build masks from materials that, because they were imported, were free from restrictive indigenous meanings. These messages from “outside” enabled them to assemble themselves in a society that had no space for what they authentically were, or rather for what a history of colonization had made of them.

More than anything else, American films and their Italian *versions* fed the black underclass male obsession with style:

There was a certain style to it all. The rudies wore very short green serge trousers, leather or gangster-style suit jackets, and their eyes were often hidden behind moody pairs of shades. If they were “rough tough” and rich enough, they would ride around on light, stripped-down motorcycles which were covered in chrome . . . The point was to be as cool as possible.¹⁸

Without retreating too far back into the often naïve discourses of “style as resistance” that characterized much British Cultural Studies and contemporary Popular Culture, this obsession with style and public performance is coterminous with the transformations in popular morality attendant with “I Shot the Sheriff.” The movement into style *is* a movement into a form of resistance unencumbered by the “depth” and weight of organized ideology. As Frayling suggests, in the 1970s, after the full impact of the Cinecitta westerns was felt back in the United States, a new form of Hollywood hero was born, a new post-ideological type of mascu-

18. Dick Hebdige, *Cut 'n' Mix: Culture, Identity and Caribbean Music* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 73.

19. Christopher Frayling, p. xii.

20. Christopher Frayling, p. 61.

21. V. S. Naipaul, pp. 59–60.

linity: “the hero as style statement, rather than as crusader.”¹⁹ He goes on to locate this curious and necessary parallel in Italian westerns, which were the dominant form of post-colonial “critical cinema” of the time:

The heroes and villains of Spaghetti Westerns are almost invariably obsessed by “style,” “image,” “ritual,” and their confrontations or interactions are, typically, symbolic ones: one of the trademarks of the Spaghetti . . . was to become the extended face-off, or duel, or settling of accounts; and the hero-figures are usually identifiable by a collection of external gestures, mannerisms, “stylish” articles of clothing, or even motifs on the soundtrack, rather than by anything remotely to do with the “inner man.”²⁰

As a critical cinema, the Italian westerns revealed the metaphorical depths and political allegories of American genre films as hollow by reducing them to the merely gestural. But they also attracted the inchoate fervor of post-nationalist manhood by glorifying not the struggle or the narrative, but the style and the performance; not the cause or the motive, but the directness of expression and the self-justifying poetry of violence.

Naipaul finds this obsession with style curious also. He notes that in Trinidad the mannerisms and gestures of white American actors were translated into universal truths of maleness as well as into specific national characteristics:

In its stars the Trinidadian audience looks for a special quality of style. John Garfield had this style; so did Bogart . . . For the Trinidadian an actor has style when he is seen to fulfill certain aspirations of the audience: the virility of Bogart, the man-on-the-run romanticism of Garfield, the pimpishness and menace of Duryea, the ice-cold sadism of Widmark.²¹

Considering the history of Trinidad and its complex traditions of ritual masking and performance as both subversive and stabilizing to the status quo, one could spend a good deal of time discussing the specifics of carnival side-by-side with the reception of American media images. As mentioned before, Naipaul is ill-suited to do this. It is unnecessary, however, because this comparison has already been done brilliantly by the great Caribbean novelist Earl Lovelace in 1979’s *The Dragon Can’t Dance*. His

character Fisheye is the connection between ritual masquerade and “critical cinema.” The passage depicting his transformation needs to be quoted at length, though it must be remembered that the criticism involved also operates on an intra-subjective level with Fisheye the “badjohn”—or Ivan the “rude bwai”—navigating the symbolic realms of both the imported genre and the socio-political realities of Caribbean life. It must not be assumed that this navigation of symbols or myth is some crude example of cultural colonialism or of minds unable to distinguish between the “real” and the “symbolic” (as if such a simplistic distinction could ever be possible under any socio-economic or cultural circumstances). After all, this navigation *is* the experience of culture in any situation.

Lovelace’s passage reads:

He began to go to the cinema. Every night almost, he went to the Royal or Empire, whichever was showing a western double; and after the show, walking home up the Hill, the picture fresh in his mind, walking kinda slow, he would feel for a few moments his strength, his youth, his promise fill him, and he would walk, the fastest gun alive, his long hands still at his sides, his fingers ready to go for the guns he imagined holstered low on his hips. But no one wanted to draw against him; and he would pick his way between the garbage and dog shit with his secret power and invisible guns, his eyes searching the shadows for a hidden gunman—in which movie was it that someone had said: “Every shadow is a gunman?”—but all he saw was maybe a few fellars gambling under the street light, or a man and his woman quarrelling. . . .

He began to develop a crawl, a way of walking that was kinda dragging and slow, in which his knees barely bent, his feet were kept close and his legs spread apart to give the appearance of being bow-legged from riding a horse. He walked, crawled to and from work, to and from the cinema, tall, slow, a bow-legged cowboy, with his hair combed up on his head in a big muff, his shirt pushed into his pants resting low on his waist, his hands hanging loose and empty at his sides; that and the cut of his head, his bulging eyes, and the soft sullenness of his lips issuing a challenge, just waiting for a man to snicker or say a rough word to him so he could cuff him down; but, his readiness was its own warning, and he went, almost a spectacle, unmolested through the streets. . . .²²

When Fisheye is socialized into the Calvary Hill community, it is no coincidence that it is via the micro-community of Trinidadian sound-culture—the steelbands, which bore names such as “Desperados,” “Renegades,” and “Bandits,” among others. Like reggae and sound-system culture in *The Harder They Come*, the steelbands provide the alternate public sphere of Trinidadian life and explicitly employ the images and icons of American globalization as signs of a transforming sense of roots. What is assembled in this situation is an authenticity distinct from the hegemony of the organic which was/is a myth bolstering a nationalist status quo (particularly in its Rastafarian manifestation) and the primitivism of the tourist trade. Of course that former status quo will ultimately recuperate the rude boys, the bad-johns, and the Rastafari as new forms of post-nationalist authenticity—like stick-fighters, steel drums and sound systems, those who must forever enter the temple of national culture through the back door.

The political commitment to artifice is similarly depicted in the transformations that beset Ivan as he encounters Sergio Corbucci’s 1966 spaghetti classic *Django* in a West Kingston cinema. In a world as socially chaotic and hypocritical as the neo-colonial reality represented in *The Harder They Come*, artifice may provide the only authenticity for a rude boy like Ivan simply because it is the only space untainted by the hypocrisy of that which is real. (The character of Ivan is, by the way, based on a real Jamaican bandit from the late 1940s who advertised himself in the newspapers with gun-toting photos, calling himself alternately “Alan Ladd” or “Captain Midnight.”) Upon encountering the depthless and formulaic world of genre film, origins and cultural “roots” become much less significant to Ivan’s attempt at resistance than does the performance of a history-less persona culled from the fragments of an Italian interpretation of an American image. In Michael Thelwell’s novelization, this transformation is rendered powerfully as the *fresh-from-bush* Ivan becomes socialized into the all-male world of urban myth. And this occurs in three stages. First the quasi-religious immersion in the spectacle:

But it was wrong to call these *pictures*. No, these weren’t pictures; the movie was a flowing reality, unfolding like time made visible before one’s eyes.

With the parting of the curtains a wall had collapsed and Ivan was looking into a different world, where pale people of giant dimensions walked, talked, fought, and conducted their lives in a marvelous and quite convincing reality. . . .

. . . The identification, however, *willing* a suspension of disbelief, was also spontaneous and damn near total. . . .²³

Then, the recognition of difference within the types of realities projected on screen. This catechism is represented by two distinct genres, the gangster film and the western—both of which offer him options:

Only after it started did Ivan realize that the first had had no color, and instead of trees only gray and black concrete. But this one was in bright and satisfying color, in a land of big unbelievably blue skies, vast plains and towering mountains inhabited mainly by horses and cows. It was, incredibly, even better than the first—not just because of the color but because the world it revealed, although just as alien, was more recognizable, not morally chaotic like the first, but simple, direct, and clear, a world with a sense of honor in which unfolded a story of justice and righteous retribution.²⁴

Then finally, the transformation as the mask becomes much more authentic than the crude face with which he was by nature burdened:

The new persona worked well. The greetings became more frequent, warmer, and in a subtle way more respectful. One night Bogart offered him a cigarette. He took it even though he didn't smoke cigarettes. After that he kept a pack of Four Aces in his shirt pocket. Now when he entered the theater it was with a cigarette dangling Cagney-like from the corner of his mouth, the smoke stinging his eyes and justifying the hard squint through which he viewed the world. Occasionally he would offer a smoke to those who seemed to merit such intimacy from the mysterious stranger. . . .²⁵

And it is through this mutual sharing of the myth that a distinct culture predicated on style but energized by political discontent defines itself. By studying the arcane rules and rituals, by wearing the most elaborate and painstakingly detailed mask, a community is born. It is worth stressing that despite its cool pose and dependence on artifice, this pastiche

23. Michael Thelwell, pp. 147–148.

24. Michael Thelwell, p. 148.

25. Michael Thelwell, p. 196.

is produced by the sublimation of a political impulse. In this case, the “rugged individualism” of the American myth is filtered through *Django* and the Italian versions; it is then uprooted from both the expansionist ideologies of the American “original” as well as the official political lineage of decolonization. It becomes what Frayling identifies in the Italian westerns as an “amoral individualism” in which greed, revenge, and raw power become the core values that uphold the style aesthetic.

In fact, in the film’s final moment when the Rastafarian Pedro suggests that Ivan stow away to Cuba where he would be greeted as a revolutionary, Ivan’s total lack of political consciousness, his incredible self-obsession, and his clear enjoyment of homicide and moral transgression all function more as the fulfillment of filmic style than as a critique of the status quo. This forces us to make the distinction that Marley’s song makes between resistance and murder, between revolution (shooting the Sheriff) and crime (shooting the deputy). So despite the habitual celebration of Ivan as a “hero of the people,” his failure to reach Cuba is his personal failure to nurture the collective struggle that is “independence,” and the nation’s general failure in resisting a resistance defined in such solipsistic, masculinist, and materialistic terms. Although produced by the decolonization struggle and its nationalist ferment, Ivan and the Rude Boys existed outside of it like lethal dandies. And as shantytown *flaneurs* they were as much a critique of American commodity culture and its attendant dispersal of values as they were a product of it. In this paradox, they were and are a sign of the failure of a Caribbean nationalism whose heart may have been with Cuba, but whose stomach had been with America from before the building of the Panama Canal.

IV

Rude-boy culture in its obsession with style (German knives, Japanese motorcycles, American cars, and flashy clothes) was and is, like all style-based subcultures, ruthlessly commodity-oriented. As icons of youth style, in their acceleration and celebration of consumption they were garish and dangerous images of national development. Like much of today’s hip hop “thug” and “gangsta” posing, the rude boys manifested a spe-

cifically American notion of freedom defined by consumption and also a specifically postmodern notion of resistance characterized by a barely self-conscious if not fully ironic navigation of commodity culture and media. Indeed the Rastafari critique of materialism and consumption—which they knew only increased neo-colonial dependence, placed competition above cooperation as the dominant cultural value, and ultimately required violence—was not only directed at the Jamaican middle class and at the conservative poor. It was also directed at the “rudie” culture so well described in *The Harder They Come*. That Rastafari critique of street violence and the amoral individualism of rudie culture *read as an image of national development* is nowhere better articulated than in “I Shot the Sheriff.”

Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, and Bunny Wailer had initially come to fame as one of the island’s premier “rudie” outfits, scoring with classics like 1963’s “Simmer Down,” “Rude Boy,” and 1966’s “Jailhouse.” Marking their transition from rudies to Rastafarians, Bob Marley once said that when they were rude, they were Rasta without actually knowing it, implying a connection between the moral reversals of Jamaican *badmanism* and the liberating heresies of Rastafarianism. But soon after the death of Bob Marley, Rastafari roots ceded ground to the ruthlessness of Edward Seaga’s 1980s and its attendant era of contemporary dancehall. It is fairly clear that this is also the ground of that transformation from local, relatively small-time “herbalists” to transnational narco-terrorists; from neo-primitive “countryman” to globally sophisticated posse-members as portrayed in books like Victor Headley’s *Yardie* trilogy, Laurie Gunst’s *Born Fi’ Dead*, Geoff Small’s *Ruthless*, and John Davison’s *Gangsta*. This ground has also been extensively covered by British and American media in alarmist ways, from the paranoia of nightly news to the ludicrous racist fantasies of Stephen Seagal’s 1990 film *Marked for Death*. Michael Thelwell says this of Ivan/Rhygin: “I wanted the development of that character to parallel a couple of generations of social development in Jamaica which produced the ‘rude boy’ phenomenon and, I think, ultimately the terrorists.”²⁶

Commenting on the significance of the film, Edward Kamau Brathwaite has written:

26. Stephen Davis, “Harder and Harder: An Interview with Michael Thelwell.” *Hambone* 3, Fall 1983, p. 110.

27. Edward Kamau Brathwaite, *History of the Voice: the Development of Nation Language in Anglophone Caribbean Poetry* (London: New Beacon, 1984), p. 41.

The premiere of the Jimmy Cliff roots/reggae film, *The Harder they Come* (Kingston 1972) marked a dislocation in the socio-colonial pentameter, in the same way that its music and its stars and their style marked a revolution in the hierarchical structure in the arts of the Caribbean . . . “for the first time at last,” a local face, a native ikon, a nation language voice was hero. In this small corner of our world, a revolution as significant as Emancipation.²⁷

His description of the film’s impact is worth repeating: *a revolution as significant as Emancipation*. A “nation language” poetics seeks its own heroes, sounds its own dialect, and generates its own post-colonial creation myth. *The Harder They Come*, though borrowing so liberally from the morality plays of American genre films, functions for Brathwaite as that post-independence “voice,” the local sound that like ska and reggae breaks free in the Sixties from the “master narrative” of American rhythm and blues to create local authenticity in and through transnational mass media.

It is a crucial moment in which an origin can be constructed outside the pentameter of colonial power. The film put images to the narratives there in the music of the sound systems and validated the downtown culture of Kingston by making it larger than life, which is to say, allegorical and mythic—like *Django*. The film does not document historical “emancipation” or political “independence,” but as Brathwaite suggests it provides that national self-recognition necessary for independence to make any sense at all. However, since the film and Marley’s song both arrive before the Manley/Seaga, PNP/JLP contests in the Seventies and Eighties and the incredible gun violence that those contests instigated, they are prophetic in suggesting that the violence of colonization may in fact be transcended by the violence of “independence”; that the violence of slavery may pale before the violence of “freedom.” After all, when the sheriff is dead, then what?

It is, then, not so strange that a genre like the American western be appropriated as the form within which to make sense of the moral, political, and cultural ambiguities of neo-colonial “independence” and of a Yankee version of “freedom.” Where Naipaul lamented the dominant presence of the American narrative structure as a sign of a lack of local originality and agency, these appropriations suggest that repetition is a

primary strategy in a praxis of de-centering. In fact, to list and catalogue the various uses, abuses, appropriations, and versioning of the American cowboy film in Jamaican popular culture in the late Sixties/early Seventies would require a much more encyclopedic project than this, especially since it has become one of reggae's oldest and most enduring clichés. But it is helpful to briefly map out some of this since it provides a richer historical and cultural context for Bob Marley's "I Shot the Sheriff" and *The Harder They Come*—texts that pave the way for much contemporary black urban and diasporic sound, style, and street politics.

One could begin with late-Sixties tracks like Don Drummond's "Ringo" and "The Guns of Navarone," which is known as the all-time best-selling ska record. "Ghost Town" by the Skatellites, "Ska-ing West" by Sir Lord Comic—one of the first DJs—and ska versions of the theme from *Bonanza* were also Sixties hits. Then in the early Seventies, the floodgates were opened with Lee Perry and the Upsetters, who dominated this cottage industry. Their "Django Shoots First" was an opening salvo. *Django* starred Franco Nero in the title role, who was himself honored in Count Machuki's 1970 DJ version "Franco Nero." These were followed by Derek Harriot's "Fistful of Dollars," Rupie Edwards's "Magnificent Seven," and "True Grit" by Bongo Herman and the Crystalites. The Upsetters also recorded "Eastwood Rides Again" and "The Good The Bad and the Upsetters." Other songs include "The Revenge of Eastwood" by the Prophets, "Geronimo" by the Pyramids, and "Navajo Trail" (two of the few reggae-westerns to deal with Native Americans) and "Trinity" by Joe White and the Crystalites.

The mid-Seventies and early Eighties featured DJs like Johnny Ringo and Toyon who specialized in cowboy themes, the former releasing songs like "Horse Man" and albums like 1982's *Riding West*, and the latter releasing in 1981 the album *How the West Was Won*, featuring the title track and "Big Showdown." Years later the late-great singer Tenor Saw (who, sadly yet appropriately, was found murdered in 1988 on a roadside in Texas) recorded "Lone Ranger and Tonto." Things didn't slow down in the late Eighties and Nineties either. Sweet-voiced Pinchers scored with "Bandolero," and Bounty Killer released his career-defining *Down in the*

28. Also the name of one of the most influential British sound-system DJ collectives of the 1990s, which produced performers like Massive Attack and producers like Nellee Hooper, who fused dub and hip hop into what is/was known as “trip hop.”

Ghetto set featuring “How the West Was Won.” The latter’s rise to DJ prominence has been due largely to his badman lyrics, which frequently allude to cowboy/Wild West themes in the kind of graphic detail found in Sam Peckinpah’s *The Wild Bunch* and in the works of American novelist Cormac McCarthy.²⁸ To those in the know, the badman poetics of Bounty Killer only followed the path laid out by the dominant reggae DJ of the early Nineties, the “Don Gorgon” himself, Ninjaman (a.k.a. the Original Gun Tooth, Front Tooth, Gold Pon Tooth, 48-Gun Bad Boy), who had witnessed Jamaica turning into a “Cowboy Town.”

Ninjaman’s obsession with guns, his “lyrical gun”—a stylized and poetic use of images and metaphors of guns and gun violence—was made possible by this climate where the revolutionary ideology of armed resistance had evolved (or devolved) into the raw celebration of one of the more popular global commodities of the Seventies and Eighties: semi- and fully automatic weaponry. The names of the DJs in the Seventies also reflected this fascination. Popular DJs such as Clint Eastwood, Josey Wales, Lone Ranger, and Trinity (also the name of one of Jamaica’s most notorious and stylish tough-guys) dominated the increasingly global Jamaican dancehall culture. The western film genre is appropriate for this fetishization of guns and gun violence, because despite its saloon girls, school marms, and dutiful “good girls,” it is essentially a world without women where the only intimacy available (or chosen, as we see in *The Harder They Come*) is between men and with weapons which mediate the homo-social bond.

The great director Sergio Leone says this about the presence of women in the traditional western and provides some clues to the self-conscious absence (or problematic presence) of women in many of his own films:

Even in the greatest Westerns, the woman is imposed on the action, as a star, and is generally destined to be “had” by the male lead. But she does not exist *as a woman*. If you cut her out of the film, in a version which you can imagine, the film becomes much better. In the desert, the essential problem was to survive. Women were an obstacle to survival! Usually, the woman not only holds up the story, but she has no real character, no reality. She is a

symbol. She is there without having any reason to be there, simply because one must have a woman, and because the hero must prove, in some way or another, that he has “sex-appeal.”²⁹

29. Christopher Frayling, p. 129 (see note 17).

In his phrase “she does not exist *as a woman*” Leone echoes the arguments of a number of contemporary European feminists for whom even the presence of women in an explicitly male narrative is merely an absence. His films—indeed in many spaghetis like *Django* where the death of a wife instigates and justifies the incredible male-on-male bloodshed—made it clear that what he once called the “Freudian Western” of the American mainstream would have its formal devices laid bare by stressing the homo-social (and in some cases homo-erotic) poetry of violence. For a poor, male, Caribbean audience already socio-culturally and economically impotent, nothing was symbolically purer than gunshots that echoed across an empty plain, and nothing more epic than a violence that evolved from revolution into *vendetta*; from the abstract and ideological to the intensely personal. Indeed, during the Eighties and Nineties there were a number of dancehall gun-tunes which were essentially love songs to the DJ’s weapon: Mad Lion’s “Glock 17,” Ninjaman’s “Married To Mi Gun” and “My Weapon,” to name just a few which eerily recall the Italian Futurist Marinetti, who in one of his fascist manifestos wrote a love song to a little machine gun. The eroticization of guns supplants the presence of “troublesome” women, and the glorification of gunfire replaces the intricacies of discourse. This is clear in Ennio Morricone’s “Guns Don’t Argue,” which provided a lyric for early-Nineties DJ Mad Cobra in his bone-chilling “Gundelero.”

