

## “The Imperial Imaginary”

By

Ella Shohat and Robert Stam

In *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*, 100-136. London, England: Routledge, 1994.

The colonial domination of indigenous peoples, the scientific and esthetic disciplining of nature through classificatory schemas, the capitalist appropriation of resources, and the imperialist ordering of the globe under a panoptical regime, all formed part of a massive world historical movement that reached its apogee at the beginning of the twentieth century. Indeed, it is most significant for our discussion that the beginnings of cinema coincided with the giddy heights of the imperial project, with an epoch where Europe held sway over vast tracts of alien territory and hosts of subjugated peoples. (Of all the celebrated "coincidences" -of the twin beginnings of cinema and psychoanalysis, cinema and nationalism, cinema and consumerism – it is this coincidence with the heights of imperialism that has been least explored.) Film was born at a moment when a poem such as Rudyard Kipling's "White Man's Burden" could be published, as it was in 1899, to celebrate the US acquisition of Cuba and the Philippines. The first Lumiere and Edison screenings in the 1890s closely followed the "scramble for Africa" which erupted in the late 1870s; the Battle of "Rorke's Drift" (1879) which opposed the British to the Zulus (memorialized in the film *Zulu*, 1964); the British occupation of Egypt in 1882; the Berlin Conference of 1884 which carved up Africa into European "spheres of influence"; the massacre of the Sioux at Wounded Knee in 1890; and countless other imperial misadventures.

The most prolific film-producing countries of the silent period—Britain, France, the US, Germany—also "happened" to be among the leading imperialist countries, in whose clear interest it was to laud the colonial enterprise. The cinema emerged exactly at the point when enthusiasm for the imperial project was spreading beyond the elites into the popular strata, partly thanks to popular fictions and exhibitions. For the working classes of Europe and Euro-America, photogenic wars in remote parts of the empire became diverting entertainments, serving to "neutralize the class struggle and transform class solidarity into national and racial solidarity. The cinema adopted the popular fictions of colonialist writers like Kipling for India and Rider Haggard, Edgar Wallace and Edgar Rice Burroughs for Africa, and absorbed popular genres like the "conquest fiction" of the American southwest. The cinema entered a situation where European and American readers had already devoured Livingstone's *Missionary Travels* (1857); Edgar Wallace's "Sanders of the River" stories in the early 1900s; Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885); and Henry Morton Stanley's *How I Found Livingstone* (1872), *Through the Dark Continent* (1878), and *In Darkest Africa* (1890).

English boys especially were initiated into imperial ideals through such books as Robert Baden-Powell's *Scouting for Boys* (1908), which praised:

the frontiersmen of all parts of our Empire. The "trappers" of North America, hunters of Central Africa, the British pioneers, explorers, and missionaries over Asia and all the wild parts of the world ... the constabulary of North-West Canada and of South Africa.

The practical survivalist education of scouting, combined with the initiatory mechanisms of the

colonial adventure story, were designed to turn boys, as Joseph Bristow puts it, into "aggrandized subjects," an imperial race who imagined the future of the world as resting on their shoulders. While girls were domesticated as homemakers, without what Virginia Woolf called a "room of their own," boys could play, if only in their imaginations, in the space of empire. The fantasy of far-away regions offered "charismatic realms of adventure" free from charged heterosexual engagements. Adventure films, and the "adventure" of going to the cinema, provided a vicarious experience of passionate fraternity, a playing field for the self-realization of European masculinity. Just as colonized space was available to empire, and colonial landscapes were available to imperial cinema, so was this psychic space available for the play of the virile spectatorial imagination as a kind of mental *Lebensraum*. Empire, as John McClure puts it in another context, provided romance with its raw materials, while romance provided empire with its "aura of nobility."