Those who consistently criticize contemporary reggae/dancehall for its sometimes gratuitous celebration of violence and the fetishization of guns through the genre of “gun talk” often do so by hearkening back to the “golden age” of “roots and kulcha.” These critics should pay attention to what Amiri Baraka famously calls “the changing same” within any black musical/narrative tradition. Roots reggae, particularly the “militant rockers” style of the mid/late Seventies, also featured a proliferation of the image of guns on record covers and in lyrics, albeit in the tradition of armed anti-colonial resistance. Much “golden era” reggae did in fact

celebrate (as in Dr. Alimantado's "Gimme Mi Gun") the use of guns for self-defense as well as on the battlefields of the cultural imaginary. Groups like the Revolutionaries featured Che Guevara on one album cover and gun-toting militias on another. Guns were prominent with The Mighty Diamonds (on their *Stand Up to Your Judgment* album cover), and many many others openly depicted guns, but in a context of anti-colonial resistance and Pan-African solidarity. By the time Peter Tosh had a guitar customized to look like a machine gun, the legitimization of guns in the context of militant "roots and culture" had been established. The fetishizing of guns as seen in *The Harder They Come* occurs simultaneously with reggae's global and commercial coming of age. Not only do guns become a sign of discourse, but also of history or historical agency. In Thelwell's version, after realizing that his idealized rural/folk past had been transformed by tourism and after "the past had deserted him," Ivan is presented with his first pair of guns by the character Midnight Cowboy, who says "Dese is you fuchah."³⁰

Much of the revolutionary zeal of "independence" has withered in these contemporary narratives, as has the dream of socialism and Pan-African solidarity that was concurrent with the arrival of Rastafarianism and the western. These sentiments still exist but are marginal; or rather, they are being refigured, either through a neo-roots discourse of nostalgia or an explicitly trans-Atlantic politics of informal capital. "Freedom" is now dominated by a language of consumption, featuring not a reverse "Back to Africa" but a lateral movement from point to point across the Atlantic with "Africa" merely a perpetual echo used by the status quo—or fundamentalists like the Rastafari—to condemn or contain any cultural transformation. "Independence" is, more often than not, engaged in terms of gender power and through a masculinity that fears obsolescence and is nostalgic for the revolutionary justifications of manhood there in de-colonization and its promise of a righteous violence to give it purpose. Considering the central importance of Jamaican music and culture on African-American hip hop and urban culture, it is the case that these changes have had some impact on the United States, since so much migration took place during the island's most violent modern political era, and since reggae has provided hip hop with so much of its aesthetic

and formal template. So if, as many argue, the highly sexualized lyrics of dancehall, hip hop, and rhythm and blues can be seen to represent the changing relationships between black men and black women, it is possible to see in “gun talk” a representation of the changing relationships among men and around the issue of masculinity and the homo-social bonds of community.

In “Lyrical Gun,” Carolyn Cooper reminds us that there is a significant difference between the literal violence of guns and the intricately metaphoric “lyrical gun” of dancehall reggae. So it is important to maintain the figurative nature of this language, particularly in a world where negative stereotypes of black men are constantly *versioned* by the American Culture Industry. In these “nation language” narratives, violence functions as the dominant *metaphor* of a black masculinity attempting to make its way out of the ashes of what were, according to Thelwell, sustaining African, communal traditions and through the discursive sprawl of socialism, American capitalism, media saturation, and urban modernity:

I . . . wanted it to be very clear that it is when his personal history is no longer available to him in a certain way—even though he had never gone back—that he has to look around for a new identity. And the one that presents itself is this hybrid, made-up identity, totally false, coming out of Hollywood, coming out of fantasy and coming also out of real injustice and social deprivation. That is intended to be a metaphor for the cultural experience of a generation of people.³¹

In her discussion of both *The Harder They Come* and Earl Lovelace’s *The Dragon Can’t Dance*, Cooper describes the male protagonists in terms of their “carnavalesque constructions of masculinity (and femininity)” via the violence of western genre films.³² She is careful to remind us that the characters’ “total identification” is “clearly pathological and must be distinguished from the discriminating responses of habitual movie goers in the Caribbean,” who “however much they might immerse themselves in the action for the fictive moment in the cinema, outside, they return to relative normalcy in the reintegrative process of communal analysis.”³³ But as the above passage asserts, this “pathology” is the author/film-

31. Stephan Davis, p. 111 (see note 26).

32. Carolyn Cooper, *Noises in the Blood: Orality, Gender and the Vulgar Body of Jamaican Popular Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), p. 97.

33. Carolyn Cooper, *Noises in the Blood*, p. 98.

34. Simon Frith, *Music for Pleasure: Essays in the Sociology of Pop* (New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 141.

maker/performer's depiction of the struggle of a masculinity that finds itself vulnerable in the climate of a neo-colonial "independence" and which can only find its "use value" in a violence that is mythic. This masculinity is structured by the binary allegories of good/evil but is confused by the hard-to-discern line between resistance and self-destruction, between individual assertion and the destruction of one's community.

Less obvious is the fact that this "pathology" is a product of Ivan's attempt to also free himself from the fetters of Thelwell's idealized rural, folk, peasant mores which seem to offer little in the face of the spectacle of American commodity culture and its neo-colonial apparatus. The "reintegrative process of communal analysis" (as conservative a fiction as Thelwell's idealized folk traditions) may also be seen as limiting and oppressive to characters born in slavery or poverty, but weaned on Yankee modernity. This latter is another point of struggle for rude-boy Ivan, because it is clear that his roots cannot save him and—as a minor-league DJ once said to this writer in conversation—Africa would not bulletproof him.

V

In a wonderful essay on the Italian composer Ennio Morricone, who came to fame for his innovative soundtracks for Italian westerns, British music critic Simon Frith makes a crucial connection between the genre and the Jamaican sounds of the 1970s: "There's a moment in *The Harder They Come* when Jimmy Cliff and his fellow 'rude boys' sit through a spaghetti western, enthralled by its images of retribution. Other people in this Kingston crowd are concentrating on the soundtrack—Ennio Morricone is the line that runs from Puccini to dub."³⁴ This statement draws attention to what has been suggested throughout this essay: the fact that reggae-western songs and the reversal of the status-quo that morally vindicates the speaker in "I Shot the Sheriff" owe far more to the Italian western than to the American "originals." They are far more indebted to Clint Eastwood than to John Wayne, who was always the icon of the white American status quo and who represented the politics of Manifest Destiny (the sheriff). Eastwood, whose fame was due to his participation in

Morricone's films, was the amoral "Man with No Name" perennially adrift across a stark psychological frontier. Interestingly, from a Caribbean perspective, Christopher Frayling describes Eastwood as a "mercenary version of the traditional 'trickster' figure."³⁵

The characters in Thelwell's and Henzell's early-Seventies Kingston are fascinated by American genre films and its male icons, but the Italian westerns are at the cinematic heart of reggae music and culture. Sergio Corbucci's Spanish-made *Django* is clearly significant, but this tradition includes dozens of films churned out by Cinecitta studios during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Examples include the entire *Django* series, which some have estimated to number past fifty, counting both Spanish and Italian productions: *Django Shoots First*, *Django Always Draws Second*, *Django Does Not Forgive*, *Django Get a Coffin Ready*, *Django Kill*, *Son of Django* and others, most of which only had *Django* in the title but not in the actual film and were united merely by a similar style and attitude. Also by the Spanish director Corbucci were *Navajo Joe*, *A Professional Gun*, and *Hellbenders*. Enzo Barboni's parodic Trinity series was also popular: *They Call Me Trinity*, *Trinity Is Still My Name*, and *My Name Is Nobody*, featuring the enigmatic Terence Hill and his "brother" Bud Spencer, a Jamaican favorite. Of course, there were films featuring Morricone soundtracks such as *Guns Don't Argue*, *A Gun for Ringo*, *Ringo Rides Again*, and *Death Rides a Horse*; and the films scored by Morricone in his highly successful collaboration with Sergio Leone: *Once Upon a Time in the West*, *A Fistful of Dynamite* (or, *Duck You Sucker*), *The Big Gundown*, and the trilogy *A Fistful of Dollars*, *For a Few Dollars More*, and *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*.

There is room in the contrast between the American tradition and the Italian for much discussion and discovery; but for our purposes here, it is obvious that what traditionally marks the Italian western is its profound, existential quality—in a manner of speaking, its quality of *dread*. The landscape of the Italian western is populated with drifters, loners, and characters of various cultural extractions—Mexicans, Swedes, the Irish, and gringos of every stripe; no one is quite white, and the dominant ethnicity is *swarthy* (and most everybody is *really* Italian or Spanish or French or German). The characters are desperate, scarred, weary, dirty,

36. Christopher Frayling, p. 130.

37. Michael Thelwell, p. 323.

ugly and bloody: the products of too much migration, of an exile without arrival, an endless frontier. Those characters lucky enough to have access to a horse—meaning that they are free to forever escape, or damned to eternal rootless-ness—encounter the fragments of communities struggling to survive in a space that curiously resembles a perpetually underdeveloped nation, one forever on the margins of history: a frontier, but one without the ennobling narrative of progress to give it promise (one need only look at the first scene of *Django* to see how the ramshackle towns and poverty-starved residents could immediately evoke black shantytown sympathies).

It is a landscape governed by raw power, by violence, by greed, by guns, by a masculinity so self-obsessed that it parodies and mocks itself with barely masked homosexual desires that cannot be accounted for but which function always as a hetero-normative sign of decay. The emptiness of the desert here serves only to emphasize the frailty of human life, and the depth of the canyons serve only to echo in *dubwise* style the rhythms of gunfire. Into this steps the Eastwood character, or Django or Trinity or Ringo who, according to Frayling, is marginal because he is both history-less and also from a different culture, alterity personified.³⁶ Watch closely enough and it is obvious that this trickster figure spends much of the narrative learning the corrupt rules of the new society simply in order to *corrupt them* in turn.

In *The Harder They Come*, the open spaces of the American western offer a contrast to (and an escape from) the streets of a Kingston congested by the vast rural to urban population movements that bring an Ivan (or a Bob Marley, for that matter) there in the 1960s. But the unfixed nature of morality in the landscape of the Italian western is what allows Ivan as a generational icon to “pathologically” link his violence to resistance and revolution. In Thelwell’s version, after realizing that his authentic folk “roots” are being offered up to tourists, Ivan feels “rootless and adrift in a world without rules or boundaries,” and feeling like “The Man with No Name” he tells himself “Ivanhoe Martin, you no come from nowhe.”³⁷ But this specific cultural use of existential angst can be traced *somewhe*. The use of the Italian western in these Jamaican popular narratives marks another shift in global popular culture that informs a text like “I Shot The Sheriff.”

Similarly, in the late Sixties and early Seventies, American country and western music undergoes a transformation from the white folk classicism of the Grand Ole Opry and romanticists like Charlie Rich, Jim Reeves, Faron Young (many of whom were popular in Jamaica) to what became known as the “outlaw” movement, which featured Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson, and others more interested in narrating an anti-authoritarian realism.

Since Jamaican popular musical tastes have always shown an affinity for American country western (believe it or not, Kenny Rogers is a beloved icon in Jamaica), this shift is of some significance. Therefore it is no accident that recent top-ranking DJ Beanie Man sings (entirely without irony) a country western song on his most successful album to date, *The Many Moods of Moses*; and it is no joke that Ninjaman (and dozens of dancehall DJs) have re-worked American country and western songs in dancehall style: songs like Kenny Rogers’s “The Gambler” and numerous songs by the story-teller/crooner Marty Robbins, whose gun tune “Big Iron” is unquestionably an influence on lyrical gunfire. Haitian hip hop impresario Wyclef Jean on his second solo album in fact ropes in Kenny Rogers for a guest vocal, much to the bemusement of his Afro-Yankee fans. In the sound system world his sound made waves when he was able to play a Kenny Rogers dubplate (an exclusive and customized record) at a clash in New York. In *Born Fi Dead*, Laurie Gunst writes:

I discovered the power of that myth as I came to know the gunmen and sufferers of Kingston. We shared an affinity with the Wild West, and this carried us across many a cultural bridge. There were night-long sessions of talk that were accompanied by ancient, scratchy jukeboxes blaring tunes by western balladeers like Marty Robbins and Tex Ritter; there were veteran outlaws who were brought to tears by “Ghost Riders in the Sky.”³⁸

Returning to Frith’s evocative comment about dub, the influence of American country music on reggae iconography is in some ways obvious, but the influence on its sound is more subtle and perhaps more profound. Just listen closely to Seventies classics like Bob Marley’s *Natty Dread*, Bunny Wailer’s *Blackheart Man*, or even Judy Mowatt’s *Black Woman* and you will hear not just the distant influence of African-American

38. Gunst, Laurie. *Born Fi Dead: A Journey Through the Jamaican Posse Underworld* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995), p. xxii.

39. Simon Frith, p. 144.

40. Simon Frith, p. 145.

rhythm and blues, but also the influence of American country western. It is there in the gospel-country influenced vocal harmonies, the use of the harmonica, the acoustic guitar strumming, and the loneliness of minor-key brass melodies; listen to this in addition to the themes of loss and redemption and violence and homelessness. Listen also to the use of space in the production of classic Nashville country, the crisp and palpable emptiness surrounding the voices and the instruments; the awareness of emptiness, of silence and space that is there in Jamaican dub music, a silence that to the trained ear links Nashville with Kingston in one sprawling transnational soundscape. It is in dub sound that we see the translation of visual metaphors of space (deserts, prairies, open ranges, and the wide Atlantic) into aural metaphors of the frontier (echo and reverb).

We can also add Italy to this soundscape, for it too is deep in the mix. After all, Morricone's productions are as dependent on reverb and echo as any Jamaican producer working after the advent of the legendary King Tubby. Morricone, Frith points out, "is as aware as any dub producer of the silences between the beats."³⁹ And his scores "draw attention to the glib sentimentality of the western myth, to its shallow, ahistorical treatment of violence."⁴⁰ The Caribbean use of the western in *The Harder They Come* and in reggae music also draws attention to the western myth, but through its awareness of colonial and post-colonial power relations, it *historicizes* the "ahistorical treatment of violence" by re-routing its allegories from center to margin, rooting them in the post-colonial streets. Since dub is a form based on repetition, replication, difference and *differance*, since it takes primary "original" texts and carnivalizes their "authenticity" by the once-Western technology of sound production, it is poetic that the American western would be run through the West Kingston echo-chamber to emerge as an icon of its own negation as well as an allegory of the violence of freedom.

VI

Beyond all the necessary historicizing and willful theorizing, there is still one fundamental question to be asked if not answered. Why not shoot the deputy?

Understanding the post-colonial reversal of values at work in Bob Marley's response to the western, our speaker *should* be proud to have shot the sheriff and be willing, as the song goes, to pay for the crime. This is if guilt can in fact be determined in a context of unequal power relations; if, as Frederick Douglass so famously theorized, a slave can ever possibly be "guilty" of a "crime" against the master (for example, can property steal?). Especially since, as the refrain consistently maintains, the speaker acted in self-defense. But isn't the deputy also a sign of the long arm of American neo-colonialism? Why one, but not the other?

All around in my home town
They trying to track me down
They say they want to bring me in guilty
For the killing of a deputy,
for the life of a deputy. . . .

Looking closely at the lyrics, it is curious that the narrative is organized around the alleged murder of the deputy and not the sheriff, and that the posse hunting the speaker is seemingly uninterested in the confession of that larger if not more significant crime.

Freedom came my way one day
And I started out of town, yeah
All of a sudden, I saw Sheriff John Brown
Aiming to shoot me down,
So I shot, I shot, I shot him down. . . .

The speaker frames this justifiable act of violence around how the sheriff was an obstacle to "Freedom." Notice that this freedom is not one that was achieved by the speaker, or grasped or asserted—it passively came his way, suggesting both the innocence of the speaker and the historical inevitability of the process. The name John Brown in the Jamaican vernacular is a signifier of the elite, respectable "brown" classes who represent the values and economic power of foreign control. Therefore the sheriff is not quite John *Wayne* but a local approximation, and the speak-

er's act is appended to the larger discourse of revolutionary anti-colonial violence. But what really justifies the "crime" is the fact that the sheriff drew first, which in the morality of the genre vindicates the speaker.

Sheriff John Brown always hated me
For what I don't know
Every time I plant a seed
He say, kill it before it grows
He say kill them before they grow . . .

The brown hatred of the black speaker is seen as unjustified and unprovoked, thereby representing the speaker as an innocent concerned primarily with sowing seeds, building a nation, liberating consciousness from the fetters of a neo-colonial pigmentocracy or other progressive ideals. And considering how richly masculine the pun on "seed" is in Jamaican vernacular, this is a specifically male poetics of race, nation, liberation, and violence. This innocent (farmer, artist, revolutionary) is, however, *already* armed before the encounter. This is not simply out of an anticipation of the inevitable run-in with the forces of law and order, since the encounter comes "all of a sudden" and on the cusp of an organic "freedom." The suggestion here is that "freedom" is more than something earned through violence. It is in itself more dangerous than John Brown could himself ever be and requires that even history's "innocents" walk carefully and well armed, eternally vigilant.

But again, why not the deputy? It is a tribute to the artistic and prophetic genius of Bob Marley that we are able, in the early twenty-first century, to find in his statement of more than thirty years ago the seeds of our contemporary crisis on the streets of Kingston, Brixton, Brooklyn, Los Angeles, and other way-stations of black migration. It can be found in the conjunction "but" in the song's title, which marks that characteristic of restraint that Ivan/Rhygin did not possess. Where Bob Marley's speaker is able to claim choices and is willing to suffer the consequences, Ivan/Rhygin does not reflect and is even able to reconfigure the dialectic in explicitly *inhuman* terms, seeing it as "between style and brute force—between art and murder," rather than as between resistance and gratuitous

violence.⁴¹ For Marley, who walked a thin line between the Rastafarian reverence for life and the nationalist knowledge and memory of blood, the “but” is a clear statement *against* the kind of gratuitous violence that masks itself in the language of resistance.

Ironically, in a narrative whose play on morality is reminiscent of the great works of Kafka, Dostoevsky, or Camus, our speaker is not being persecuted for the “crime” he has confessed to, which is more than likely the more symbolically significant crime.⁴² He is instead being punished for a crime that he is innocent of. Perhaps it is this overarching context of systemic injustice which makes the restraint of the speaker seem somewhat naïve; perhaps the best response would have been to shoot the deputy also, and then ride out of town into an American sunset. America, after all, is the Caribbean frontier, the space of escape well known for its infinite reversals of morality and the unfixed nature of its own truths. But for Marley the oppressed must retain their humanity at all costs, regardless of the injustice around them, and face both guilt as well as the exploitation of their innocence. Restraint, the song tells us finally, the reflective “but,” is the only moral center available to the oppressed in a world saturated with ambivalence and excess.

41. Michael Thelwell, p. 200.

42. Albert Camus's *L'Étranger* is without question a central text for the Italian western. Its deadpan response to moral/ethical complexity is due, in turn, to the influence of postwar American pulp fictions. It would also be of great significance to Richard Wright's fictions.



7

Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* and the Spectacle of Empire: Global/Local Rumblings Inside the Pax Americana

Rob Wilson

We generally made them [foreigners] feel rather small, too, before we bore down on them with America's greatness until we crushed them.

—Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad* (1869)

American domination—the only domination from which one never recovers. I mean from which one never recovers unscarred.

—Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (1950)

If we had to use force, it is because we are America. We are the indispensable nation. We stand tall. We see further into the future.

—US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright,
justifying the use of cruise missiles
against Iraq in February 1998.¹

When Ridley Scott's \$100 million blockbuster, *Gladiator*, opened in May 2000, it carried its transnational audiences uncannily back to the second century AD and to the plight of a Roman general from the Spanish provinces stripped of his office and family, forced into slavery, and set upon the *agon* of revenge through the gladiator routes of Empire. *Entertainment Weekly* noted the movie's instant box-office clout, but demurred, "Ben Hur, done that," poking fun at the (seemingly) defunct genre of retro-



1. Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad* (New York: Signet, 1966), p. 484; Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), p. 60; Albright is quoted in Andrew J. Bacevich and Lawrence F. Kaplan, "Battle Wary," *New Republic*, May 25, 1998, p. 20.

2. See Carlin Romano, "Loosen Up, Professor! Pop Culture Is Good for Your Scholarship," which tracks the pop-cultural effect of such a movie, immediately, on book sales in Roman history and copycat genres, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 28, 2000. For the instant pop "novelization" of the movie, see Dewey Gram, *Gladiator* (New York: Onyx Books, 2000). Also see Diana Landau, ed., *Gladiator: The Making of the Ridley Scott Epic* (New York: Newmarket Press, 2000), hereafter cited parenthetically as *Making*.

3. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), hereafter cited parenthetically as *Empire*.

4. G. M. Tamas, "On Post-Fascism," *Boston Review*, Summer 2000, p. 43.

5. John Gray, "Between Dubya [George W. Bush] and the Deep Blue Sea," *The Guardian*, November 1, 2000, p. 22. Gray sees Britain as the last mediator between superpower America and a Europe on the brink of "post-democratic federalism" via the European Union. On the perilous presumption of assuming an American hegemony in the Middle East, see Stanley Reed, "Say Good-Bye to the Pax Americana," *Business Week*, October 7, 2000, pp. 30–31.

6. Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000), p. 7, hereafter cited parenthetically as *Blowback*. As Perry Anderson, editor of the *New Left Review*, has portrayed the American-driven globalization of capitalist principles, "Neo-liberalism as a set of principles rules undivided across the globe: the most successful ideology in world history." Quoted in Mark Price, "The New New Thing," *Lingua Franca* 11 (February 2001), p. 19.

Roman drag brought back from the 1950s Cold War dispensation of life-under-empire.² Issued in the same season as Harvard University Press's blockbuster text on the wonders and perils of neo-liberal globalization, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire* (which offered, as we shall invoke throughout, its own more de-centered, hopeful, and non-territorial way of reflecting upon bio-political domination), *Gladiator* enacted, if it at times barely critiqued, a sublimated spectacle of global peace, enlightened rule, architectonic power, transnational community, and bone-crunching sport under the distractions of empire.³ With the box-office success of *Gladiator* secured without much critical acclaim, Ridley Scott could say to his detractors what the emperor Vespasian had said to those mocking his efforts to raise money to build public arenas and create works of imperial effect like the Roman coliseum, *Non olet pecunia* (Money does not stink).

In this tricky moment of neo-liberal globalization, when domination has taken on a guise of post-historical innocence and what British scholar John Gray calls a kind of "post-totalitarian fascism . . . thriving under the capacious carapace of global capitalism," one has to wonder if *Gladiator* was not, implicitly, less a representation of the Roman empire than a blasted allegorization of the Pax Americana itself in its neo-liberal mode of moral innocence, global ratification, and soft hegemony.⁴ As Gray has phrased the terms of this new Pax Americana, in the context of worrying US "unilateralism" and roll-back from European and Middle Eastern intervention, "The United States is the world's only truly global power, its hegemony more complete than any in modern history."⁵ An ex-hawk Asianist, Chalmers Johnson, has belatedly castigated this post-Cold War edifice of "informal [or, better said, disavowed] empire" and warns of the looming consequences of sporadic "blowback" and interconnected if spatially dispersed violence on the peripheries. The US superpower, says Johnson, has created "an empire based on the projection of military power to every corner of the globe and on the use of American capital and markets to force global economic integration on our terms, whatever costs to others."⁶ Surely, "imperialist globalization" and the ideology of neo-liberalism that props it up in sublimated forms of discourse and global spectatorship are meeting with, if not generating from within the

metabolism of world capitalism itself, diverse surges of resistance. The “worlding world of the multitudes” surges up and across borders far from the arenas and jails of the gladiators.

But Empire, in today’s looser regime of postmodern globalization, does not just repeat the sovereign state forms, disciplined labor, military apparatus, and binary identity politics of modern land-bound imperialism. In the multitudinous vision of Hardt and Negri, for whom the mass media and Internet can create new modes and zones of rhizomatic agency and indeterminate arousal, the empire of neo-liberal capitalism represents “a fundamentally new form of rule.” (*Empire*, p. 146) This Empire feeds upon the proliferation of difference and the warped and mongrel becoming of de-territorialized, hybrid, multiple, and de-centered flows. *Gladiator*, too, would arise, intersect, and capture this flow. Hence, a key problem of this Empire is managing multiculturalism at home (inside existing nation-state frames) and abroad (at the transnational borders of mongrel plenitude).

In *Gladiator*, imperial ratification and moral innocence are best embodied in the rude and homey Australian-Maori hero, Russell Crowe.⁷ As Maximus, he speaks a kind of pidgin consent to the spectacle of peripheral domination. He leads the concentric staging of the surrounding provinces of foreigners coming home to Rome to roost in some kind of World Wide Wrestling match of sadomasochistic spectacle, at once bloody and moral yet nostalgic for an ethos of Eurocentric superiority, imperial sovereignty, international power, and the vindication of a neo-sublime aesthetic. Enacting some digitized and literalized Hollywood version of *panem et circenses*, postmodern global rule here becomes the arousal of credulity towards the master-narrative of enlightened imperialism. But I would also claim that Ridley Scott is at pains to frame and implicate the very apparatus of Hollywood-based cinema itself (as depoliticizing spectacle) in the process of soliciting hegemonic consent to plots and forms of cultural-political domination. Caught up in paradoxes of the imperial image and the military machine, *Gladiator* may be cinematic spectacle exposing what Hardt and Negri call “the legitimation of the imperial machine” practiced (in part) by the “communications industries” them-

7. April Henderson of the History of Consciousness program at the University of California Santa Cruz informs me that although Russell Crowe is often considered to be “Australian” in the Hollywood press, he actually comes from New Zealand or Aotearoa and is proudly part Maori, which renders him an apt “foreign” subaltern of Empire.

8. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam describe the clunkier “eurocolonial” cinema apparatus of Britain, France, Germany, and the United States as used during the modernist era of technorated expansion and “imperial belonging”: “Given the geographically discontinuous nature of empire, cinema helped cement both a national and an imperial sense of belonging among many disparate peoples,” but often along lines of white “racial solidarity” and indigenousothering; see *UnthinkingEurocentrism, Multiculturalism and the Media*, Chapter 3, “The Imperial Imaginary,” pp. 102–103.

9. Drawing uncanny ontological continuities between the Roman imperial civilizing mission and the American postwar domination of liberal humanist culture, William Spanos’s *America’s Shadow: An Anatomy of Empire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999) underlies some of my wilder formulations on the Pax Americana arising within the Bush/Reagan/Clinton global dispensation.

10. I should say that I will be refiguring more globally mediated notions of an American-generated sublimity discussed in Rob Wilson, *American Sublime: The Genealogy of a Poetic Genre* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); see also Rob Wilson, “The Postmodern Sublime: Local Definitions, Global Deformations of the US National Imaginary,” *Amerikastudien* 43 (1998), pp. 517–527.

11. See the Ien Ang essay in Kuan-Hsing Chen et al., eds., *Trajectories* (London: Routledge, 1997).

selves in their lyric modes of global enchantment, spectacular violence, and mass circulation. (*Empire*, p. 33)

Gladiator, to my way of reading, is a skewed and unsettling use of the Hollywood epic genre. The movie offers a spectacle of global cinema fleshing out the contemporary machinery of an imperial power disavowing, distracting, and sublimating (via US neo-liberal market rationales and retro-enlightenment rhetoric) its own mounting forces and traumatic media of political, economic, and cultural domination, here seen (via Ridley Scott et al.) as taking over local mongrel and racial peripheries (from Africa and England to Germany and Spain) with woe-and-wonder consent. A spatially mobilized visuality of global vastness and imperial splendor (cum decadence) helps to ratify geo-expansion in a cut-and-paste way.⁸ Fleshed out with spectacular architectural grandeur and a kind of luminous aerial ascent to the global city of power, Rome emerges as a site for cinematic expansion and a staging of globalization forces. The movie enacts a spectacle and challenges, at times, the techno-euphoric reign of the Pax Americana, and the moral and political discourses propping up such aestheticized spectacles-of-empire.⁹ At times, Ridley Scott’s intertextual cinematic apparatus swerves from evoking the sublime romantic scenery of Thomas Cole’s *Course of [American] Empire* paintings from the Manifest Destiny era to the more overtly neo-fascist architectonics of Leni Riefenstahl’s *Triumph of the Will* to create uncanny, anachronistic, and disturbing analogies between American self-aggrandizement of global power and its European predecessors in Germany, Britain, and Rome.

In such cinematic modes of sublime-image spectacle, the movie offers sublimated enchantments for a renewed credulity towards the master-narrative of enlightenment.¹⁰ In *Gladiator*, such a narrative is presumed to be underlying the Euro-American-dominated new world order. But this is a wary achievement, given the large-scale nostalgia of Europeans for re-unified Europe avowing (in Ien Ang’s critique of European market discourse) their own time-honored if waning sense of cultural superiority and political control.¹¹ Maximus’s full name, Maximus Lucius, means “full light,” suggesting his ties to the Enlightenment project of the Roman Empire as duty, civilizing force, law: the civilizing enunciation of imperial

subjectivity, *civis Romanus sum*.¹² Maximus offers a hero all too willing to invoke such a discourse of enlightenment to legitimize the makings of global empire and the subordination of local peoples (and womanhood) via conquest, integration, and war. Empire is seen bringing light to the dark places of the Earth via the reign of law, civil decorum, and centrist order. Hardly the foe of Empire, Maximus is only opposed to any anti-republican subversion of its rule through a “warped Oedipal nightmare” named Commodus.¹³ Split off from the goodly yeoman-like drives of Maximus, Commodus comes to embody some more decadent version of Empire, one identified with Europe in its more fascist moments and modes of amoral excess.

Fighting for his own family and to free himself from the slave class, Maximus moves from the just war against Germany to his own *bellum justum* against the state as perverted by Commodus. To be sure, whatever its New Age aura of otherworldly mysticism and dream-like streams of pagan consciousness in Spain, the macho identity plot and world-making of *Gladiator* is hetero-normative and conservatively pious at the core. The empire sublates its subjects into orderly containment and family value, across the far-flung corners of this Roman (American) Earth. The movie finally ratifies home and family as the base of empire, reflecting the fundamental desire of imperial man (in some neo-universalizing sense) for war, law, and order. Indeed, *Gladiator* seems intent upon “re-masculinizing” American male selfhood from Los Angeles to Taipei for more global and civilizational modes of market domination.¹⁴ As Carla Freccero describes the way this self-ratifying narrative of imperial spectacle works, *Gladiator* is quite neo-conservative in its honoring and praise of righteous fathers and conscripted sons through a plot and “spectacular display” of power that “lets us believe in all those manly warrior values and tricks us into the myth of patriotic belonging” to the imperial community of family value, manly virtue, and enlightened rule.¹⁵

Screenwriter David Franzoni has explicitly evoked the force of US and Roman historical analogies, suggesting a huge imperial subtext for the writing of *Gladiator* into a new-millennial text. “There are so many elements of ancient Rome during the period that are almost identical to

12. A minister in Swansea refused to christen a woman’s hefty newborn son after Maximus Lucius, recognizing that the hero of *Gladiator* was not a Christian (and that the child’s mother had not been to church in nine months). “Canon Refuses to Name Baby After Gladiator,” *The Times*, November 4, 2000, p. 3.

13. See Sara Gwennlian Jones on “the play of excess and lack that configures Maximus in oppositional relation of Commodus” as tragic double, in her insightful review essay of *Gladiator*, in *Scope*: www.nottingham.ac.uk/film/journal/filmrev/gladiator.htm.

14. Here I am evoking the analysis of “spectacles of war” by Susan Jeffords and Michael Rogin, et al., who saw Reagan-era movies and texts moving beyond the national doubt, trauma, and guilt of the Vietnam War to create residual forms of imperial masculinity and strong forgetting. See Susan Jeffords, *The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989). Kuan-Hsing Chen argues that in spaces like Taiwan, where America has functioned inside the cultural-political psyche as imaginary desire since the Cold War era, “The power of the culture of US imperialism has been precisely to insert itself into the geo-colonial space by constructing itself as the imaginary figure of modernity and, hence, as the object of [transnational] identification.” “Club 51: On the Culture of US Imperialism,” talk at Cultural Studies Center at the University of California Santa Cruz, February 2, 2001, cited with permission.

15. Carla Freccero, movie review of *Gladiator* for the “film gang” of KUSP radio, Santa Cruz, California, May 5, 2000. Cited with permission.

16. David S. Cohen, "From Script to Screen: *Gladiator*," *Script*, Vol. 6 (July/August 2000), p. 32.

17. David S. Cohen, *ibid.*, p. 33.

18. Sara Gwenllian Jones tracks the film's iconography as a transgression of genre: she refers here to the film's "swirling, enigmatic" music by composers Hans Zimmer and Lisa Gerrard, as well as the "harsh glare [of light] bleached across geographies of uncomfortable beauty—the rock and desert of Morocco, the arid lunar landscapes of Malta."



America today that it's almost unavoidable," Franzoni admitted about his script, and went on to flesh out the trans-temporal metaphor of empire via details of urban unrest and media intervention. "Street gangs dominating the inner cities, politicians using the media, entertainment, to control the masses, the concept that the masses can be controlled in a thoughtless manner. The very idea [of media control] is becoming more and more clearly American. That was a core idea of Roman politics, the idea that their voices can be corralled to sing as one is definitely Rome after the Republic."¹⁶ (Or a core American idea of hegemony after World War II, Franzoni seems to imply, via the installation of globalized media, liberal politics, and market forces.) Maker of cautionary scripts on subaltern forces of American history like *Citizen Cohn* and *Amistad*, Franzoni (like his director Ridley Scott) is writing inside/against the American Empire and its uncanny spectacles of home and colony (like the mongrel Pacific Rim spaces of *Blade Runner*), making and estranging cinematic works into retroactive and retrospective effects, but keeping "the dialogue contemporary, like the television [series] *I, Claudius*."¹⁷

Recalling the nostalgic vistas and domesticating ideology of Hollywood epics and the stark retro-moralism of works like *Ben Hur*, *The Robe*, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, *Quo Vadis*, and the slave-based resistances of *Spartacus*, *Gladiator* enacts a newer mode of global spectacle. Its plot pits the over-stuffed power of the Roman Empire not only against its own consenting local agents, like Maximus—the fallen general in search of moral redemption and public revenge upon illicit power—but also against various republican agents and plural citizens more broadly, who enjoy the spectacles of bloodshed and agon of combat only as some kind of sublimated solicitation of their own enlistment in the cause and everyday forms of empire. Offering a "skewed and unsettling" reworking of the "Hollywood epic genre" from the Cold War era (which typically posited a lone, quasi-Christian and Americanized hero like *Spartacus* against a totalitarian state of orientalized cruelty named Egypt, Babylon, or Rome), as Sara Gwenllian Jones has noted, *Gladiator* warily posits its own reign of Empire against the primordial setting of "another Europe, one that is ancient, elemental and unruly, a world of harsh environments and strange pagan deities."¹⁸

From the time of Julius Caesar and the imperial centralization of state power under Augustus Caesar in Rome until such events were to be outlawed by neo-Christianized rulers, different emperors had used free, state-sponsored public spectacles to rule over the people with what we now would term—after Bush 2—“shock and awe” tactics of fire-power and media display. These ranged from sporting events in the Circus Maximus, forms of comic theater, horse races, exotic animal hunts and fights, and mock naval battles to outright gladiatorial combat, and served to entertain, elicit support for, if not to ratify their own power on the pulses of their amazed and terrorized populace.¹⁹ Terror and awe become the sublimated means to generate a kind of implicit public consent to imperial achievement, evoking the power and legitimacy of empire over its awe-struck subjects. From the time of Augustus Caesar, an “imperial entertainment industry” had been built up to create extravagant display and to serve the political neutralization of dissent.²⁰ As the museum-based editors of *Gladiators and Caesars* write, “extravagance was in the very nature of gladiatorial contests. The *munera* (games) were a violent spectacle, a dramatic display and not least a demonstration of equipment.”²¹ All of this monumental display of equipment, force, battle, and conquest of strong over weak in the circus went into a lavish enactment and sublimation of imperial power and subjectivity. In *Gladiator*, much of this display has become high-tech graphics, merging the human, animal, and digital forms into battling (and cheering) cyborg-citizens in the arenas and ceremonies of Empire. Ridley Scott has remarked of his own epic vocabulary, Hollywood self-consciousness, and will to sublime effects of mass-imperial transport deployed in *Gladiator* (here sounding more like Longinus than the Frankfurt School), “Inevitably, there are comparisons in sport and movie entertainment to the Romans and their spectacles in the arena. Mass entertainment provides a visceral experience of things you can’t have, or can’t do. ‘Escapism’ is a word with bad connotations. I prefer ‘transported,’ ‘elevated,’ or ‘taken on a journey.’” (*Making*, p. 9)

In *Gladiator*, the awesome opening battle of the huge technologically superior forces of the Roman empire of Marcus Aurelius (Richard Harris) against the brave, recalcitrant, yet severely undermanned forces

19. Noting that “the sensational film *Gladiator*” had aroused public interest in Roman sports and spectacles across contemporary Europe, British Museum director R. G. W. Anderson opened an exhibit on “Gladiators and Caesars” in October 2000, with the moral proviso that the exhibit (like the film itself) “raises deeper issues of state-sanctioned violence, political control and manipulation of the masses.” *Gladiators and Caesars: The Power of Spectacle in Ancient Rome* (London: British Museum Press, 2000), Eckart Kohne, Cornelia Ewigleben, and Ralph Jackson, eds., p. 6. The exhibit was based on a concept developed in art museums in Hamburg and Speyer, Germany, spring and summer 2000.

20. *Gladiators and Caesars*, p. 139.

21. *Gladiators and Caesars*, p. 40.

22. The techno-euphoric display of US high-tech weaponry in the Gulf War and global spectacles deployed in the “sublime” Patriot missile are discussed in Rob Wilson, “Techno-euphoria and the Discourse of the American Sublime,” *National Identities and Post-Americanist Narratives*, ed. Donald E. Pease (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), pp. 205–229. On cinema as a perceptual training apparatus of modern war-making and international spectacle of the Earth-domineering gaze, see also Paul Virillo, *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception* (London: Verso, 1989).