### THE SHAPING OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

Beliefs about the origins and evolution of nations often crystallize in the form of stories. For Hayden White, certain narrative "master tropes" shape our conception of history; historical discourse consists "of the provisions of a plot structure for a sequence of events so that their nature as a comprehensible process is revealed by their figuration as a story of a particular kind." The nation of course is not a desiring person but a fictive unity imposed on an aggregate of individuals, yet national histories are presented as if they displayed the continuity of the subject writ-large. The cinema, as the world's storyteller *par excellence*, was ideally suited to relay the projected narratives of nations and empires. National self-consciousness, generally seen as a precondition for nationhood—that is, the shared belief of disparate individuals that they share common origins, status, location, and aspirations—became broadly linked to cinematic fictions. In the modern period, for Benedict Anderson, this collective consciousness was made possible by a common language and its expression in "print capitalism's." Prior to the cinema, the novel and the newspaper fostered imagined communities through their integrative relations to time and space. Newspapers—like TV news today—made people aware of the simultaneity and interconnectedness of events in different places, while novels provided a sense of the purposeful movement through time of fictional entities bound together in a narrative whole. As "bourgeois epic" (in the words of Georg Lukacs), the novel inherited and transformed the vocation of the classical epic (for example *The Aeneid*) to produce and heighten national identity, both accompanying and crystallizing the rise of nations by imposing a unitary topos on heterogeneous languages and diverse desires.

The fiction film also inherited the social role of the nineteenth-century realist novel in relation to national imaginaries. Like novels, films proceed temporally, their durational scope reaching from a story time ranging from the few minutes depicted by the first Lumiere shorts to the many hours (and symbolic millennia) of films like *Intolerance* (1916) and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). Films communicate Anderson's "calendrical time," a sense of time and its passage. Just as nationalist literary fictions inscribe on to a multitude of events the notion of a linear, comprehensible destiny, so films arrange events and actions in a temporal narrative that moves toward fulfillment, and thus shape thinking about historical time and national history. Narrative models in film are not simply reflective microcosms of historical processes, then, they are also experiential grids or templates through which history can be written and national identity figured. Like novels, films can convey what Mikhail Bakhtin calls "chronotopes," materializing time in space, mediating between the historical and the discursive, providing fictional environments where historically specific constellations of power are made visible. In both film

and novel, "time thickens, takes on flesh," while "space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. There is nothing inherently sinister in this process, except to the extent that it is deployed asymmetrically, to the advantage of some national and racial imagi-naries and to the detriment of others.

The national situation described by Anderson becomes complicated, we would argue, in the context of an imperial ideology that was doubly transnational. First, Europeans were encouraged to identify not only with single European nations but also with the racial solidarity implied by the imperial project as a whole. Thus English audiences could identify with the heroes of French Foreign Legion films, Euro-American audiences with the heroes of the British Raj, and so forth. Second, the European empires (what Queen Victoria called the "imperial family") were themselves conceived paternalistically as providing a "shelter" for diverse races and groups, thus downplaying the national singularities of the colonized themselves. Given the geographically discontinuous nature of empire, cinema helped cement both a national and an imperial sense of belonging among many disparate peoples. For the urban elite of the colonized lands, the pleasures of cinema-going became associated with the sense of a community on the mar-gins of its particular European empire (especially since the first movie theaters in these countries were associated with Europeans and the Europeanized local bourgeoisies). The cinema encouraged an assimilated elite to identify with "its" empire and thus against other colonized peoples.

If cinema partly inherited the function of the novel, it also transformed it. Whereas literature plays itself out within a virtual lexical space, the cinematic chronotope is literal, splayed out concretely across the screen and unfolding in the literal time of twenty-four frames per second. In this sense, the cinema can all the more efficiently mobilize desire in ways responsive to nationalized and imperi-alized notions of time, plot, and history. The cinema's institutional ritual of gathering a community—spectators who share a region, language, and culture -homologizes, in a sense, the symbolic gathering of the nation. Anderson's sense of the nation as "horizontal comradeship" evokes the movie audience as a provisional "nation" forged by spectatorship. While the novel is consumed in solitude, the film is enjoyed in a gregarious space, where the ephemeral *communitas* of spectatorship can take on a national or imperial thrust. Thus the cinema can play a more assertive role in fostering group identities. Finally, unlike the novel, the cinema is not premised on literacy. As a popular entertainment it is more accessible than literature. While there was no mass reading public for imperial literary fictions in the colonies, for example, there *was* a mass viewing public for imperial filmic fictions.

The dominant European/American form of cinema not only inherited and disseminated a hegemonic colonial discourse, it also created a powerful hegemony of its own through monopolistic control of film distribution and exhibition in much of Asia, Africa, and the Americas. Euro-colonial cinema thus mapped history not only for domestic audiences but also for the world. African spectators were prodded to identify with Cecil Rhodes and Stanley and Livingstone against Africans themselves, thus engendering a battle of national imaginaries within the fissured colonial spectator. For the European spectator, the cinematic experience mobilized a rewarding sense of national and imperial belonging, on the backs, as it were, of otherized peoples. For the colonized, the cinema (in tandem with other colonial institutions such as schools) produced a sense of deep ambivalence, mingling the identification provoked by cinematic narrative with intense resentment, for it was the colonized who were being otherized.

While the novel could play with words and narrative to engender an "aggrandized subject," the cinema entailed a new and powerful apparatus of gaze. The cinematic "apparatus,"

that is to say the cinematic machine as including not only the instrumental base of camera, projector, and screen but also the spectator as the desiring subject on whom the cinematic institution depends for its imaginary realization, not only represents the "real" but also stimulates intense "subject effects." For Christian Metz, the cinematic apparatus fosters narcissism, in that the spectator identifies with him/herself as a "kind of transcendental subject." By prosthetically extending human perception, the apparatus grants the spectator the illusory ubiquity of the "all-perceiving subject" enjoying an exhilarating sense of visual power. From the Diorama, the Panorama, and the Cosmorama up through Nature Max, the cinema has amplified and mobilized the virtual gaze of photography, bringing past into present, distant to near. It has offered the spectator a mediated relationship with imaged others from diverse cultures. We are not suggesting that imperialism was inscribed either in the apparatus or in the celluloid, only that the context of imperial power shaped the uses to which both apparatus and celluloid were put. In an imperial context the apparatus tended to be deployed in ways flattering to the imperial subject as superior and invulnerable observer, as what Mary Louise Pratt calls the "monarch-of-all-I-survey." The cinema's ability to "fly" spectators around the globe gave them a subject position as film's audio-visual masters. The "spatially -mobilized visuality" of the I/eye of empire spiraled outward around the globe, creating a visceral, kinetic sense of imperial travel and conquest, transforming European spectators into armchair conquistadors, affirming their sense of power while turning the colonies into spectacle for the metropole's voyeuristic gaze.

#### CINEMA AS SCIENCE AND SPECTACLE

If the culture of empire authorized the pleasure of seizing ephemeral glimpses of its "margins" through travel and tourism, the nineteenth-century invention of the photographic and later the cinematographic camera made it possible to record such glimpses. Rather than remaining confined to its European home, the camera set out to "explore" new geographical, ethnographic, and archeological territories. It visited natural and human "wonders" (the Nile, the Taj Mahal) and unearthed buried civilizations (the excavations in Nubia), imbuing every sight with the wide-eyed freshness of the new machine. Yet the pioneers of the recorded image rarely questioned the constellation of power relations that allowed them to represent other lands and cultures. No one questioned how Egyptian land, history, and culture should be represented, for example, or asked what Egyptian people might have to say about the matter. Thus photographers making the grand oriental tour might record their own subjective visions, but in doing so they also drew clear boundaries between the subject looking and the object being looked at, between traveler and "traveled upon." Photographers such as George Bridges, Louis de Clercq, Maxime du Camp and filmmakers like Thomas Edison and the Lumiere brothers did not simply document other territories; they also documented the cultural baggage they carried with them. Their subjective interpretations were deeply embedded in the discourses of their respective European empires.

The excitement generated by the camera's capacity to register the formal qualities of movement reverberated with the full-steam-ahead expansionism of imperialism itself. The camera was hired out to document the tentacular extensions of empire. Photographers and filmmakers were especially attracted to trains and ships, engines of empire that delivered raw materials from the interiors of Asia, Africa, and the Americas into the heart of Europe. Robert Howlett's photographs for the London *Times* of "The Bow of the Great Eastern" (1857) not only foreshadowed subsequent homages to the futurist esthetics of the machine, but also documented the construction of an unprecedentedly large ship as a matter of national pride and a confirmation of British supremacy at sea. The work of early photographers such as Felix Teynard, Maxime du Camp, Edouard-Denis Baldus, John Beasley Green, Louis de Clercq, and John Murray was

supported, published, and exhibited by diverse imperial institutions. De Clercq, for example, was invited to accompany the historian Emmanuel-Guillaume Rey on a French government-sponsored expedition of 1859 to the Crusader castles of Syria and Asia Minor, a trip that generated the six volumes of *Voyage en Orient, Villes, Monuments, et Vues Pittoresques de Syrie*, along with the collection of historical artifacts now housed in the Oriental Antiquities Department of the Louvre. And Murray served in the East India Company army, where, like many Englishmen in India, he took up photography as a hobby. His work, first exhibited in London in 1857 during the "Indian Mutiny," was encouraged by the Governor-General of India, Lord Earl Canning, the same governor who suppressed the uprising and who, together with his wife Lady Charlotte Canning, was a major patron of photography in India.