23. On the American-centered techno-mechanics of visuality and gaze in the Persian Gulf War, see Shohat and Stam on the deadly simulacrum of “postmodern war,” *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, pp. 125–131 (see note 8).

24. *Gladiators and Caesars*, p. 128.

25. *Gladiators and Caesars*, p. 135.

of Germania, uses fireworks effects and protracted time frames to imply an analogy between the US/UN forces in the Persian Gulf in their techno-euphoric defeat of Iraq in 1991. The cyborg effect of spectatorial disengagement is heightened (here, as throughout the movie) by digitalized insertions of bodies, weapons, animals, flames, lightning, a whole trumpery of sublime expansion and sublimated aggression soliciting assent via awe, trauma, and wonder before the force and (seeming) enlightenment of global Empire.²² As in the Persian Gulf War, we at times follow the over-matched battle from the weapons’ point of view, although Scott estranges this suturing with dark tonalities and frames that freeze and cut into the sheer savagery and wild-dog quality of imperial war.²³

Gladiator shuffles imperial history around to suit its own heroic plot, elevating the fictitious Maximus over male rivals in physical and moral grandeur. It evokes shots drawing on later figurations of victorious combat like Gerome’s *Pollice Verso* (1872) where thumbs are once again turned in the wrong direction (down instead of up); it is right to pick Commodus (who became Caesar in 166 AD) as his imperial foil. The real Commodus funded, trained for, and took part in gladiatorial events himself. The passion of Commodus for gladiatorial contests was legendary, to such an extent that there were rumors that his real father was not the ascetic Marcus Aurelius (who disdained cruel spectacles in the Roman amphitheaters) but a gladiator whom his mother Faustina had loved.²⁴ Whatever the libidinal investment of the emperors in such masculine combat of war and the allure of imperial megalomania from Caligula to Commodus, there was a depoliticizing effect often at work upon the populace. Aggression was acted out in an arena of excess whereby the masses would “become less agitated about political events.”²⁵

The audience becomes avid for sensation, and delights in its apparent power acted out on display, by means of the gesture of turning thumbs up or down as some kind of collective vote of state violence. (Ironically, this recalls Siskel and Ebert voting “thumbs down” in their weekly movie reviews on TV as surrogate critic for the American masses.) Vicarious participation through aesthetic spectacle offers spectators the sense of being a judge with the power of life and death over the mangled par-

ticipants. But, in the famous debunking of such imperial spectacles as depoliticizing events by Juvenal (in the *Tenth Satire*), the Roman *pleb* “now meddles no more and longs for just two things—bread and circuses.”²⁶ In the contemporary American idiom, this would mean something like serving up more spectacular movies, MTV, and an endless supply of Big Macs and Kentucky Fried Chicken (what is called “hamburger imperialism” in Taiwan). This goes down well with the town-square-like presidential debates of two centrist candidates running for imperial presidency on the stage of an ever-globalizing power. Gore Vidal, novelistic chronicler of America as some huge postwar Empire of bad faith, sexual decadence, and brutal Puritanism undergoing a quasi-Roman decline, puts it like this: “Let TV be our Coliseum and the third-worlders our gladiators.”²⁷

To invoke the grim Debord on the socialized subjectivity of the spectacle, capitalism triumphant on such a global scale can only recognize itself in the triumph of the spectacle: some self-legitimizing image of grandeur deliriously trumping liberal contradiction via aesthetic assent.²⁸ The sublime spectacle of power becomes, for Hardt and Negri, more like a virtual space in which the outside flips over into the inside, the arena of spectacle into the spectator of empire, all liberal politics “sublimated and de-actualized in the virtual space of the spectacle.” (*Empire*, p. 189) If Empire’s lavish spectacle of mortal combat is threaded into a hugely bio-political theatrics of geo-power, this is what Gopal Balakrishnan (reviewing *Empire*) shrewdly calls “a media-steered system of political publicity.” Such an American empire of de-centered legitimacy and instant terror can become “permanently vulnerable to the impact of destabilizing, marginal events that slip out of the control of those who manufacture consent.”²⁹ The action movie here reaches back into what Nietzsche later ratified as the Greco-Roman love of agonistic battle and will to affirm power and victory over defeated poets and priests, “the visual stimulation of seeing muscular bodies in vigorous exertion, defying death and injury.”³⁰

Under the management of the producer-like and cynical Proximo (Oliver Reed), Scott’s spectacle of trained warriors is offered not so much as commodity as community of production and domination. Delighting in the reign of reason and law as in the display of combat and will to

26. *Gladiators and Caesars*, p. 135.

27. Quoted by Peter Kemp, “Delusions of Grandeur,” in his review of Gore Vidal’s latest “US empire” novel *The Golden Age in The Guardian*, October 14, 2000, p. 47.

28. See Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1994). See also Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 48 (note 3).

29. Gopal Balakrishnan, “Virgilian Visions,” *New Left Review* 5 (Sept-Oct 2000), p. 147

30. *Gladiators and Caesars*, 47. See Friedrich Nietzsche, “Homer’s Contest.”



31. David Wyatt, *Five Fires: Race, Catastrophe, and the Shaping of California* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1997), p. 155.

32. Here I agree with Fredric Jameson that Hollywood “metageneric” works like the *Godfather* trilogy, *Dog Day Afternoon*, and *Jaws* offer both ideological obfuscation and mystery (reification) to the audience as well as figure forth more “utopian” longings for forms of familial, class, transnational “collectivity.” See “Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture,” *Signatures of the Visible* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 29–34.

carnival excess, Coliseum spectacle paradoxically circulates to empower the state and ruler at the expense of the actors and citizens. Scott’s cynical emperor Commodus is played with relish by Joaquin Phoenix and framed by neo-fascist icons recalling *Triumph of the Will*: Commodus delights in abolishing dissent into preening hegemony and the seductions of illegality and incest. In effect, the citizen is turned into a screaming and amazed audience member, who feels himself complicit in the enjoyment of his own sublation into the bloodletting forms of empire, enjoying (as in the imperial sublime) the masochism of becoming the disempowered citizens (if not the disemboweled subalterns of Empire). The Republic-upholding senator named Gracchus (Derek Jacobi) cannot undermine the amoral power of this public spectacle. Turning thumbs up or down as sign of death gives the spectator the illusion of participation and amplifies the sensation of vicarious risk, here distanced as the spectacle of male combat and the agonistic triumph of strength over weakness or dissent.

David Wyatt argues in *Five Fires*—tracking the impact of catastrophe upon the making of California into a US border space of racial conflict and class antagonism as well as the turn away from these damages of history into distancing aesthetics of spectacle in photography, painting, and cinema—that spectacles are more than just feats of size and luminosity. Spectacles do more than enact the sublime bombast of natural vastness and democratic empowerment. In fact, quite the contrary effect is solicited in the achievement of distance, autonomy, and awe through American spectacle. Wyatt claims, “Spectacle can be defined as the use of form that sets out to distance its audience from the represented event [earthquakes, urban race riots, world war, colonial violence in the making of modern-day California] while mystifying that audience about the event’s contexts and possible causes.”³¹ But in sublime spectacle distance and irony is less the rule than is a sense of vicarious trauma, conquest, and empowerment, here meaning “the fantasy bribe” of imperial collectivity and heroic aggrandizement concealed in the mass-cultural commodity form.³²

In the Hollywood epic genre, excitement traditionally overrides historical accuracy, creating an expansive cinematic space in which to create the ambiance of Empire’s aura in all its excess of terror and wonder and to

create fragmented analogies to contemporary politics. On such an imperial stage of mediated power, one has to wonder if “the resistances, struggles and desires of the multitude” flowing forth as some kind of deterritorializing, bio-political, and hybridizing creativity of labor are all that “capable of autonomously constructing a counter-Empire, an alternative political organization of global flows and exchanges” as Hardt and Negri claim they are within contours of capital’s decentered and non-territorial Empire. (*Empire*, pp. xv–xvi) For Hardt and Negri, the proletariat or collective slave class of the global era has flipped over more hopefully into some mongrel mixture of Jesus’s multitudes, Deleuze’s nomads, and Marx’s laboring drones. In such a view, the movie *Gladiator* would in effect “push through empire to come out the other side” into the forces of the counter-imperial multitudes and insurgencies of power’s ebb and flow. (*Empire*, p. 206)

The movie did use scenes of “extremely graphic violence” and earned an “R” rating, but the violence was highly moralized and distanced, as the spectacle turned away from war and conquest into arenas of mass sport celebrating the *agon* of individual challenge and hand-to-hand combat. (At times it recalls a US television show from the 1990s called *Gladiator* that had shamelessly featured weekly challenges to steroid-enhanced contestants running a gauntlet of body blows and colliding bodies.) The entertainment website Access Atlanta captured the US audience’s willing complicity in performing such spectacles of empire, turning everyday Americans into neo-Romans casting votes inside the blood-strewn and tiger-ridden Coliseum: “Two thousand thumbs up. Make that 200,000 if you want your verdict juiced with computer effects.” Needless to say, the American audience can by no means stand for the world or the global as such, nor suggest the way this movie might be warped and trans-coded at the moment of reception in spaces outside/against the imperial core like India or Russia.³³

Would Americans do their part, again, in the shifting of the Roman Empire westward, trekking east to west across the neo-enlightened market-covered globe spreading peace, bread, and computer-enhanced circuses, hailing conquest and domination as manifest destiny?³⁴ Scott, perhaps much more skeptical and British at core, refuses any merely aestheticizing disconnect between audience and history, spectacle and moral-political

33. My analysis here is in no way adequate to describe these global/local warpings and polycentric flows of the Hollywood spectacle outside the US market and cultural frames.

34. See Howard Horwitz on the fears of imperial repetition and European decadence that haunted visions of the so-called American Sublime in cultural producers like Thomas Cole in his *Course of Empire* paintings from 1833 to 1836: “Sublime Possession, American Landscape,” in *By the Law of Nature: Form and Value in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 37–55. The “westerning” of the Empire theme is captured in Bishop George Berkeley’s poem from the Enlightenment era, “America: A Prophecy,” trumpeting its imperial ratification credo, “Westward the course of Empire takes its way,” which ironically gave the radical California city of Berkeley its post-imperial British name. See Gray Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 280–282 and 6–9, on the naming of Berkeley, California, as a fulfillment of the westward march of the imperial-city dream to the shores of Anglo-global San Francisco and, further, to the vast hinterlands of the Pacific Basin. In such an American manifest-destiny scenario, San Francisco would replace Washington, DC, as a grander and more Asia/Pacific-oriented version of Rome.

35. Born in South Shields, England, in 1937, Ridley Scott graduated from the Royal College of Art (one of his classmates was David Hockney) and has directed fifteen movies since the Napoleonic-based *The Duelists* (1978) and meta-genre cult classics like *Thelma and Louise* (1991), *Alien* (1979), and *Blade Runner* (1982), as well as more than 2000 commercials. Scott's training in art (and commerce) serves him well, as *Gladiator* is self-consciously generated around paintings of the Roman Empire from the Romantic era by Gerome and Alma-Tadema. As Arthur Max, the production designer for *Gladiator*, revealingly commented, "We tried to bring to *Gladiator* a sense of the Roman empire in decline—its greatness and at the same time its corruption and decay. And to do that we found ourselves looking not so much to the scholarly historical realm as to interpretations of Rome by certain nineteenth-century painters—classical Romantics who depicted an exotic view of Rome as they wished it to be, not as it really was" (*Making*, p. 66). On Gerome's impact, see *Making*, pp. 22–26. See also Paul M. Sammon, *Ridley Scott* (New York: Thunder Mouth Press, 1999), especially Chapters 1 through 3 on his British training in art, commerce, and postmodern image effects for RCA, BBC, and Apple.

36. See www.cinemasense.com/Reviews/gladiator.htm.

37. As Carla Freccero phrases this form-becoming-content dynamic in her radio review of *Gladiator*, "That's one of the messages of this movie—itself a spectacular display that does all the things it tells us that the spectacle does."

38. Alexander Walter, "The Split Screen," *London Evening Standard*, October 5, 2000, p. 31.

consent.³⁵ As one cinemasense.com reviewer noted through the audience response in Los Angeles, "We were stunned with the realization that our international viewing audience assembled in the plush surroundings of the Loews Cineplex at Universal City in Los Angeles shared a visceral connection with the Roman crowd reveling at the spilling of human blood."³⁶ (This critic went on to safely distance such violence into the Roman past.)

Despite such a "visceral connection" to the spilling of imperial blood and the maintenance of global power that our beloved *Gladiator* brings into critical-complicit representation,³⁷ perhaps Americans (sitting in their plush Hollywood seats, eating popcorn and hot dogs and Cokes, distracted by the news of globalizing markets *cum* WTO-dissent) do not like to think of themselves as an imperial force for domination. It is hard to think of America as having become a center of some neo-Rome, much less as the sublimated fascist state enforcing open markets upon those conscripted as labor and hinterland in this global orgy of consumption. But perhaps this Hollywood spectacle of *Gladiator* brought home the allure of imperial power and, instead of critique, oddly solicited a half-guilty, sublimely pleasurable, and voyeuristic consent from its cinematic effected global/local subjects.

Films like *Gladiator*—bigger in scale, more spectacular and techno-industrial in effect, more broadly commercial in appeal—may not just be about Empire. They may help to represent and enact the contemporary threat of "Americanization" felt as force of genre—meaning, for example, the overwhelming of local traditions and local-based settings and themes by filmmakers in Britain now being underwritten by the British Film Council. As Alexander Walker warns, "The generation [of film makers] weaned on *Star Wars*, reared on *Aliens* and now embracing *Gladiator* has no affinities with Ken Loach or Mike Leigh-type films like *My Name is Joe* and *High Hopes*." These are smaller films that "focus on daily life and character in Britain" instead of making Hollywood-hip, sublime, and cool "genre product" as does Ridley Scott.³⁸ Worrying about global/local imbalances of culture after the war, Britain has not moved far from the outraged cry of John Maynard Keynes outlining the cultural policy of the new Arts Council in 1946—"Death to Hollywood." At times, though,

this cultural nationalism articulated against the reign of Hollywood genres “has mutated into [today’s cry of] ‘long live Merchant Ivory.’” That is to say, hazy costume dramas milking British literary and royal heritage into global export and tourist attraction, as the lure of blockbuster spectacles remains a longing at the ex-imperial core.³⁹

Globalization of the political economy is by no means a *fait accompli*. Not even inside the ex-imperial centers of post-colonial discourse like Britain, where moralistic policies like tougher school discipline, anti-drug campaigns, and “standing up for the countryside” and yeoman farmer products of white ethnicity can try to soften the global opening. William Hague, former Conservative party leader in England, did his best to see New Labor treated with global disillusion and local contempt under the overreaching Millennium Dome in 2000. Hague has nevertheless promised to “champion the cause of a flexible, free trading, low tax, lightly regulated Europe—a Europe that goes with the grain of the global economy.”⁴⁰ Nowadays, going with the grain of the global empire or regimes of globalization has become the regionalizing watchword of the day. New Labor is intent upon moving “Third Way” Britain towards some supra-national unity inside the European Union as “a superpower that is not a superstate,” as Tony Blair told the EU in Warsaw in 2000).⁴¹ The terms of identity shift but the longing for symbolic forms of collective empowerment, civilizational commitment, primordial belonging, and global status still haunt the national forms, hence the imperial nostalgia for Empire as spectacle and simulacrum.

Globalization, by now generating waves of street protests and oppositional linkages among Teamster, anarchist, and turtle at international economic meetings like APEC in Vancouver and the WTO in Seattle on the nervous Pacific Rim, has begun to reveal the threat to democracy of the globalizing economy. This means more control and power with less transparency in the hands of the wealthy nations (especially the market-booming United States) and multinational corporations who can frame and unduly influence international organizations like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization. Under the neo-liberal regime of such institutions, in the wary words of

39. Stefan Collini, “Culture Inc.,” supplement to *The Guardian*, October 28, 2000, pp. 16–17.

40. Andrew Sparrow, “Labor Arrogant and Divided, Says Hague,” *The Daily Telegraph*, October 6, 2000, p. 9.

41. Ian Black and Nicholas Watt, “Blair Calls for Euro ‘Superpower,’” *The Guardian*, October 7, 2000, p. 1.

42. Andrew Simms, "Tempering Minority Rule" [by the Group of Seven]," *The Guardian*, October 30, 2000, p. 25.

43. Quoted in Corey Robin, "The Ex-Cons: Right-Wing Thinkers Go Left!," *Lingua Franca* 11 (February 2001), p. 28.

Andrew Simms, "the anomalies and inequalities of globalization have darkly flowered."⁴² Deregulation and speed mount for capital, whereas increased management, restraint, border blockage, and decreased benefits for labor seem to have become the neo-liberal norm on the American model.

This shift from "European-style imperialism" to an American-led Empire of justice, prosperity, human rights, and peace has been generated around a core ideology of neo-liberal freedom installed at the market frontiers: "The contemporary idea of Empire is born through the global expansion of the internal US constitutional project." (*Empire*, p. 182) This is what Hardt and Negri contend in their post-Roman trajectory of imperial power to the shores of the Potomac. While American forces push towards forging a single universal free market on the model of cybernetic capital flowing across borders, this turbo-flux, instability, and chaos of creation-destruction is driven, policed, and all but regulated by the "world's last great Enlightenment regime, the United States," to quote John Gray's lament on the "false dawn" of such capitalist globalization.⁴³

Still, as Hardt and Negri phrase the global-local paradox of installing a multi-centered, fluid, and dynamic process of globalization giving at times more dynamism and agency to the creative and mobile multitudes of the local, "the coming Empire is not American and the United States is not its center." (p. 384) In such a paradoxical reading of US imperialism and its Cold War legacies and heritages of sub-colony inscription, the United States has not become some new Rome of territorial expansion and outright state plunder, but a huge and mixed "cluster of new Romes." Washington goes on controlling the nuclear bomb (monarchal power), New York goes on nervously managing the speculative crisis of global markets (aristocratic power), and Hollywood is ever-generating the "ether" of cultural semiotics and the spectacular software of liberal hegemony (democratic power). (p. 347) If "the indispensable instrument for maintaining the American empire is its huge military establishment" (*Blowback*, p. 222) and costly missile-based internationalism, *Gladiator* helps to make this amorphous Empire palpable as a global structure of feeling. The movie fits the mongrel peripheries into a transnational totality which secures consent to its military machine not so much via domination and plunder as via aesthetic ratification, mediated trauma, and modes of civilian awe.



This may be what Aimé Césaire means when he warns (in the post-colonial-nationalist contexts and techno-industrial imbalances of his uncanny *Discourse on Colonialism*) that “American domination [is] the only domination [form] from which one never recovers . . . unscarred.” Perhaps Césaire means that one cannot escape becoming “scarred” by the psychic, mysterious, and spatial entanglements at the global/local border of national self-determination and the US image spectacle (see my epigraph to this essay). Even a gladiator battle, reframed, can elide the scars of material domination and begin to make the imperial sublation of peripheral subjectivity look (and feel to diverse audiences) like a narrative of heroic success: Russell Crowe as the “man who defied an Empire” (as the global ad campaign for the movie claims). Fittingly enough, *Gladiator* was nominated for twelve Academy Awards in 2001 and won five of them, including important ones for best picture of the year and best actor, which can only amplify its global impact as an empire-haunted blockbuster.