Travel photographers did not just document territories for military and governmental purposes, their photos also registered the advances of scientific activities, for example the archeological excavations of Greece and Egypt. Fascination with ancient monuments was mingled with admiration for the camera's capacity to provide a vivid sense of distant regions and remote times: a photo in Du Camp's album *Egypte, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie* (1852) - "Westernmost Colossus of the temple of Re, Abu Simbel, 1850" - shows the photographer's assistant atop the crown of Ramses II, illustrating both relative scale and a moment of mastery and possession. If bourgeois travelers cherished photographic moments of their own exploring - as in Du Camp's photo of Flaubert in Cairo in 1850 - the colonized had to bear the weight of a generic ethnographic gaze, as in the anonymous photograph "Women Grinding Paint, Calcutta, 1854." The camera also played a botanical and zoological role by documenting exotic fauna and flora. Louis Pierre Theophile Dubois de Nehant's "Another Impossible Task" (1854) shows the elephant "Miss Betsy," imported from India, in the Brussels Zoo, while Count de Motizon's photo (1852) captures Londoners admiring a hippopotamus captured on the banks of the White Nile. More than a servile scribe, the camera actively popularized imperial imagery, turning it into an exciting participatory activity for those in the motherland.

The social origins of the cinema were schizophrenic, traceable both to the "high" culture of science and literature and to the "low" culture of sideshows and nickelodeons. (At times the two cultures coalesced: the flying balloon in *Around the World in 80 Days*, designed to circle the world, is also the object of spectacle for enthusiastic Parisians.) The desire to expand the frontiers of science became inextricably linked to the desire to expand the frontiers of empire. The immediate origins of the cinema in Western science meant that filmic exhibition also entailed the exhibition of Western triumphs. The visible achievements of both cinema and science also graced the proliferating world fairs, which since the mid-nineteenth century had become the new "international" showplaces for the spectacular fruits of industrial and scientific progress.

*Plates 15 and 16 Global ubiquity: Around the World in 80 Days and Simba: King of the Beasts*

The visualist inclinations of Western anthropological discourse prepared the way for the cinematographic representation of other territories and cultures. The "ontologically" kinetic status of the moving image privileged the cinema not only over the written word but over still

photography as well. It lent indexical credibility to anthropology, arming it with visual evidence not only of the existence of "others" but also of their actually existing otherness. Cinema in this sense prolonged the museological project of gathering three-dimensional archeo-logical, ethnographic, botanical, and zoological objects in the metropolis. Unlike the more auratic and "inaccessible" elite arts and sciences, a popularizing cinema could plunge spectators into the midst of non-European worlds, letting them see and feel "strange" civilizations. It could transform the obscure *mappa mundi* into a familiar, knowable world.

Photography and the cinema represented alien topographies and cultures as aberrant in relation to Europe. Operating on a continuum with zoology, anthropology, botany, entomology, biology, and medicine, the camera, like the microscope, anatomized the "other." The new visual apparatuses demonstrated the power of science to display and even decipher otherized cultures; dissection and montage together constructed a presumably holistic portrait of the colonized. Technological inventions, in other words, mapped the globe as a disciplinary space of knowledge. Topographies were documented for purposes of military and economic control, often on the literal backs of the "natives" who carried the cinematographers and their equipment. In the colonial context, the common trope of the "camera gun" (Marey's "fusil cinematographique") resonated with the aggressive use of the camera by the agents of the colonial powers. "Primitive" peoples were turned into the objects of quasi-sadistic experimentation. This kind of aggression reached a paroxysm in the 1920s films of Martin and Osa Johnson, where the filmmakers gleefully prodded Pygmies, whom they called "monkeys" and "niggers," to get sick on European cigars. In films such as *Trailing African Wild Animals* (1922) and *Simba* (1927), the Johnsons treated African peoples as a form of wildlife. The camera penetrated a foreign and familiar zone like a predator, seizing its "loot" of images as raw material to be reworked in the "motherland" and sold to sensation-hungry spectators and consumers, a process later fictionalized in *King Kong* (1933). There was no clue, in such films, as to how Europeans depended for their everyday survival in the field on the knowledge, intelligence, labor, and the "enforced subordination of people the white folk insisted on seeing as perpetual children."