The Pax Americana Empire of global/local turbo capitalism operates under such a post-imperialist vision of expanding horizons and proliferating differences, all somehow ecstatically enlisted and conscripted into the free market of the commodity culture. But as the journey of the rude Spaniard Maximus in *Gladiator* shows, there is finally no egress from the routes, arenas, and spectacles of Empire, however multi-centered; no pastoral exit out from modes of domination, except in the transcendental visions of consciousness, other-worldly music, profanity, prayer, death, and dream. The mongrel forces of the local periphery are routed through the domineering pores and arenas of Empire, the forces of mobility, mongrel community, and freedom brought back into the ecstasy of celebration, battle, spectacle, demos, and abolishment.⁴⁴ The multicultural forces of the transnational moment have been seemingly integrated and contained. When the Numidian character Juba (Djimon Housou) utters his comradely blessing over the body of Maximus and buries the little ceramic statues of wife and child in the bloody sands of the Coliseum saying, “Now we are free. We will see you again, but not yet, not yet,” one has to wonder if this affirmation of “freedom,” pagan transcendence, and racial solidarity among the mongrel transnational community is not another way of ratifying the mysterious dominations of Empire.⁴⁵

44. This may be the gloomiest analysis of “local” forces I have ever offered. For a reading of global/local dialectics that gives much more emphasis to the resistant and innovative powers of the situated local and peripheral sites within and against transnational capitalism, see Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake, eds., *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998) and Rob Wilson, *Reimagining the American Pacific: From ‘South Pacific’ to Bamboo Ridge and Beyond* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000).

45. Drawing attention to “*Gladiator* as geopolitical metaphor,” a *New York Times* article quoted political science professor Jeffrey W. Legro, who worried the Roman Empire analogy like this: “The international stage of the United States since World War II is like a variation on the script from the movie *Gladiator*. We entered the arena reluctantly but once inside vanquished all challengers. Now we stand alone inside the Coliseum, victorious and sword in hand but with little idea now about what to do with Rome. What’s more, we’re not even very sure where the exit signs leading out of the Coliseum are located.” This prescient comment on “America as reluctant Empire” theme was uttered in the context of the Working Group on Hegemony at the Woodrow Wilson center in Washington, composed of fifteen scholars worrying the militarism and anti-democratic potentials of US superpower responsibility, cultural appeal, and economic sway. See Kurt M. Campbell, “The Last Superpower Ponders Its Next Move,” *The New York Times*, February 10, 2001: pp. A15–17. *Gladiator* was former CBS News anchor Dan Rather’s favorite movie: as the liberal newscaster said, ominously miming the Roman Praetorian Guard.

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Reterritorializing Asia Pacific:

The Post–September 11 Logic of Hegemony¹

David Palumbo-Liu

The following is the text of a paper presented for “Who’s Next? Korea and Beyond,” a conference held at New York University, April 2003. I thank the organizers of the conference, as well as my co-panelists (Bruce Cumings, Jonathan Schell, Luis Francia, and Hendro Sangkoyo) for their comments at the teach-in. Also, thanks to Arif Dirlik and Epifanio San Juan, Jr., for their suggestions. This talk was broadcast on April 29, 2003, on “Democracy Now!”, Pacifica Radio. Since the time of composition and the time of publication, of course history has taken various directions. I retain the original text as a way to provide a snapshot of the impact of events of 9/11 on Asia Pacific. What unfolds now will follow the contours of recent events.

Taking a cue from Arif Dirlik’s edited volume, *What Is in a Rim?*, we find today that if we ask a similar question, “What is Asia Pacific?”, we are forced to consider, like Dirlik, the material effects of ideological formations and policy-making—this, not any pristine or eternal geographic designation, discloses the permeable nature of “regions.” It is not just under the condition of “globalization” that regions are best understood as interdependent and linked, but, more precisely, it is under the condition of global hegemonies that the precise “shaping activities” of dominance belie any celebratory notion of global villages and “free” markets. To be specific, understanding ways that 9/11 has seemingly unleashed the United States from all traditional constraints on exercising its hegemonic aspirations is part of the task of understanding the new formations of Asia-Pacific-America in the early twenty-first century.

September 11 has had a profound impact on Asia Pacific, reterritorializing national and regional spaces according to the logic of both global anti-terrorism and the preservation and extension of US global hegemony. This essay will first address the strategic and ideological importance of the

1. For an excellent discussion of “hegemony” as applied to Asia Pacific, see Bruce Cumings, *Parallax Visions: Making Sense of American–East Asian Relations at the End of the Century* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), especially pp. 26–27.



2. The term “benevolent global hegemony” is coined by William Kristol and Robert Kagan in “Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 1996).

Asia Pacific region, connecting 9/11 to the wars on Iraq and the current situation in the Middle East. I then move to the general effects of the ideas of preemption and dominance that have been established since 9/11, and end by commenting on the effects of these two issues on Asia/America.

The particular character of the Iraq war is indelibly colored by the events of September 11. The vast majority of Americans who supported the war on Iraq did so because the Bush administration was effective in selling the notion that Saddam Hussein and Al-Qaeda were inseparable, and that to do away with Saddam was to both avenge the terrible events of September 11 and to prevent any further such occurrence. Without that link being made, it is doubtful that Bush could have made a case for the essentially unilateral war. We recall that as early as 1998, the Defense Policy Board had presented the case for “finishing the war in Iraq” to President Clinton, and that that now-infamous memo was signed by most of the major figures in today’s administration, specifically the ruling elite within the Department of Defense. However, the argument for regime change in Iraq should be itself recognized as merely part and parcel of the all-encompassing “preemptive,” world-domineering posture the United States articulated over a decade ago in the Defense Planning Guidance scripted by Paul Wolfowitz. The events of September 11 thus provided the perfect pretext for invading Iraq and manifesting for the first (but certainly not the last) time the ethos of the Defense Planning Guidance of the early Nineties, an ethos also captured in the high moral tonalities of the concept of “benevolent global hegemony” articulated in 1996, and now enshrined in Bush’s 2002 National Security Strategy.²

What were some of the effects of September 11 for Asia Pacific? And how were these regional effects linked to the ethos of hegemony and preemption just described? The answers to these questions are not hard to come by. Immediately after the terrorist attacks, the Philippines became known in Washington as the first country in the world to offer military contributions to the war on terrorism. The first leader to reach out to Bush was Philippine President Gloria Macagapal Arroyo, who on September 19, 2001, announced that she would create a regional anti-terrorism coalition to support the looming US retaliation against its

attackers (*Gulf News*, September 19, 2001). Arroyo promised to “walk every stage of the way” with the United States’ “war on terrorism” (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, November 21, 2001). By correlating the attacks of 9/11 with preexisting efforts in the Philippines to eradicate outlaw bands of kidnappers previously associated with Al-Qaeda, Arroyo was able to claim a kind of political and moral prescience and globalized a local instance, drawing the connection between American and Philippine anti-terrorist activities and staking out as well a common international project. A former AFP chief of staff put the equation concisely: “The Philippine government’s success in defeating the Abu Sayyaf is a defeat of international terrorism.” (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, September 19, 2001)

Besides the lip service Arroyo paid to the war on terrorism, the Philippine president offered airspace and combat troops to aid in the United States’ efforts, and invited US troops to the islands.³ *Business World* shrewdly called this a “gesture of solidarity and friendship as well as political savvy,” as it yielded tremendous benefits to the Arroyo government. Within a year, the magazine said, “a cold shoulder turned to a warm embrace” (September 6, 2002). James Kelly, US assistant secretary of state for East Asia and Pacific Affairs, suggested then that “the United States may help ease the Philippine debt burden as part of a *reward aid package* for its support of the US campaign against terrorism” (my emphasis; *AFX News—Asia*, November 18, 2001). But the aid largely came in the form of military assistance that served as well (and perhaps even more) the purposes of the United States, allowing US troops to return to the Philippines.

Shortly after September 11, Republican Congressman Sam Brownback of Kansas announced that “it appears the Philippines is going to be the second, the next target, after Afghanistan in the war on terrorism.” The *Jakarta Post* then reported that the United States had indeed created this “second front” by sending 1,200 troops to the Philippines in January 2002. And in June 2002, Paul Wolfowitz visited the Philippines and asserted the increased US role there, again drawing the connection between these actions and those in Afghanistan: “the US military presence in southern Philippines is the largest mission outside Afghanistan to fight terrorism since 9/11.” (*New York Times*, June 4, 2002)

3. In public statements, members of the Philippine Congress called Arroyo’s invitation to the US military a gross violation of the Constitution.

Over and above the aid and resources promised immediately after 9/11, which included more than six hundred military “advisors,” the United States promised \$100 million in military aid and one hundred more special forces units, bringing the total to more than a thousand US troops. The Philippines became the fourth-largest Asian recipient of US foreign military financing (FMF) and the first in terms of US International Military Education Training. (*Business World*, August 5, 2002) Again, these activities should be recognized as serving at least three purposes: the ostensible one, namely fighting terrorism; but also fortifying a weak Philippine regime and offering the United States a military base in a strategically critical region.

If the strategic epicenter for this second front was the Philippines, a newly organized Asia Pacific region was its new circumference. Although the *Jakarta Post* noted that “it is undeniable that Southeast Asia is not a breeding ground for terrorists,” it noted too that, “thanks to the war against terrorism, ASEAN, which lost its fire and fame due to the 1997 [economic] crisis, is regaining not only confidence but respect.” (December 16, 2002) It is thus crucial to see the reshaping of Asia Pacific within the context of the ebbs and flows of capital. Itself a child of global capital, “Asia Pacific” proved no more immune to the cycles and seasons of the capitalist mode of production than any other formation. Produced to facilitate the flow of capital, goods, and labor between Asia and the rest of the world, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation consortium was first heralded as a key entry into the new world economic order, and then deflated into an impotent bundle of corrupt practices once the “Asian” economic crisis hit in the late Nineties.

The logic of anti-terrorism thus played a huge role in redefining Asia Pacific and bringing it back into view. But we need to remember that this visibility was of a particular sort—the region was recognized as a revitalized economic entity, and at the same time it reappeared on the “relevance” charts as a space of terror and anti-terror. Its reemergence on the world’s radar was dramatically staged so as to emphasize a critical connection: that of economic and military globalization. In November 2002, at least nineteen countries took part in an anti-terrorism



conference in Manila cohosted by the World Tourism Organization. The conference was called the “International Conference on Terrorism and Tourism Recovery.” The participants included all ten ASEAN countries plus the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, China, and the United Kingdom.

Not only were regional relations thus revised, but international ones as well. For example, in November of 2002, the European Commission said that Europe would “help the Philippines boost its capabilities to fight terrorism” through “technical and funding assistance,” and renegotiate a former dispute over high European tariffs on Philippine tuna. It also offered European support for development aid for the Muslim-held southern Philippines regions. (Agence Presse France, November 22, 2002) And on December 4, 2002, China’s public security minister, Jia Chunwang, struck an agreement with Philippines Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina, Jr., for closer cooperation between their respective police forces. (BBC Worldwide Monitoring, December 4, 2001) Similar renegotiations took place between other Asia Pacific countries and Europe and the United States. The question then becomes, why was the United States so intensely interested in the opening Arroyo provided? Why was Europe so conscientious in engaging with Arroyo and other Asia Pacific leaders when they came to renew and renegotiate trade and other agreements in this new environment? To understand this requires looking back to the last wars in Asia.

In the aftermath of Vietnam, for the United States there arose a need for a “forward defense,” a pan-oceanic garrison to prevent wars in Asia from reaching the US mainland. The focus for US strategists became island-bastions in the western Pacific, Philippines, Japan, and Guam. One saw a huge increase in the US Pacific military presence under Reagan: the rise in surface warships rose one hundred percent between 1980 and 1983.⁴ Two events occurred in the early Nineties that set in motion even greater concern on the part of the United States. In 1991 Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed proposed the establishment of an “East Asia Economic Group” excluding the United States and led by Japan. That same year, the Philippine senate rejected the “Treaty

4. See Walden Bello, *People and Power in the Pacific: The Struggle for the Post-Cold War Order* (London and San Francisco: Pluto Press and the Transnational Institute, 1992).

of Friendship, Cooperation, and Security” that would have extended the stay of the ninety-one-year naval base at Subic Bay. Senate president Jovito Salonga declared, “Today we have summoned the political will to stand up and end 470 years of foreign military presence in the Philippines.” (Quoted in Bello, p. 3) (It is crucial to note that precisely these two points of weakening US influence in the region were immediately addressed post-9/11: the return of US troops to the Philippines, and the reconsolidation of ASEAN under American hegemony.)

The loss of that strategic foothold was crucial. In 1995, former US Air Force Pacific General John Lorber reiterated the importance of Asia Pacific to US strategic interests: “We, the United States, are a Pacific nation, where command extends from the West Coast of the United States to the eastern coast of Africa and includes both polar extremes. The United States has seven defense treaties worldwide, and five of them are in the Pacific region.” (<http://www.bulatlat.com/news/2-31/2-31-simbulan.html>) According to the 1997 *Report of the Quadrennial Defense Review* by the US Department of Defense, US national defense and security policy implemented by 100,000 US troops deployed in the region is intertwined with economic globalization such as “the protection of the sea lanes of trade,” and “ensuring unhampered access to key markets, energy supplies, and strategic resources.” Pentagon literature now treats the operational jurisdiction of the US Pacific Command as “highways of trade which are vital to US security.”

And yet another report put together by former CIA and State Department analysts talks about US plans to reestablish forward bases in the Philippines as part of an American strategy against international terrorism. Indeed, four months *before* September 11, 2001 (that is, in May 2001), the RAND Corporation issued an important policy strategy labeled *The United States and Asia: Toward a New US Strategy and Force Posture*.⁵ Its lead author is a critical figure in both the Asia Pacific and the Middle East, Zalmay Khalilzad. Khalilzad is a member of the Defense Policy Board. He is also the author of *From Containment to Global Leadership* (1995), and Bush’s advisor on Afghanistan. He was instrumental in the series of conferences that produced an interim post-Taliban government in

Afghanistan, was part of the transition team in Iraq, and was then named Ambassador to Iraq.

The RAND document maps Asia Pacific in very precise strategic terms: “Southeast Asia lies at the intersection of two of the world’s most heavily traveled sea lines of communication (SLOC). The East-West route connects the Indian and Pacific Oceans, while the North-South route links Australia and New Zealand to Northeast Asia. Nearly half the world’s merchant fleet capacity sails through the SLOCs of the South China Sea and the waters surrounding Indonesia. These SLOCs serve as the economic lifelines by which the economies of Northeast Asia receive oil and other critical inputs and export finished goods to the rest of the world.” But along with this critical economic role, the region also plays an indispensable military one: “From a military perspective, these sea lanes are critical to the movement of US forces from the Western Pacific to the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf” (p. 35). We thus find again the intimate connection between economic and military globalization. It is crucial to note that during the 1987–88 Iran-Iraq war, seventy-five percent of the US Navy ships deployed to the Indian Ocean and the Gulf were Seventh Fleet vessels operating out of Subic Bay in the Philippines—exactly the base that was closed in the early 1990s. During the first Gulf War, this base was a critical refueling and reprovisioning center for the US Navy. It is no wonder then that Arroyo’s invitation to the US military to return to the Philippines to help fight the war on terrorism opened the door to much more than she expected, or wanted.

In outlining US objectives in the region, the RAND document takes as central to its worlding world, “the need to preclude the rise of a regional or continental hegemon.” This imperative is important for two reasons. It is necessary to “prevent the United States from being denied economic, political, and military access to an important part of the globe; and to prevent a concentration of resources that could support a global challenge to the United States on the order of that posed by the former Soviet Union.” To do this, the United States must “seek to maintain stability in the region through ‘shaping’ activities aimed at providing positive incentives for cooperative behavior and disincentives against the use of force to achieve

geopolitical goals. These shaping activities must seek to convince the nations of the region that their security will be attained more easily if the United States maintains an active military role in the region than would be the case if not” (p. 44). We find in these passages exactly the goals and methods of the Defense Planning Guidance scripted by Paul Wolfowitz and leaked to the press in the early 1990s. It was in this document that the Department of Defense outlined a plan for the United States to maintain absolute global dominance. This would require neutralizing any possible threat to American military hegemony and “shaping” activities to persuade those countries that might be ambivalent about such a plan for a new US World Order. The influx of military and other aid to the Philippines mentioned above contains precisely the elements of both these “methods” as applied to Asia Pacific.

To forward the US agenda, the RAND study proposes a menu of possible strategic options: “At one end of the spectrum would be a strategy built on ensuring and strengthening US hegemony in Asia. The key to this strategy would lie in maintaining and increasing the US position of preeminent power in the region—if necessary taking steps to constrain the economic and military growth of any other country that could threaten that preeminence. Such a strategy would require maximum vigilance as well as the expenditure of money and effort and, as such, would probably prove incompatible with US domestic requirements” (p. 45). The study then mentions a number of less “extreme” options, which include forming a “condominium” with one of Asia’s major powers; adopting the role of “balancer” among the major regional powers; creating a collective security system; and finally, the possibility of complete disengagement from Asia. But note how September 11 dramatically changed the playing field, and how the Iraq war’s “success” might well incline Washington to the more radical end of the spectrum: “foreign” goals of neutralizing threats to American power are all the more urgent, and the potential domestic costs of maintaining US hegemony are easily overridden both by concerns about national defense and the element of revenge. From several perspectives, then—regional, national, foreign, domestic—the connections between Asia-Pacific-America and the Middle East are clear.

Now let us consider how this newly re-territorialized Asia Pacific might be a particularly critical environment under the logic of preemption. If in the early Nineties the time was not yet ripe for the full florescence of Wolfowitz's Defense Planning Guidance, after September 11 these very themes are enshrined and widely broadcast in Bush's 2002 National Security Strategy, and manifested in the Iraq war. While Bush asserts at one moment that "today, the international community has the best chance since the rise of the nation-state in the seventeenth century to build a world where great powers compete in peace instead of continually prepare for war" (RAND document, p. 9), at the same time he puts forward the option to unilaterally use force: "The United States has long maintained the option of preemptive actions to counter a sufficient threat to our national security." He then attempts to assuage the fears of other nations that the United States might always opt for the use of force, while at the same time implying that if other nations were to use preemptive force, they would likely do so as aggressors, rather than in self-defense: "The United States will not use force in all cases to preempt emerging threats, nor should nations use preemption as a pretext for aggression" (p. 5). There is a clear preemptive moral argument here—the case for preemptive action on the part of the United States is always defensive and not aggressive, yet the use of preemption by others is likely to be only a mask for aggression.