If cinema itself traced its parentage to popular sideshows and fairs, ethno-graphic cinema and Hollywood-ean ethnography were the heirs of a tradition of exhibitions of "real" human objects, a tradition going back to Columbus' importation of "New World" natives to Europe for purposes of courtly enter-tainment. Exhibitions organized the world as a spectacle within an obsessively mimetic esthetic. In the US, at a time roughly coincident with the beginnings of cinema, a series of fairs - the Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1893, the Omaha Trans-Mississippi Exposition in 1898, the Buffalo Pan-American Exposit-ion in 1901, the St Louis "Louisiana Purchase" Exposition in 1904 - introduced millions of fairgoers to evolutionary ideas about race in an atmosphere of communal good cheer. The Chicago Columbian Exposition spatialized racial hierarchies in a quasi-didactic fashion by having the Teutonic exhibits placed closest to the "White City," with the "Mohammedan world" and the "savage races" at the opposite end. Racism and "entertainment," as Robert W. Rydell points out, became closely intertwined. The Omaha fair featured an exhibit on "the Vanquished Races," and in the Atlanta Exposition the Sioux were obliged to reenact their own defeat and humiliation at Wounded Knee. The Louisiana Purchase Exposition included a Filipino exhibit that made the Pacific Islands seem as much a part of "manifest destiny" as the conquest of the west. Such expositions gave utopian form to White supremacist ideology, legitimizing racial hierarchies abroad and muting class and gender divisions among Whites at home by stressing national agency in a global project of domination.

Africans and Asians were exhibited as human figures with kinship to specific animal species, thus literalizing the colonialist zeugma yoking "native" and "animal," the very fact of exhibition in cages implying that the cages' occupants were less than human. Lapps, Nubians, and Ethiopians were displayed in Germany in anthropological-zoological exhibits. The conjunction of "Darwin-ism, Barnumism [and] pure and simple racism" resulted in the exhibition of Ota Benga, a Pygmy from the Kasai region, alongside the animals in the Bronx Zoo. A precursor to Epcott's global village, the 1894 Antwerp World's Fair featured a reconstructed Congolese village with sixteen "authentic" villagers. In many cases the people exhibited died or fell seriously ill. "Freak shows" too paraded before the West's bemused eye a variety of "exotic" pathologies. Saartjie Baartman, the "Hottentot Venus" was displayed on the entertainment circuit in England and France. Although her protrusive buttocks constituted the main attraction, the rumored peculiarities of her genitalia also drew crowds, with her racial/sexual "anomaly" constantly being associated with animality. The zoologist and anatomist George Cuvier studied her intimately and presumably dispassionately, and compared her buttocks to those of "female mandrills, baboons ... which assume at certain epochs of their life a truly monstrous development." After Baartman's death at the age of twenty-five, Cuvier received official permission for an even closer look at her private parts, and dissected her to produce a detailed description of her body inside out. Her genitalia still rest on a shelf in the Musee de l'Homme in Paris alongside the genitalia of "une negresse" and "une peruvienne" as monuments to a kind of imperial necrophilia. The final placement of the female parts in the patriarchally designated "Museum of Man" provides a crowning irony.

As the product of both science and mass culture, cinema combined traveling knowledge with traveling spectacles, conveying a view of the "world itself as an exhibition." The study of a hypersexualized "other" in scientific discourse was paralleled by the cinema's scopophilic display of aliens as spectacle. Hollywood productions abounded in "exotic" images of moving native bodies, at times incorporating actual travelogs dug up from the archives, deployed in such films as the *Tarzan* series. Thus in a "double standard" erotics, the Production Code of the Motion Picture Producers and Directors of America, Inc, 1930-4, which censored Jane's two-piece outfit into one in later *Tarzan* films, left intact the naked African women in the background, evoking a *National Geographic*-style prurient delight in unilateral native nudity. The portrayal of dance rituals in such films as *The Dance of Fatima* (1903), *The Sheik* (1921), *Bird of Paradise* (1932), and *Sanders of the River* (1935) displayed alien flesh to hint at the masculinist pleasures of exploration. Hiding behind a respectable fig leaf of "science" and "authenticity," ethnographic films focused directly on the bouncing breasts of dancing women. Hollywood films, under the surveillance of domestic moral majorities, relegated native nudity to the background or restricted the imagery to minimal "native" garb. Formulaic scenes of dark frenzied bodies entranced by accelerating drum rhythms relayed a fetishized image of indigenous religions. Ceremonial possession (portrayed as a kind of mass hysteria) evoked the uncontrollable id of libidinous beings. Ethnographic science, then, provided a cover for the unleashing of pornographic impulses. The cinematic exposure of the dark body nourished spectatorial desire, while marking off imaginary boundaries between "self" and "other," thus mapping homologous spheres, both macro-cosmic (the globe) and microcosmic (the sphere of carnal knowledge).

#### PROJECTING THE EMPIRE

The cinema combined narrative and spectacle to tell the story of colonialism from the colonizer's perspective. From the Lumiere brothers' mocking portrayals of the culinary habits of North

Africans in *Le Musulman Rigolo* (The Funny Muslim, 1902), through the adventure tales of *Tarzan*, to the Westerner-in-the-pot cannibal imagery of the 1980s version of *King Solomon's Mines* and the scientific missions of *Indiana Jones* (1981, 1984, 1989), dominant cinema has spoken for the "winners" of history, in films which idealized the colonial enterprise as a philanthropic "civilizing mission" motivated by a desire to push back the frontiers of ignorance, disease, and tyranny. Programmatically negative portrayals helped rationalize the human costs of the imperial enterprise. Thus Africa was imaged as a land inhabited by cannibals in the Ernst Lubin comedy *Rastus in Zululand* (1910), Mexicans were reduced to "greasers" and "bandidos" in films like *Tony the Greaser* (1911) and *The Greaser's Revenge* (1914), and Native Americans were portrayed as savage marauders in *Fighting Blood* (1911) and *The Last of the Mohicans* (1920).

Each imperial filmmaking country had its own imperial genres set in "darkest Africa," the "mysterious East," and the "stormy Caribbean." It was in this imperializing spirit that Thomas Alva Edison staged battles against Filipino guerillas in the fields of New Jersey (with Blacks standing in for the Filipinos) and that J. Stuart Blackton staged the Spanish-American war using scale-model battleships in local bathtubs. Indeed, many of the early American one-reelers, such as *Cuban Ambush* (1898), *Roosevelt's Rough Riders* (1898), *Troop Ships for the Philippines* (1898), and *Landing of U.S. Troops near Santiago* (1902), glorified the imperialist binge in the Caribbean and the Philippines. Even filmmakers not conventionally associated with lauding imperialism betray a shared discourse of empire. Georges Melies' filmography, for example, features a number of films related to expansionist voyages and orientalist fantasies: *Le Fakir - Mystere Indien* (1896), *Vente d'Esclaves au Harem* (1897), *Cleopatre* (1899), *La Vengeance de Bouddah* (1901), *Les Aventures de Robinson Crusoe* (1902), *Le Palais des Mille et une Nuits* (1905). Similarly, in Melies' *Le Voyage dans la Lune* (A Trip to the Moon, 1902; based on Verne's *From the Earth to the Moon*, 1865), the rocket's phallic penetration of the moon (the space frontier) recapitulates, on another level, the historical discourse of the other (imperial) "frontier." ("I would annex the planets if I could," Cecil Rhodes often said.) The film is structured like a colonial captivity narrative: spear-carrying skeleton creatures burst from the moon's simulacral jungle and capture the explorers, only to be defeated by the male explorers' gun-like umbrellas, which magically eliminate the savage creatures. Such a film, not in any obvious sense "about" colonialism, can thus be read as analogizing imperial expansion.

Many American films, for example *Beau Geste* (1939), filmed in Arizona but set in Morocco, praised the work of their imperial confreres in the French Foreign Legion. Between 1911 and 1962, France itself made over 200 feature films set in North Africa, many of them memorializing the exploits of the Legion against native rebels.<sup>32</sup> But the British especially became masters of the imperial epic, as in the Korda trilogy *Sanders of the River* (1935), *Drums* (1938), and *The Four Feathers* (1939) and in the films produced by Michael Balcon: *Rhodes of Africa* (1936), *The Great Barrier* (1936), and *King Solomon's Mines* (1937). At a time when roughly one-fourth of the human race lived under British rule, many films preferred a nostalgic look back at the "pioneering" days of "exploration" to a frontal examination of the quotidian brutality of latter-day imperialism.