The notion of preemption is not new to the Pacific. After the fall of Saigon and before the end of the Cold War, the United States, preparing to fight a Soviet fleet, strategized an air and naval attack on Vladivostok. In this war plan, it accepted the option of a limited nuclear war and "first-strike option." Navy Secretary John Lehman declared in June 1984: "Who gets to shoot first will have more to do with who wins than any other factor."⁶ Near the end of Cold War, there was the suggestion to re-orient the US posture from deterring the vanishing Soviet threat to containing terrorist threats emanating from the Third World. This new focus is argued for in the 1988 document *Discriminate Deterrence*, produced by the Presidential Commission on Long-Term Integrated Strategy.⁷ At this point, the twin logics of preemption and anti-terrorism emerge powerfully in Asia Pacific. Admiral Charles Larson, commander-

6. Walden Bello, p. 19.

7. Walden Bello, p. 27.



8. Quoted in *Newsweek*, April 22, 1991.

9. Seema Sirohi, "US Arms Maker's Post-Cold War Scenarios," Pacific News Service, April 15-19, 1991.

10. www.inq7.net/brk/2002/dec/02/brkafp_2-1.htm.

in-chief of Pacific Command, testified before Congress that North Korea posed the greatest immediate danger to regional stability. Colin Powell, then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, complained: "I'm running out of demons—I'm down to Fidel Castro and Kim Il-Sung."⁸ It was within this environment as well that General Dynamics singled out India as one of the key targets for the next generation of cruise missiles. A fifty-two-page briefing paper produced by GD outlined a scenario for the year 2000 in which "India and Pakistan are spoiling over a war for Kashmir. The United States would intervene to prevent an Indian nuclear strike against Pakistan and use 307 cruise missiles to neutralize targets in India."⁹

Today the logic of preemption has been taken up anew in the Asia Pacific. Prime Minister of Australia John Howard issued a statement in which he said, "It stands to reason that if you believe that somebody is going to launch an attack on your country, either of a conventional kind or a terrorist kind, and you had a capacity to stop it and there was no alternative other than to use that capacity, then of course you would have to use it." In response, a spokesman for Indonesia's foreign ministry told ABC radio that Australia did not have the right to launch military strikes in other countries and warned that countries could not "flout international law and norms willy-nilly." The Thai government said no country should do anything like what Howard suggested. Each country has its own sovereignty that must be protected. And the Philippines National Security Adviser Roilo Golez said Howard's comments were completely unacceptable. "That's a very surprising statement, to say the least, in fact bordering on shocking," Golez said. "I can't believe that it would come from a supposed friendly country in the neighborhood. You are talking about a region with very strong government, the ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] region. This is the twenty-first century, not the nineteenth century."¹⁰

As a further manifestation of the reterritorializing effects of preemption and anti-terrorism after 9/11 on Asia Pacific, and as more evidence as well of the intertwining of economic and military globalization, on the basis of Howard's remark, Golez advised reconsidering the proposed anti-terrorism pact between Philippines and Australia, arguing that Howard's

preemptive policy could well result in an “assault” on the sovereignty of the Philippines. The Philippines foreign ministry issued a statement saying that Howard’s pronouncement revealed “hegemonic ambitions.” Nevertheless, President Arroyo dismissed Howard’s remarks as merely “hypothetical,” and used the occasion of that day’s press conference to instead ask for more Japanese aid in fighting the war on terrorism, noting “the yen is mightier than the sword.”¹¹ In the crisis regarding North Korea, we can see the recommended “shaping activities” well at work—the capitulation of the Roh administration in South Korea to a militant (rather than deliberative) stance toward the North, as recommended by the United States (Roh announced at his White House visit of spring 2003 that he had found a kindred spirit in George W. Bush, a striking departure from his earlier pronouncements made prior to the Iraq War); and Japan has joined South Korea and the United States in striking that stance. At the same time, the North has been all too happy to engage in a similar ratcheting-up of militant discourse and “preemptive” threats. The whole logic of preemption and attributions of “evil” (so as to make the targets of preemption more clear) has thus created an abysmal situation where the hoped-for resolution of terrorism—the erasure of “evil”—has in fact resulted in its opposite: the proliferation of reactive terrorism in the form of both increased nuclearization and terrorism.

In sum, the future of Asia Pacific is intimately tied to the future of the Middle East, both because of its strategic importance via the South China Sea and Indian Ocean, and because of the ideological after-effects of both 9/11 and the Iraq War on renegotiating and reshaping national, regional, and international policies. It is crucial to recognize this strategic link, and to recognize as well the specific dynamics of US hegemony in Asia Pacific. Having thus defined this link and explained the connection among anti-terrorism, regional remapping, and preemption, let us turn finally to the effects of these developments on Asia/America.

Consequences for Asia/America

First of all, the interstitial space between the United States and Asia Pacific has been deeply affected in the radical redefinition of US-Pacific

relations according to the logic of the discourse of terror and preemption. I am speaking of that space occupied variously by immigrant and diasporic subjects. For example, renegotiations of regional and international relations also provided the occasion for revisiting anti-terrorist policies in Europe and the United States that adversely affected Filipinos: At the anti-terrorism, pro-tourism conference, Arroyo asked Francis Taylor, US ambassador to the Philippines, for exemptions for Filipino-American security workers who would lose their jobs because of their lack of citizenship. Colin Powell was also pressed on Asian-American issues upon his announcement of the signing of the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement in the Philippines. He was tested on the question of US deportation of overseas Filipino workers, as well as the loss of jobs faced by Filipino Americans whose lack of citizenship made them ineligible to hold security jobs. And Philippines Foreign Undersecretary Delia Albert asked the European Union to remove the Philippines from its list of countries whose citizens have to undergo special screening before they are granted entry visas.

Within the United States, we can mention at least the effects of increased militarization on minority populations: in a country now primed for perpetual war in the never-ending effort to secure and preserve American military and economic dominance, we must recognize the racial composition of the US military. We must recognize as well the increased likelihood that the “domestic costs” of hegemony are now considered worth absorbing, at the profound cost to social services, health, and education. We should note as well the resurgence of xenophobia; the heightened surveillance of immigrant groups and dissidents, including the wiretapping of trans-Pacific communications; and the demands that universities and colleges screen international students and their activities. The renewal of what were supposed to be time-limited provisions of the Patriot Act, and its expansion in the Patriot Act II, pose fundamental threats to basic civil liberties and produce a particularly chilling effect on dissent, or even the expression of skepticism toward both specific and general government policies.

Under such conditions and imperatives, the logic of preemption has hijacked the imagining of the future—all imaginings of the future must now, it seems, be pegged toward the pragmatics of preservation,

protection against an unnamed and unnamable enemy. While no one would suggest that the historical context does not demand heightened awareness of new dangers and threats to not only the United States, but nations around the world, the idea of preemption masks the real issue—that of global dominance and strategic applications of “preemption.” You cannot engage the logic of preemption without hegemony. Thus, to secure and protect hegemony is promulgated as necessary to secure American lives, yet it is applied more precisely to secure American economic interests and to produce a particular map of the Middle East, of Asia, and of the world as a whole.

In this situation, it is essential for survival to imagine otherwise, to offer another logic to that of preemption. As a literary critic who deals with the power of rhetoric, I am especially interested in the immense power of story-telling. Against the narrative and political plots of preemption, we need to put forward critical counter-narratives. But to be convincing and compelling, they need to be founded on a firm recognition of history, rather than fantasies which actually are fictive pretexts for dominance and suppression. In this regard one cannot but be heartened by the resolution passed in 2003 by the Hawaiian state legislature, a resolution worth quoting in its entirety for its firm sense of history, and its laying bare the true cost of subscribing to the imperative of preemption.

THE SENATE

S.C.R. NO. 18

(www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2003/bills/scr18_.htm)

TWENTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE, 2003—STATE OF HAWAII



SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

reaffirming the State of Hawaii’s commitment
to civil liberties and the bill of rights.

WHEREAS, the Hawaii State Legislature is committed to upholding
the United States Constitution and its Bill of Rights, and the Hawaii
State Constitution and its Bill of Rights (Article I, Sections 1–22);
and

WHEREAS, the State of Hawaii has a distinguished history of safeguarding the freedoms of its residents; and

WHEREAS, the State of Hawaii is comprised of a diverse and multi-ethnic population, and has experienced first hand the value of immigration to the American way of life; and

WHEREAS, the residents of Hawaii during World War II experienced first hand the dangers of unbalanced pursuit of security without appropriate checks and balances for the protection of basic liberties; and

WHEREAS, the recent adoption of the USA Patriot Act and several executive orders may unconstitutionally authorize the federal government to infringe upon fundamental liberties in violation of due process, the right to privacy, the right to counsel, protection against unreasonable searches and seizures, and basic First Amendment freedoms, all of which are guaranteed by the Constitutions of Hawaii and the United States; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of Hawaii are concerned that the actions of the Attorney General of the United States and the United States Justice Department pose significant threats to Constitutional protections; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Twenty-Second Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2003, the House of Representatives concurring, that the State of Hawaii urges its Congressional delegation to work to repeal any sections of the USA Patriot Act or recent executive orders that limit or violate fundamental rights and liberties protected by the Constitutions of Hawaii and the United States; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that to the extent legally possible, no state resources—including law enforcement funds and educational administrative resources—may be used for unconstitutional activities, including but not limited to the following under the USA Patriot Act:

- (1) Monitoring political and religious gatherings exercising their First Amendment Rights;

- (2) Obtaining library records, bookstore records, and website activities without proper authorization and without notification;
- (3) Issuing subpoenas through the United States Attorney's Office without a court's approval or knowledge;
- (4) Requesting nonconsensual releases of student and faculty records from public schools and institutions of higher learning; and
- (5) Eavesdropping on confidential communications between lawyers and their clients.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to Hawaii's delegation in the United States Congress.

This resolution is a model for other states to follow; it is also a model for a kind of historical and activist thinking that seeks to make links between the present and the past that have been suppressed in the hegemonic narrative of history. Such thinking rallies against the onslaught of unbridled paranoia which fuels preemption, and weighs the costs of acting solely on the basis of what we are led to imagine.

The creative imaginings of cultural workers in Asia Pacific contribute as well to an alternate vision of what might or might not be the psychic, spiritual, material, embodied contents of "the Rim." Such imaginings, as in the work of writers such as Karen Tei Yamashita, Gary Pak, Lois Ann Yamanaka, and many others, map out historically sensitive alternatives to the vision dictated by US hegemonic interests. While they are at the same time not free-floating and independent of the decided effects of US domination, neither are they shackled absolutely to its logic and its predeterminations. Rather, in picturing Asia Pacific these days, it is equally important to recognize the presence of a global logic of dominance, and to imagine forcefully and persuasively another set of possibilities, a counter-logic that critiques and unmask the unilateral and calculated invention of the present and the future. The preservation of our country should not come at the cost of the liberties that are foundational to its very identity; the security of the world should not depend on surrendering truth, logic, and international law.

Here in Asia Pacific, we must imagine otherwise, along a different trajectory. This other mode of imagining the region and the globe is not ignorant or dismissive of the threats of terrorism, but it is wary of the narrowing of the future into a specifically motivated and closed system of hegemonic exercises. And it looks toward a future that has not been impoverished materially and spiritually by the “need” to preempt. It maps Asia Pacific in multiple and heterogeneous ways that reach out to a democratic future instead of retreating into a rehearsal of empire.



9

White Surfer Dude

Rob Wilson

. . . flowered wreaths pay homage to the statue of the surfer, his muscular figure beside a tall board—lord of the lighthouse, the perfect waves, and the fog creeping through the fallen cypress, pines and feathered grasses.

—Karen Tei Yamashita, “The Santa Cruz of Tofu”

Even karaoke can open up a haunted-mirror space of banality and trans-Pacific dreaming: whenever this Pacific Rim *flâneur* was in a karaoke club with cultural studies friends, say, in Seoul, Taipei, or (even) Honolulu during the transnationalizing 1990s, I was asked to sing (*compelled to enjoy*, as Žižek might say) the lyrics to that Mamas and Papas hymn to US west-coast bliss, “California Dreaming.”

California dreaming, on a winter’s day: It’s a hymn to post-Beat wanderlust and global homesickness (the longing for some kind of west-coast New Age church) which was only slightly less cloying than Jack Kerouac being forced to croon that other John Phillips-penned anthem to California-as-space-of-global-redemption, “If You’re Going to San Francisco, Be Sure to Wear Some Flowers in Your Hair.” They were hippie-era lyrics embarrassingly close to the historical becoming-dharmabum trajectories of this born-in Connect/I/cut life of Rob Wilson who had relocated his trope-quest life for Beatitude to Berkeley in 1967.

After some twenty-two years of working in Hawai‘i and year-long forays to teach in Korea, Massachusetts, Japan, and Taiwan, he did end up living again in California, dwelling in Santa Cruz beside the spectacular Pacific coast at Monterey Bay in Northern California, where the Pacific Ocean turbulence abides as a sublime space of transnational becoming and mongrel otherness even as mimed to the bad karaoke music of transnational/local surf culture.

The public statue honoring this local art and music here in Santa Cruz is not that of Duke Kahanamoku with his Hawaiian back turned



un-indigenously to the breakwater Pacific surf in Waikiki Beach; but this anonymous white surfer dude gazing, chock-a-block, like some oceanic astronaut launching heavenward along the millionaire terraces, joggers, and companionable dogs of West Cliff Drive in Santa Cruz. He (whatever his history of prior possession or will to embody a Santa Cruz local-poetics) holds his wooden long-board proudly erect, he dwells near eternity by this Pacific Ocean walkway and bike path. Maybe he looks small and humble by now, haunted in his frail muscles and language-less-ness by cultural lack, localness, secondary status white man becoming-Hawaiian along California dirt paths, becoming water being, born-again water-baby of Pacific Man immensity and California dog-town X coastal survival. Anonymous, alone, a local surf-poet claiming as his/hers this tagged and boarded space of stylistic renewal and the makings of a countercultural *contado* on the Pacific Rim, situationist de-touring suburban mission towns like Santa Cruz, Santa Barbara, Venice Beach. Turning the Pacific coastal space into youth culture, worlded world of oceanic poetry and homegrown sport.

It is a lot easier to dwell with this humble statue of Wes Reed, and go with the flowing lines of this modest poetics and frail white macho-claim upon eternity here, dwelling with/as this “white surfer dude” statue, than with the Native Hawaiian godhead statue of Duke Kahanamoku with his huge wooden long-board in Waikiki, to whom the white sand and lava beaches in Hawaii belonged for centuries before Captain Cook or Jack London with his James-Michener-becoming-US-statehood writing crew got here to take American landfall, to take dominion over the language and beachhead at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel and Outrigger Canoe Club.

Space and time shrunken into trans-global karaoke dialogue of half-forgotten show tunes and rock lyrics like “Sukiyaki” or “Jailhouse Rock,” there abides “on the beach” at Waikiki a statue of the Duke beckoning aloha before a white-immigrant settler citizen of Honolulu statehood to whom this tourist icon of surfing culture (or irony) stood as a white-colonial rebuke on [King David] Kaulakaua Avenue that was not his to name. This statue of the Duke suggested a way of commemorating the Hawaiian native culture and surf art that was, in effect, an artful American way of simulating/displacing the indigenous into an ex-primitive bronzed icon

of the global-tourist service industry in its movement from luxury liner days of the *SS Lurline* to mass jet travel to the Friendly Skies of United.

This statue of the Duke at Waikiki (dedicated in Honolulu in 1990 to honor the centennial of his birth) became a way of phasing out the native, honoring its disappearing presence, his “defeated sovereignty” as a duke (or as a king or queen), tourists cruising into Hulas Bar on Kuhio Street . . . say brah, who invented these karaoke tunes and bars to lap-top sex back alleys of Waikiki, as if the Duke were forever disappearing into some kind of duty-free zone for Elvis and Dennis Wilson and a host of surf-and-sex haunted tourists to flow in and out of the indigenous spaces and local pours of Bamboo Ridge with infinite yen and recycled Zen and lost-in-translation Suntory ads to the surf.

To put ten thousand flower leis upon the heavy bronze shoulders of the Duke, to strangle him with honor and sadness, like the statue of King Kamehameha getting strangled with a trillion rings of Hawaiian flowers on Lei Day or Aloha Day at the Honolulu courthouse across from ‘Iolani Palace, his one Hawaiian hand welcoming, his one royal Hawaiian hand holding out a spear to rebuke the plotting white citizens overthrowing the Hawaiian nation, to no avail.

But this statue of the Duke, it was not what I would take to be authentic Hawaiian art or a monument to an abiding native form or cultural-survival tactic coming down from haunted days of King Kalaniopuu on the Big Island (for whom surfing the ocean waves into land was a way of taking possession, showing *mana* as an entitlement and *mele* worthy of the place and the community and the gods). The Duke was a belated warrior-king poet of his own days, an Olympic swimming global/local hero rumored to have mated with Doris Duke, and to have lived on salmon, tuna, and onion sandwiches.

Diet of the white surfer dude: he moves from Twinkies, peanut butter, and Diet Cokes to alfalfa sprout sandwiches and Power Bars, ginseng ginger ale from Odwalla. “This beach is for locals only.” Signs are put up to enforce surfing protocols and brochures made to promote codes of politeness (“the Aloha Spirit”) on the waves of Santa Cruz beaches, to protect the waters from macho threat of “surf-turf Nazis.”





His presence as white-surfer dude statue standing watch over the sea is a way of signing and possessing, a quiet way of claiming this beach for local possession via bronze veneration, not too far from the Surf Museum at the Mark Abbott Memorial Lighthouse, which commemorates the long duration of trans-Pacific surfing as a history of criss-crossing customs, goods, ships, signs of culture moving across ocean from Hawaii to Santa Cruz, North Shore to Mavericks and Monterey Bay.

The white surfer dude native is not so much on the beach but above it, standing on the West Cliff dirt, evoking his quiet gaze like some eternal lifeguard, as if one of awestruck semi-goofy non-dominion.

Here the skinny surfer evinces a low-key worship of natural sublimity, admiring the trans-Pacific godhead of oceanic consciousness worthy of honoring, fearing, and respecting. Perhaps the tiny man gestures towards a more maternal counter-worlding of the US Pacific vision, whatever the sheer white-sentimentality of this liberal gaze, more at home in this town planted by the sea. (At least he is not Leland Stanford grinning over his railroad ranch lands, or a mission padre named Hidalgo with his foot on the neck of an Indio native at the San Francisco Civic Center, or the Union Square Monument to Admiral Dewey in 1898 taming ex-colonial natives in the Philippines for US imperial splendor.)

White surfer dude,
gazing off into his own karaoke surf music,
shutting off the war-machine heroics and elevator music
if only for the oceanic nonce
where sky meets the sea in Santa Cruz,
this place of holy crossings.

Afterword: Worlding as Future Tactic

Rob Wilson

... that's a thing, a thing world watches things, world, that's a thing, my negro suit has jew stripes, my yarmaka was lost in a flash flood, while I mattered with Navajos about peyote ... I need the Intelligent Woman's Guide to Mongrelism, I need Greenwich Village ... [We] demand statehood for North Beach. ...

—Bob Kaufman, “Second April”¹

If we were a true empire, we would currently preside over a much greater piece of the Earth's surface than we do. That's not the way we operate.

—Vice President Dick Cheney,
on whether the United States considers itself an empire.²

Globalization, and the taken-for-granted vision of global spaces and modes implied by that contemporary god-term of neo-liberal discourse, does not just belong to the imperial war-machine and end-of-history triumphalism called the United States of America, and what Hugo Chavez has christened (like a Situationist poet smelling the sulphurs of the Antichrist at the United Nations) its “world dictator” of a president. “Dawn is breaking out all over,” the Venezuelan president challenged this preemptive US imperium. “You can see it in Africa and Europe and Latin America and Oceania. I want to emphasize that optimistic vision [from the peoples of the South that are rising up against the Empire of neo-liberal globalization]. . . .” (Address to the United Nations, September 20, 2006)

The world of “world literature” and its changing disciplinary practices of transnational cultural studies are becoming “worlded” into alternative expression and public impact from disparate critical angles of vision,

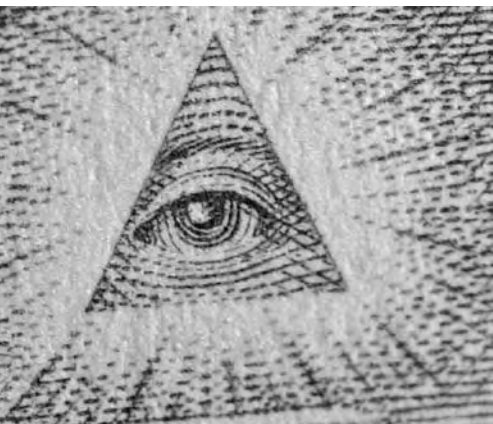


1. Bob Kaufman, *Solitudes Crowded With Loneliness* (New York: New Directions Press, 1965), pp. 66–68 and 83.

2. Even the *New York Times* was (seemingly) astounded by this simulated disavowal of US territorial and/or economic expansionism, and made it the mass media's “Quotation of the Day”: see www.nytimes.com/2004/01/25/international/europe/25DAVO.html.