Cedric Hardwicke as Livingstone conducting an African choir in "Onward Christian Soldiers" in *David Livingstone* (1936), Cecil Rhodes planning the Cape-to-Cairo railway before a map of Africa in *Rhodes of Africa*, Reginald Denny laying down imperial law to a native ruler in *Escape to Burma* (1955), Tarzan performing deeds of valor in the imperial service; such are the filmic epiphanies of empire. What Jeffrey Richards describes as the "square-jawed, pipe-



smoking, solar-tooped English sahib," standing at the ramparts, scanning the horizon for signs of native restlessness, crystallized an ideal imperial figure for cinematic consumption. Actors such as Ronald Colman, C. Aubrey Smith, Clive Brook, David Niven, Basil Rathbone, George Sanders, and Ray Milland incarnated heroic virtue in what amounted to a form of celluloid ancestor worship. *Rhodes of Africa*, for example, paints a hagiographic portrait of the imperial patriarch, constructed as an exemplum of foresight and benevolence. Both Korda and Balcon stress the austere stoic virtues and natural authority of the British on foreign strands. In *Sanders*, a film based on the popular Edgar Wallace series, a colonial District Commissioner (Sanders) puts down an uprising in Nigeria and brings British law and order to the River Territories. The usual colonial splitting pits the good Black Chief Bosambo (Paul Robeson) against the evil King Mofalaba. Colonialism, as incarnated by the authoritative and likeable Sanders, is portrayed as natural, eternal, beneficent. Africans themselves, meanwhile, were enlisted to enact their own caricatures. The exploits of figures like Sanders, Tarzan, and Quartermain brought home to the domestic public an idealized version of what abstract imperial theories meant "on the ground."

The imperial thrust of many of these films requires no subtle deciphering; it is right on the surface, often in the form of didactic forewords. *Sanders*, for example, is dedicated to the "sailors, soldiers and merchant adventurers ... who laid the foundations of the British Empire [and whose] work is carried on by the civil servants - the Keepers of the King's Peace." The preface to *Rhodes of Africa* suggests that Africans themselves endorsed Rhodes' enterprise; the Matabele, we are told, regarded Sanders as "a royal warrior, who tempered conquest with the gift of ruling." Elsewhere imperial ideology is explicitly expressed through dialog. Colonel Williams in *Wee Willie Winkie* (1937) tells Shirley Temple: "Beyond that pass, thousands of savages are waiting to sweep down and ravage India. It's England's duty, it's my duty, to see that this doesn't happen." *Farewell Again* (1937) begins:

All over the world, wherever the Union Jack is flown, men, from castle and cottage, city and village, are on duty ... facing hardship, danger, death with only a brief glimpse of home. Each has his own joys and sorrows but a common purpose unites them - their country's service.

In such films, Britain's material interests in the imperialized world are masked by what Conrad's Marlowe would have called "redeeming ideas": the battle against savagery (*Wee Willie Winkie*), the struggle to abolish slavery (*Killers of Kilimanjaro*, 1959), the fight against fascism (*The Sun Never Sets*, 1940).

#### *Plates 17 and 18 The White man's burden: Beau Geste and Sanders of the River*

A positive image of empire was also encoded into law. The British in particular imposed censorship provisions throughout their empire. In Trinidad, the censorship code forbade "scenes intended to ridicule or criticise unfairly" British social life, "White men in a state of degradation amidst native surroundings, or using violence towards natives, especially Chinese, negroes and Indians," and "equivocal situations between men of one race and girls of another race." In 1928 the Hong Kong censor told the American Consul-General that his duty was to uphold British prestige in "a small settlement of white men on the fringe of a huge empire of Asiatics." A United Artists agent in Hong Kong reported that banned subjects included "armed conflict between Chinese and whites" and portrayals of "white women in indecorous garb or positions or

situations which would tend to discredit our womenfolk with the Chinese.” The British censorship codes applied to global audiences, pressuring American producers to respect them. In 1928, Jason Joy warned production personnel that the British would not permit “the portrayal of the white man and woman ... in a way that might degrade him or her in the eyes of the native, nor will they permit anything in films tending to incite the natives against the governing race.” At the same time, colonial powers tried to prevent the development of rival “native” cinemas. The growing power of Egyptian national cinema in the Arab world was perceived as troublesome by the French, leading them to form a special department “responsible for setting up a production centre in Morocco whose official mission was to oppose the influence of Egyptian cinema.”