3. Sister Gertrude Morgan, "I Got the New World in My View," *Let's Make a Record*, Preservation Hall CD recording, 2004: www.preservationhall.com

On her self-taught and multi-disciplinary visionary practices of "worlding" the City of God in a mongrel body of painting, sermon, poem, and song, see also *Tools of Her Ministry: The Art of Sister Gertrude Morgan* (New York: Rizzoli, 2004), ed. William A. Fagaly. In 2004, her work was on display for the first time at the American Folk Art Museum in New York City, traumatized site of "Ground Zero."



multiple frameworks surging across and from below, from social situations linked to the global South and sites like Oceania, Africa, and Inter-Asia, and new knowledge/power field practices that are as yet emerging, fluid, under-identified and coming into trope and (with Hugo the sublime) hope. As a very different preaching and wailing American named Sister Gertrude Morgan once put this creatural stress on the rise of such emergent practices, new powers, strange genres of oppositional language and counter-visions to any US Empire while she was working the preaching-and-teaching streets and tenements of New Orleans (ministering at home in what she termed the Southern "headquarters of sin"), "*I got the new world in my view.*"³ This fluid embrace of theo-poetics and an autopoiesis of the imagination (inside various social movements) can help break the spell of our dead-time globalization and help the world to re-present itself via an active, critical, and imaginative process of "worlding," as we aim to show in this collection and to sketch out in the introductory overview to this volume by Christopher Leigh Connery, and this concluding Afterword.

The trans-disciplinary pedagogy, transnational literacy, and multi-sited interventions gathered here from contributors in this *Worlding Project* collection from New Pacific Press work together to help envision, materialize, and shape into keener global/local expression exactly what such a differential, transnational, mongrel, and situated "worlding" project could do: moving out beyond the pomo-poco pieties and cant-capitalist formulations of neo-liberal redemption and professional surrender taking place in the humanities and social sciences, and doing situated practices of "worlding" cultural studies during the era of globalization. In other words, doing a transnationalized cultural studies that becomes situated within and against the bordered regimes and hegemonic discourses of US Empire, when the "worlding" regime of capitalist expansion, techno-media domination, and a kind of multi-mediated territorial liquidation work overtime to install a vision that operates otherwise from older modes of imperialism and outright colonization ("that's not the way we operate"). *Worlding* as a post-colonial critical practice will be posited against the reign of these available categories and reified modes of everyday media recognition called "the global" as such.

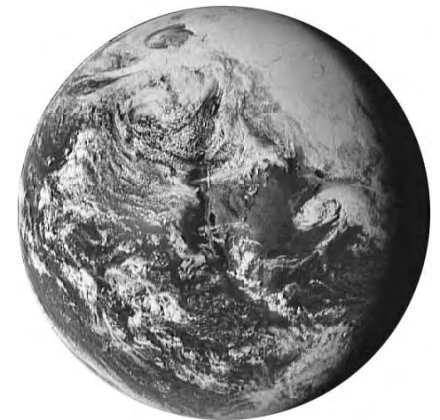
Worlding as such is not mere globalization, not so much “globaloney discourse” as a diverse historical process of world-formation and life-world building-up, as we hope to show here in this collection of cultural criticism. Such a collection, starting from this global/local position as a form and frame, necessarily reflects the specific location, history of California consciousness, and region-haunted trajectory of doing cultural studies at Santa Cruz, that theory-drenched place of myriad North/South linkages and Asia/Pacific “holy crossing” (*santa cruz*) on the coastal edge of the Pacific Rim. Here a world-prescient program in Cultural Studies has been thriving since 1988 (for more on this, see the history provided in the Introduction, “Worlded Pedagogy in Santa Cruz” by Christopher Connery). Working within and against the globalization regime as such and its myriad minions of what some language-writers would now debunk as so much pious “globaloney,”⁴ we aim here to prod, irritate, refigure, de-reify, and critique the US-led Empire of neo-liberal globalization and its huge security-state apparatus-cum-liberalist complacency with its disgraceful and brutal shock-and-awe war-machine that is spreading and vaunting into (seeming) global domination and *faux* legitimacy.⁵

Working inside and against the body of this ever-mutating global/local US beast, this war-machine of lies and ruses above the laws and modes of democracy or consent, we are moving towards creating different modes of *thinking and writing, studying, and teaching the world* against and inside this apparatus. Our goal is here a shared one of embodying emergent forms of theorizing, activating, and writing cultural poetics/geo-material politics, especially as situated perilously on the Asia/Pacific Rim cultural-political front. The hope is that we might help generate perchance (like William Carlos Williams writing near his “filthy Passaic River” in Paterson, New Jersey, or Jack Spicer in his line-of-flight bar of linguistic estrangement and queer-becoming in Cold War San Francisco’s post-hip North Beach) some “news that stays news,” tropes and turns changing some of the terms and frames.

Worlding, as we can only begin to sketch out here in these pages, implies a more fully culture-drenched and being-haunted process of “de-distancing” the ever-globalizing world of techno-domination and its

4. See tactics in the special issue of *Tripwire* Vol. 7 edited by Yedda Morrison and David Buuck on “Global/Local” writing practices, fall 2003; and, for example, the transnational labor poetics of Rodrigo Toscano in *Partisans* (Oakland: O Books, 2001) and *The Disparities* (Green Integer, 2002).

5. See the ongoing US military expansionism as outlined and lamented by Asia-area expert Chalmers Johnson in *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy and the End of the Republic* (New York: Henry Holt, 2003) and his no-less-prescient pre-9/11 analysis, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000). On the disastrous consequences of an Anglo-American-style economic regime gone perilously global and ideologically as well as socially deluded, see London School of Economics professor John Gray’s analysis *cum* conservative jeremiad, *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism* (New York: The New Press, 1998).



6. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, trans. by Joan Stambaugh (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), p. 97.

7. I thank David Hoy for his careful reading of my (wary) invocation of Heidegger's Germanic philosophy here, which he tracks as an attentive process of "turning-nouns-to-verbs" like "worlding" and "de-distancing." Like earlier mentors in the History of Consciousness program located in the University of California Santa Cruz's Humanities Division, David Hoy is taking this situated process of "building dwelling thinking" forward into emerging "new narrative" domains where global/local poetics and deconstructive philosophy can interact on center/periphery, cosmopolitical, and post-colonial scales. See David Couzens Hoy, *Critical Resistance: From Poststructuralism to Post-Critique* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004).

badly managed nuclearized standing-reserve. "Worlding," as an active-force gerund, would turn nouns (world) to verbs (worlding), thus shifting the taken-for-granted and normal life-forms of the market and war into the to-be-generated and remade. As such a *gerundive* process of situated-articulation and world-making, "worlding" thus would help deepen and show how modes and texts of contemporary being and uncanny world-ly dwelling (as in reading the language of first-world novels against the imperial grain, for that matter) can become a historical process of taking care, and setting limits, entering into, and making the world-horizon come near and become local and informed, situated, instantiated as an uneven/incomplete material process of *world-becoming*.⁶

Worlding—first taken as a kind of "de-distancing" in Heidegger's special semantic sense in postmodern ontology—here suggests *an active and vigilant critical as well as poetic constructivist process* of bringing what the German-Greco thinker calls the *thinging world* and *worlding world* of object-plurality, boundary-making, and the sheer multiplicity of a world nearer to grasp and giving language to (worlding being into presencing). But "worlding" as such at the same time entails a process of critically pushing to the horizon of consciousness and dwelling place those things, forces, instruments, signs, and objects that would threaten this building-up and renewing of the regenerative life-world and species being.⁷ We do not world the world empire of world literature, we would de-world and estrange its will to domination and subsumption.

Such "worlding" can thus become part of an active and vigilant process of post-colonial creation and resistance to global capital, as happens when in Gayatri Spivak's post-colonial and defamiliarizing invocation of "worlding" as a vigilant process of Third/First "world-making" (more on this below) she challenges the modes and mores of British empire as a culture and pedagogy of managed containment. In earlier contexts of modernist buildup and the very rise of techno-science into a dominant mode of knowing and using nature, Martin Heidegger first forged his postmodern philosophy of poetic language and place-based ontology and thereby attempted to counter the rise of techno-discourse and commoditized science that was instrumentalizing the planet into a standing-reserve fit for appropriation, profit, and use.

Playing upon the semantic presences and absences of the German language in which he could turn nouns like “world” (*Welt*) and “thing” (*Ding*) into fully gerundive verbs of boundary-making activity, such as “worlding world” and “thinging thing,” Heidegger thus turned the secreted metaphysical language of philosophy earthward into a kind of post-Romantic poetic prayer, wish, or care, a kind of ontological performative towards Being, as he tried to counter and still the ruthless Cold War drive to Earth-domination. “Stillness stills,” he paradoxically urged during the era of the Marshall Plan, and “What does it still? It stills Being into the coming of presence of world. May world in its worlding be the nearest of all nearing that nears, as it brings the truth of Being near to man’s essence.”⁸

To be sure, some might still find the very loaded Germanic semantics of this neo-Orphic phrasing and this hyper-ontology of presencing (*Anwesenheit*) quite dated now or even politically offensive and evasive (as did Theodor Adorno memorably enough) in its post-Romantic *poesis* (poetic-remaking, building up, dwelling at once) as some kind of bounded disclosure and a caring emplacement of self in world, region, language, and history. Still, Heidegger’s long-wrought and estranging attempt to forge, utter, and expose “*the worlding of the world*” as an active, man-made process of critical construction, horizon-making, and (as he puts it) world “bringing-near” suggests the very malleability, discursive framing, and the kind of potentially communal contestation of “a process of world-making over which the poet [no longer alone] presides.”⁹ That, in any event, would be our world-making gambit here.

Worlding needs to become a kind of trans-critical process of listening to and caring for one’s own life-world as well as the related and emergent species being of others—what Jack Spicer called (or relentlessly invoked in his poetry as) the (poetic) “Outside” world: a world outside the small self of the lyric that would disrupt and estrange the poem into alien recognition, un-languaged housing, and the fully disjunctive clash of experimental forms and sentences.¹⁰ That is to say, *worlding* can at the same time entail some kind of against-the-grain critical process of life-world estrangement and an everyday de-reifying, to use these active verbs, as well illustrated in Gayatri Spivak’s making strange of the British white women-subjects in the far-flung colonial gothic spac-

8. Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*, p. 49. Vigilant critiques of Heidegger’s onto-romanticism and political fallibility are presented in Theodor Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, trans. Knut Tarnowski and Frederic Will (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1973); Luce Irigaray, *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*, trans. Mary Beth Mader (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999); and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics*, trans. Chris Turner (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990). *The Worlding Project* remains vigilant of such colonial dangers.

9. Michael Groden, Martin Kreiswirth, and Imre Szeman, eds., *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*, second edition (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), p. 375.

10. A fully critical genealogy for the term is by no means offered here; I realize that it would take a much more historical analysis of “worlding” to make compelling sense as a reading tactic than I can now offer. I take critical hope from the Spicer-like insight of Ralph Waldo Emerson that, whatever the world-in-flux under US capitalist processes of creative destruction that are seemingly endless and eternal—unfixing everything under the sun, the pathetic self included—still, “the world is all outside: it has no inside.” See “Experience,” *Essays Second Series* (1844), *Emerson: Essays & Poems* (New York: Library of America, 1996), p. 481.

11. Gayatri Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1985): pp. 43–61.

12. Paul Bové, *Destructive Poetics: Heidegger and Modern American Poetry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980); see also Paul Bové, ed., *Early Postmodernism: Foundational Essays* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1995).

es and narrative trajectories of *Jane Eyre*, whose self-consolidation as white-feminist individual is contingent upon the abjection if not ruination of native subjects and peripheral spaces and modes: the "unhomely" worlding of a so-called Third World life-world into dependency and exploitation in the West Indies, the Congo, India, and Oceania then and now.

Gayatri Spivak's post-colonial approach to this "worlding" language and pedagogical stance of literary representation enacts a reading process of critical vigilance and "worlding" that works forward and inter-connects (near and far) by tying the eerie plantations of the West Indies and South Asia to the refinement of the British-empire teacup and those (seemingly) segregated metropolitan pleasures of consuming the domestic novel.¹¹ This is a mode of post-Vico cultural criticism that Paul Bové had called attention to and himself enacted as the worlding and clearing-out process of an American "*destructive poetics*," poesis as a beginning move towards de-creation/innovation, remembering the world forward as Kierkegaard put it, and life-renewal when (via such critical counter-vision and active poesis) "all things are become new."¹² But, more commonly speaking in the professions of literature and history, Spivak's essay gave "worlding" a critical currency in the emergent fields of post-colonial and diaspora studies across the 1980s and 1990s, which fast refigured "Third World" into something long linked to the dominant, managed, and the occluded: not *third worlds*, but *third spaces*, that came to be the rage for *post-colonial in-betweenness* in a banal, repetitive sense.

Such moves of poetics can help, each day and place, to undo and contest the taken-for-granted spaces, times, and subject-forms of globalization. For we live in a world of everyday globalization that Derrida has translated (debunkingly in his Capri dialogue with Vattimo on the "spectral" postmodern return of world religions and civilizational crusades) into a wholesale enlightenment process of "globalatinization" (French: *mondialatinisation*). By this neologism and defamiliarizing trope of globalization, Derrida would re-denominate, de-imperialize, and estrange the neo-liberal "worlding" of a post-European life-space more and more taking on the neo-American idiom of a market discourse that goes on

inscribing the everyday life-world into an oblivious empire of capital: a life-world lived and believed in via shock-and-awe spectacles of cinema, media panacea, cynical reason, cyber-software, and—in the final instance—war.¹³ Fetishism of these ever-spectral neo-liberal market forms often goes hand in hand with the death-of-God as a wholesale disappearance into commodity worship, all ratified daily as a benevolent displacement of enjoyment under the catastrophic flux of a “tele-technoscientific capitalism.” (*Religion*, p. 13) If “all reification is a forgetting of being” in its various modalities, spaces, and emergences, then we still do need the “worlding” potentiality and liquefying effect of “the aesthetic dimension” to fight against late-capitalist reification of history (to invoke Marcuse’s libidinal formulation) “by making the petrified world speak, sing, perhaps dance.”¹⁴

Haunted by rival fundamentalisms from Washington to Tehran and the reactive world wars of counterterrorism and terror as in a media shadow game with a text scrambled from the pages of Revelations, to be sure, such tenets are becoming the belief-system (the displaced religion) of a neo-global capitalism insinuating and ratifying itself (by globalizing its symbolic fantasies and misrecognitions) as the modes, values, and worlding practices of “everyday reality.”¹⁵ Haunted by trauma, class antagonism, racial exploitation, and symbolic lack, globalization as such is caught up in generating the huge global-local networks of a massive telematic feedback system of US sublimity, as if one day waking up from the cinematic modes of retro-history and spatial-disaster genres to discover (as if the morning news coming from afar) “the vengeance of the body proper against an expropriating and delocalizing tele-technoscience, identified with the globality of the market, with military-capitalistic hegemony, with the globalatinization of the European democratic model.” (*Religion*, p. 55) This bio-political power of a US-dominated Empire goes on moving the shock-and-awe effects from Rome and Baghdad to the bunker-down military sublimity of Washington, DC, and its tri-partite nexus of global cities linking the speculative excess-machine of New York City to the unsleeping dream-factories of Los Angeles.¹⁶ We would do better to listen to “John the Revelator” sung by Blind Willie Johnson than the lying and scheming scriptures of the so-called White House.

13. Jacques Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge: the Two Sources of ‘Religion’ at the Limits of Reason Alone,” in Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo, eds., *Religion* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 11 and 67. Further references to *Religion* will occur parenthetically. This *Séminaire de Capri* originally took place in Italy in 1994.

14. Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Towards a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), p. 73. Marcuse is evoking and reframing the grimmer formulations of the Frankfurt School as outlined in Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970), p. 230.

15. On the “belief before belief” of global capitalism as a symbolic-system of commodity fetishization instantiated antagonistically in everyday practices and US-global popular culture, see Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), p. 40.

16. On the tri-partite spatialization of US biopolitical power into “a cluster of new Romes: Washington (the bomb), New York (the money), and Los Angeles (ether),” see Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 347.

17. Martin Heidegger, “The Thing,” *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 165. UCSC Professor of Philosophy Albert Hofstadter first translated these influential essays on “the worlding world” of Heidegger’s counter-poetics from his being-gnarled German into English while working/dwelling in Santa Cruz, California. It was Hofstadter, among other founders like Norman O. Brown and Hayden White, who helped to give the History of Consciousness program at UCSC its abiding orientation toward theorizing “consciousness” as a critical process of historical, poetic, disciplinary, and linguistic formation.



18. On de-politicizing modes of capitalist affect becoming commonplace, see Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004). On the globalized technologization of the life world, see Rey Chow, *The Age of the World Target: Self-Referentiality in War, Theory, and Comparative Work* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

19. See Albert Hofstadter on the global reign of technological-enframing as an ontological forgetting of the world, as recuperated (to some extent) via a non-oblivious language he called, after World War II especially, “poetic thinking” or the being-place of “dwelling.” Introduction to *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. xv.

20. Slavoj Žižek invokes this “worlding” process as an ex-static language to counter the insufficiently bracketed sublation of capitalist humanity into virtual-reality as offered in the Wachowski brothers’ film, *The Matrix*, in *On Belief* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 53. See also Robert Pogue Harrison, *The Dominion of the Dead* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) for a quasi-Heideggerian and post-Vico way for the humanities to go on recalling, invoking, and dwelling with “the earth and its dead.” I benefit from Paul Bove’s spring 2006 University of Hong Kong lectures on the critical methods, tropes, and keen historicism of Vico as wielded to counter the knowledge and

If capitalist globalization would shrink world space and time, abolish distances and borders in an ongoing telematic subsumption via the US mediascape and war-machine apparatus that draws countries like the UK and Japan into its grasp, this “frantic abolition of all distances brings no nearness.”¹⁷ This we know in our everyday modes of insecurity, boredom, and stupefied sublimity at the shopping mall.¹⁸

To riff upon the counter-language and ontology-haunted cultural poetics of Heidegger, we might say that our own time of world-globalization is a destitute time, in which the man of capitalogic has all but forgotten the nature of being, the very worldly processes of “dwelling” or “building up” and “worlding.”¹⁹ Caring for the language of literature and the humanities in this oblivious time of Earth-forgetting, *Matrix*-interpellation, and shopping mall-being can become an ex-static way of attending to language as a “site of the historically determinate disclosure of the world-horizon as such.”²⁰ At a time when the US Secretary of State can cover up the ruins of Picasso’s fascist war and terror-haunted painting *Guernica* at the United Nations in February 2003 in order to forget history, cover up social reality with state lies, misrecognize virtue, and go headfast to global war in the preemptive name of the Pax Americana, we do need to remember, invoke, and intervene into such bad globalization and false localizations with counter-worldings. To be a patriotic American, it is not enough anymore to be an agoraphobic shopper, consuming terror and awe with the morning news that looks away from the truth and the damages of its global system.²¹

Against the domineering process of neo-liberal globalization at home and abroad, what we would hold out for here are some of the critical processes and poetic tactics of *worlding*, as we urge, building up a life-world palpably disclosing its lived-in modalities, boundaries, tactics, and historical processes of humanities survival and being-as-dwelling. “The world presences by worlding,” as Heidegger evoked so crypto-poetically in the being-soaked postwar lectures on technology and language like “Building Dwelling Thinking” (1951) and “The Thing” (1950). That is to say, we become capable of letting the thing become present and near (located) in its “thinging from out of the worlding world.”²² In the radically stitched-

together Heideggerean (*cum* Pauline) terms used by Žižek and Badiou to challenge the universalizing belief-system and reified materiality of global capitalism-cum-multiculturalism as a closed system, “Heidegger points the way out of this [global] predicament” by disclosing and activating a process of “being thrown” (*Geworfenheit*) into the world, “[being] never fully at home in it, always dislocated, ‘out of joint’” as a constitutive condition of lack, social formation, and symbolic-ideological contestation.²³ Worlding takes this “thrown-ness” into global capitalism and the neo-liberal imagination only as a starting point, a reifying orientation to contest: *to language* (as an active vigilant process of world-making) with a relentless and impious anti-modern scream (or some kind of Melvillean grimace in the world oceans)—saying, “No, that’s not the way we operate.”

At the same time, as has been suggested, the critical and deconstructive *worldliness* of this “worlding” process of reading the world needs to remain fully wary of any neo-colonialist or appropriative en-framing by the self. Such a process would represent the turning of the world into a standing reserve of domineering uses, sublimated appropriation, exploited labor, the will to dominate and extract from being and things some kind of gigantic (by now transnational) surplus value, excess enjoyment, and profit.²⁴ In the era of the Marshall Plan and the Cold War, Heidegger had presciently warned against the coming-to-global dominance of a space-shrinking and atom-bursting science he called “gigantism” and the pragmatic sublimity of world capitalism-cum-modernity he associates (as does Gramsci on “Fordism”) with “the catchword ‘Americanism’.”²⁵

This is the world we have been given to change, to contest, to bring forth as world, to “world the world” beyond death and market banality into a renewed presence and active becoming.²⁶ This world is the life-world many would now rather gloatingly denominate (both pro and con) by the neo-liberal catchword “Empire,” dictated with the stipulation that this empire on the American-nation-as-universal-model generates a huge “globalatinization” process fully worthy of world-wary critique and affirmative dismantlement.²⁷ The United States—the world’s most loved,

power mode of an imperium, his in Europe and ours in the USA entwined.

21. I play upon this formulation from my colleague, Earl Jackson, in the Literature Department at the University of California Santa Cruz who was critiquing Sophia Coppola’s much-lauded *Lost in Translation* as an “agoraphobic” symptom of the post-9/11 flight from Pacific Rim space into forms and modes of American innocence at home (Los Angeles) and abroad (Tokyo) in his talk on Korean cinema at the University of California Santa Cruz Cultural Studies Center, February 25, 2004.

22. Heidegger, “The Thing,” pp. 179 and 181.

23. Slavoj Žižek, *On Belief* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 8–9.

24. On the “en-framing” of the world into capitalist globalization as some kind of huge “standing reserve” of atomic energy and technological dominion over nature and place, see Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology” (1955) and “The Age of the World Picture” (1938), in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977).

25. Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture,” p. 135.

26. On good and creative-generating “en-counters” with such active energies of expansive becoming, rebirth, and the movement away from allegiance to deadly forces that would poison, intoxicate, depress, decompose, and break down the self, see Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), trans. Robert Hurley, pp. 100–104. I applaud Lindsay Waters’ relentless efforts to do battle against what he so aptly calls these “enemies of promise” that can take over with a nihilistic professionalism and empty historicism leading to more of the same: a world not worth making, or teaching to the young.

27. Paul Bové for one treats the “global blockbuster” that was Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s *Empire* as merely a “profession’s symptom” of an Americanized misreading of globalization, given the lie by events of 9/11 and the hugely anti-constitutional aftermath of the security-state apparatus: see his “Afterword: Can We Judge the Humanities By Their Future as a Course of Study?” in David Li, ed., *Globalization and the Humanities* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), pp. 273–284.

28. David Bander, “He [Dennis Miller] will go after anybody—except for Bush,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 5 February 2004: E13. We could here invoke Ridley Scott’s cautionary movie *Black Hawk Down* as a third-world entangled rejoinder to this US military dominion over the African periphery and the hubris of technoeuphoric dominion via “shock and awe” weaponry. (The aftermath to the war in Iraq offers rebuke enough.)

29. See Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), fn. 42, p. 269.

30. Relevant tactics here for transnational pedagogy and cultural studies would be Spivak’s keenly critical invocation of “render[ing] our home uncanny” via an “*unheimlich*” sense of ecological planetarity of worldiness and international community that goes beyond the merely liberal-humanist or nation-beholden sense of the global or worldly dwelling in the marketplace norms: see Gayatri Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), pp. 72–78.

31. See the canonization of this world-wary essay in Spivak, “Three Women’s Texts,” *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds. (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 269. At the World Social Forum in Mumbai,

hated, feared, and admired nation these post-9/11 days—has to negotiate this terrain of conflicted affect and phobic dominion as global superpower. “In short,” as CNBC right-wing talk show host Dennis Miller once quipped in banal admiration of this Bush-led regime of world order-cum-lyric ratification, “We’re Frank Sinatra.”²⁸ The world of our above-the-law thugs, however, is no laughing matter from Cuba to Afghanistan and South Central LA.

As Slavoj Žižek would remind us in his wild fusion of Lacanian lack with a Hitchcock-like cultural projection of eros and need into the cinematic apparatus of global mediation, we need to forge some transnegational tactics which can confront “worlding” as a counter-capitalist process of political becoming and democratic-socialist re-symbolization at the present time. In *Tarrying with the Negative* as later in his *On Belief*, Žižek invokes “Heidegger’s recurrent figure apropos of the ontological difference, namely the tautological verbalization of the substantive ‘worlding of the world,’ [since this worlding] designates precisely ‘world in its becoming,’ in its [political/symbolic] possibility, which is not to be conceived as a deficient mode of actuality.” Žižek would connect this “worlding of the world,” even under the hegemony of global capitalism, to the open possibility of forming and en-framing an ever-open mode of democratic-populist politics as symbolic identification, embracing the gaps and fissures of difference, desire, spectral haunting, openness, and lack. This is the open-ended situation as “epitomized, in the case of Rumania, by the hole in the center of the flag, previously occupied by the red star, the Communist symbol” or, say in this our Pacific Rim context of Empire, by an American flag with disappearing white stars/black holes. (In this collection, see the cautionary critique by Kuan-Hsing Chen on the trans/state of Taiwan becoming the “Club 51” of the US global world-order on the Pacific Rim.) Going against the grain of neo-liberal mystifications of globalization as some dream of “capitalism without capitalism,” Žižek fuses Marx and Hegel to Lacan to forge a poetics of critical negativity in the constitution of political identification, embracing the Master-Signifier as an open-ended *worlding process* of perpetual deferral, fantasy-fabrication, becoming and lack.²⁹

In a series of counter-global interventions and essays written against the de-regulating era of voodoo-Reaganomics and cultural Thatcherism, as mentioned above, Gayatri Spivak has relentlessly enacted what she called an anti-colonial “worlding,” articulated as a process of making palpable (via deconstructive estrangement and Marxist-feminist engagements in a vigilant process of counter-canonical reading) an object world and set of subject-forming literary dispositions full of lingering imperial traces. This mode of post-colonial “worlding” Spivak had keenly practiced, for one, in her counter-liberal readings of British Empire novels of canonical complacency like *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, *Foe*, and *Frankenstein*. In this collection, we would thus follow Spivak’s trans-disciplinary lead in trying to wrest “worlding” away from strictly Heideggerian uses and make it resonate across discrepant global/local contexts so as to challenge First World/Third World modes of reading and transnational interconnection.³⁰

Moving towards mapping a newly worlded pedagogy of “transnational literacy” based on this counter-worlding of the First World in her critique of post-colonial reason, Spivak warns exactly against ignoring the uneven and appropriative relations of transnational labor, urging “the ‘worlding’ of what is now called ‘the Third World.’” This sanctioned ignorance on the part of the critic can lead to yet another neo-literary GATT round of sublimated appropriation and will-to-superiority over the global environment by the religious fundamentalism of capital, textual blindness-cum-sublimity, and historical forgetting via a process that makes for “an [institutionalized] signifier that allows us to forget that ‘worlding,’ even as it expands the empire of the literary disciplines” into whole new subjects, areas, transnational linkages, readings, and texts.³¹

This tactic becomes part of the uneven “world” of post-colonial studies in the 1990s, as it spreads and proliferates into neo-oblivious canons, courses, panels, and other-absorbing anthologies and takes on some kind of neo-Commonwealth dominion. At least by now, the post-colonial aura has to deal with the uneven yet interconnected “worlding world” of global capitalism and the global political economy, coming to terms with how cultural-political otherness survives planetary exploitation and ecological depletion.³²

India, in January 2004, the WTO regimes and World Bank regimes are being relentlessly challenged in their assault upon bio-diversity and social damages near and far: see “No Boundaries in Fight Against Globalization,” *The Economic Times*: economictimes.indiatimes.com//articleshow/433456.cms.

32. See Arif Dirlik’s powerfully situated and discourse-shattering intervention into the US professionalization of “postcoloniality” (as in Homi Bhabha at Oxford, Chicago, and Harvard University’s English Department) as a way of ignoring or, better said, suavely occluding the global political economy, *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998).

33. Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Manners” from *Essays: Second Series* (1844), in *Emerson: Essays and Lectures* (New York: Library of America, 1996), p. 513.

34. On the phobic instability of such white sitings/citations of Pacific cannibalism, see Paul Lyons, “Lines of Fright: Fear, Perception and the ‘Seen’ of Cannibalism in Charles Wilkes’s *Narrative* and Melville’s *Typee*,” in Barbara Creed and Jeanette Hoorn, eds., *Body Trade: Captivity, Cannibalism and Colonialism in the Pacific* (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 131–138. See also Paul Lyons, *American Pacificism: Oceania in the U.S. Imagination* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005) for related forays against Michener-ism via a turn to the place-based and ocean-crossing reimagining of Oceania by indigenous peoples and their allies.

35. On the belated “Worlding of American Studies,” whereby the post-Cold War American studies comes to terms with occluded histories of imperialism at home and abroad, as well as emergent post-colonial challenges from border spaces and counter-indigenous sites, see the review-essay of that name by Rachel Adams, *American Quarterly* 53 (2001): 720–732. For an Asia-Pacific situated deformation of this nation-framed field, see also Rob Wilson, “Reframing Displacements in the US Pacific and Asia-Pacific Field Imaginary,” *Journal of Asian American Studies* 6 (June 2003): pp. 199–205. On related issues of disciplines and geopolitical imaginary of the US global, see Rob Wilson, Susan Gillman, and Kirsten Gruesz, eds., special “Worlding American Studies” issue of *Comparative American Studies*, Vol. 2 (2004).

36. Rock’s comment was circulated as an intervention into Bush 2 global politics on the international cultural studies website list coordinated by Professor Gill Rodman.

37. For a rejoinder to the implicit “Anglo-Globalism” of Franco Morretti’s over-extended, Euro-centered, and all too top-down model of “world literature” as a late capitalist center-periphery system of formal abstraction and local derivation where the center still disseminates the forms and rules, see Jonathan Arac’s helpful critique of this huge world-English tendency, “Anglo-Globalism,” *New Left Review* 16 (2002). More recently, Pascale Casanova’s “world republic of letters” would be an even more baleful example of a preposterously Euro-centered model of cultural production trying to look post-colonial and *au courant* while everywhere keeping Paris (and to a lesser extent London) at the translational center of the world’s cultural-capitalism and world literary system of uneven “consecration.” The skewered world of such a literary system reflects what Bob Dylan called, in an album of that name during the same era, a “world gone wrong.”

“Half the world, it is said, knows not how the other half live,” wrote Emerson in the expansionist decades when American empire was expanding its manifest destiny of global redemption into knowing (and by turns absorbing) the otherness of Texas, Canada, and Mexico and westward across Alta California and the Pacific Northwest territories of Oregon and Washington into the beckoning Asian and indigenous reaches of the Pacific, meaning in effect Hawaii, Guam, and the Philippines.³³ Emerson’s historical scene evoking the global etiquette of cultural otherness was drawn here in his essay on “Manners” from the US South Seas naval expedition commandeered by Charles Wilkes, who had just compiled a five-volume *Narrative* of this government-sponsored enterprise in 1845 and mapped the vast US Pacific for commercial, cultural, and military purposes. “Our Exploring Expedition saw the Feejee islanders getting their dinner off human bones; and they are said to eat their own wives and children,” Emerson avows, miming this Pacific contact scene of civilizational confrontation and manifest triumph.³⁴

Emerson’s America Pacific outreach-scene of global manners and linkage to cultural otherness (thus intruding upon Pacific localities of health and peace and inter-connection across “Oceania” via the blunt outreach of American governmentality) reeks of ethnographic de-realization, sublime over-extension in space and time, whereby long-standing white mythologies of savagery are once again given a man-eating Pacific-gothic twist. The phobic fetish-contagion of Fiji islanders terrorizing polite Euro-American white redeemers would now be replaced (in American mass-mediated worlds) by the chieftain hordes of Afghanistan or laboring drones of China, swarming across the border into Long Island Sound and San Francisco Bay.

The very “worlding of American Studies” as a field imaginary is founded in such scenes of global exceptionality and the virgin-land mythologies of redemptive innocence and democratic promise, quite early gone frightfully hemispheric and global. This process has only now, belatedly, begun to come to terms with its own world histories, racial phobias, and occluded forms of imperialism, hemispheric injustices, and the emergent tactics of border spaces and indigenous counter-nations.³⁵

If this is “utopia achieved,” as Baudrillard rather prematurely claimed of US primitive postmodernity in the Reagan era, the de-worlded world-order of this *bad new century* has a long way to go before counter-worlds are disclosed, evoked, brought into critical horizon, and allowed to co-exist.

Uneven, unjust, unholy, and everywhere coming undone in lines of de-creation, mockery, and flight, this globalization of “Anglo-global” banality and US market fundamentalism is by no means an accomplished fact, destiny, or fate, as if this world “globality” has been achieved, and world history has ended at the Anglo-global fusion culture of the shopping mall and the information super-highway.³⁷ “World news worlds the world,” an American cyber-poet living on the Pacific Rim has more caustically written, thus miming the synecdochic reduction of an American-view-of-the-world by mass media like CNN International or Time-Warner that gets all too commonly taken for the world as such. Postmodern resistance to such global stasis is not so much lost as stalled in translation.³⁸ Deferral is not enough in the face of such blundering US brutality and the ongoing dismantlement not just of pension plans and workers’ rights for the dispossessed “multitudes” of temporary labor; but, say, the top-down undoing of that vaunted American Constitution and Bill of Rights that Hardt and Negri took such (pre-9/11) comfort in as some kind of international norm governing and modelling for the whole world the modes and mores of “Empire.” That dream is over.³⁹

Awakening to the post-9/11 cause of imperial ratification-through-spectacle, Hollywood has taken upon itself the sublime task of regenerating spectacles of imperial fascism as re-functioned into genres of the neo-Roman (*Gladiator*) or even neo-Japanese (*The Last Samurai*) fetish.⁴⁰ Hollywood can tell the world its global spectacles of American history with a fully international cast and Rumanian setting (*Cold Mountain*), as if the US Civil War had nothing to do with the struggle for emancipation, and Afro-Americans remain ghostly shell-carriers and speechless cowards, as if Toni Morrison (or Margaret Mitchell for that matter) had never existed. The reign of the Anglo-global is coming perilously undone, day by day, even if the sulphur fumes rise and the ozone gets depleted in these planetary slums.⁴¹

38. See Magajeros, *Sailing to Ellis Island: Post-modern Poetry From National Tsing-Hua University* (Hsinchu, Taiwan: Magajeros Studio Press, 1997), p. 113.

39. For the post-9/11 dialectics of empire and the “multitudes” of resistance, see Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004).

40. Romantic spectacles can allow the awe-struck cinema-goer to keep attending these spectacles, even as the shifty power of the fetish covers up exploitation with fashion and sublimity, as well evidenced in the recent millennial drive to evermore romanticize imperial fascism in transnational epics of globalization like *Gladiator* and *The Last Samurai* if not in the post-capitalist Chinese foray into making its own global spectacle of Pacific Rim fascism, Zhang Yimou’s *Hero*. (See the essay by Rob Wilson in this collection on the global-US sublimity of *Gladiator* as a Pax Americana narrative.)

41. As of 1995, English was second to Chinese as the world’s most common native tongue, and the British linguist David Graddol projects that by 2050 Arabic, Hindi-Urdu, and Spanish will be equal to or surpass English as languages of global usage: see Randolph E. Schmid, “English Language Unlikely to Dominate the Globe, British Linguist Predicts,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, February 27, 2004: A-9. The imperial pretensions of American, British, and Chinese language claims to world dominance are debunked in the Jackie Chan and Owen Wilson movie of global carnival set in frontier Nevada and high-culture Victorian England in 1887, *Shanghai Knights* (2003). Even Hollywood is getting fed up with Hollywood genres of imperial nostalgia and frontier domination in Asia and the Pacific, or is it just getting postmodern tender and post-orientalist goofy as in a “Tokyo” life-world of fading romance and lost chances, *Lost in Translation?*

Drawing upon the nexus of global/local visions as well as the trans-Americas energies and activist modes of Santa Cruz and the left-coast San Francisco “contado” of Northern California, New Pacific Press plans to publish an array of uncanny works that will intervene in cultural production of the Pacific Rim as a fantasmatic region of global capitalism, and the counter-worlding and pidginizing strategies of mongrel poetics. The works aim to be cutting-edge in form and content, tied to contexts of emergent energies, and are intended to reflect the various left-leaning energies of Santa Cruz as a “borderlands” space of crossings and edges, as well as the Pacific Rim dynamism of California as a space of possibility, renewal, refusal, and promise. In the world of this *transcultural* Pacific Rim, local and global flows fuse and collide, as Santa Cruz here becomes a kind of cyborg-infested “mission” town of unholy theory-production and queered edges, reflecting and refracting *border-becoming-mongrel forces* as situated at the transnational edge of a counter-poetics to this US-global dispensation.

This work of poesis and activist imagination in, on, along, and across this new-made Pacific Rim continues: as the place-based imagining needs to be multiple, emergent, fraught with half-baked promises and muddled energies, becoming as necessary and real as a bioregional poetics of location, situation, body, site. To invoke the long-situated struggle to forge such a coalitional vision of a trans-Pacific writing community as embodied by Gary Snyder speaking to a San Francisco audience in the post-Beatnik *mappamundi* that is North Beach: “We live here still on the Western slope of the continent, on the Eastern coast of the Pacific, in a

vibrant political culture. We have kept our independence from the extremism of the current [or war-making Bush 2] administration. We need to continue to work to accomplish what they love to call ‘regime change.’ The work is not over.”⁴² Regime change begins at home (as rooted and routed in the everyday life-forms, to be sure), but we may never get to this end-time triumph or reign of hope and world renewal so long promised.

As a critical tactic of reverence-cum-resistance, “worlding” can be an active part of that *world-becoming process of renewal* and transformation, in sites we do labor within what Hesiod called our “works and days”: in the house, academy, disciplinary formation, workplace, the city, self, community, family, street, neighborhood hangout, machinic assemblage, bioregion and watershed, the body, the mass media, the lyric poem and cultural essay, the multi-worlding globe. As Jack Kerouac once reminded Bob Kaufman on a clear Bay Area day of mescaline revelations, blue skies, mongrel love-ins and worse, as this Beat SF poet of minor languages and Afro-Jewish lines of flight into “Beatitude” went on contending against the imperial pretensions and jail sentences of the United States contado during that neo-Roman period of the Cold War, “Walking on water wasn’t built in a day.”⁴³ The world of the Empire begins to wobble, and alternatives to that mode of being were not built in a day.

Worlding is still out there, in the world, in the words and pauses of the text, in the vacancy of atoms, in the consciousness and emptying of the will to beatitudes in the self, in a look or a stutter, in the seeming permanence of rocket ships, cyberspace, the lovely post-Jeremaic albums like *Modern Times*, and the stars which still beckon us out into the sublime.

Contributors

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