Hollywood films also rendered service to empire by reconstructing colonial outposts in southern California. In Samuel Goldwyn's *The Real Glory* (1939), for example, soldiers of fortune and the American army quell a “terrorist” uprising in the Philippines. Despite the US' own historical origins in anti-British revolt, Hollywood films often demonstrated as much enthusiasm for European colonialism as did the European films. Hollywood made more films than the French did about the French Foreign Legion, and American films like W.S. Van Dyke's *Trader Horn* (1931) and *Stanley and Livingstone* (1939) glorified British colonialism in Africa. George Stevens' *Gunga Din* (1939), similarly, showed three heroic British soldiers battling savage Punjabis in nineteenth-century India. Furthermore, the fact that American stars such as Spencer Tracy in *Stanley and Livingstone* and Charlton Heston in *Khartoum* (1966) played British colonial heroes virtually ensured the sympathetic identification of the Euro-American public, thus playing out on a thespian level the historical lap-dissolve by which the British-dominated imperialism of the nineteenth century faded into the US-dominated imperialism of the twentieth. In Henry Hathaway's *Lives of a Bengal Lancer* (1934), starring Gary Cooper, a handful of British officers hold back a native rebellion. The older officers are played by British actors, the younger by Americans, suggesting a kind of imperial succession. As Richards points out, Shirley Temple, the top box-office attraction in Britain and the US from 1935 to 1938, played a central role in the imperial films. *Wee Willie Winkie*, based on a Kipling story, featured her as an American girl in India who learns about England's mission from her British grandfather, the commanding officer of a frontier fort. While the grandfather - a figure of British colonialism - is overly rigid, the American granddaughter is flexible and adept at mediation and at one point actually intervenes in a war to reconcile a rebel Khan to the British Raj. Thus the English-American family becomes enlisted in a kind of imperial allegory. Temple's diplomatic “in-betweenness” reflects the historical in-betweenness of the US itself, as at once an anti-colonial revolutionary power in relation to Europe, and a colonizing, hegemonic power in relation to Native American and African peoples. Upon arriving in India, Temple confuses the Indians (natives of India) with American “Indians” - committing Columbus' error, but in reverse. In a film released just two years later, *Susannah of the Mouties* (1939), she intervenes between the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and an “Indian” tribe, suggesting the substitutability of the two kinds of “Indian.” (Shirley Temple Black's later nomination as Ambassador to Ghana provides a further twist on this trope of substitutability.) Moreover, three of the epics of British India, *Lives of a Bengal Lancer*, *Four Men and a Prayer* (1938), and *Gunga Din*, were remade as westerns, entitled respectively *Geronimo* (1940), *Fury at Furnace Creek* (1940), and *Soldiers Three* (1951). The imperial epic also provided the model for westerns like *Santa Fe Trail* (1940) and *They Died with Their Boots on* (1941), while *Charge of the Light Brigade* (1938) was the model for *Khartoum*. Thus a kind of imperial circularity recycled the formulae of European supremacy vis-à-vis globally dispersed others, with the White Euro-pean always retaining his or

her "positional superiority" (Edward Said's term).

The studios' predilection for spinning-globe logos also translated imperial ambition. The Lumieres' location shootings of diverse "Third World" sites, such as India, Mexico, Egypt, and Palestine, inaugurated this imperial mobility. The globe logo became associated with several studios (Universal, RKO), and with the British Korda brothers' productions, many of whose films, such as *Drums*, *The Four Feathers*, and *The Jungle Book* (1942), concerned imperial themes. The globe image symbolically evokes divine powers, since the created world implies a Creator. Later, TV news updated this trope of "covering the world." In the 1950s, John Cameron Swayze used the globe-trotting motif in his *Camel News Caravan* and contemporary news programs call attention to it through their spherical-line globes and illuminated maps. Recent TV coverage of international crises generated further elaborations of the trope. A Gulf war special, ABC's *A Line in the Sand*, had Peter Jennings walk on top of a colorful political map of the Middle East as a setting for a pedagogical tour of the region's history, in a "covering" at once temporal and spatial. The North American TV commentator literally steps on, sits on, and looks down on the map, bestriding the narrow world "like a colossus."

In both cinema and TV, such overarching global points-of-view suture the spectator into the omniscient cosmic perspective of the European master-subject. Incorporating images of maps and globes, *Around the World in 80 Days*, (1956), for example, begins with its omniscient narrator hailing the "shrinking of the world" which occurred during the period that Verne was writing his book. (The prelude to the film includes the mandatory globus prop made to spin for the camera.) The idea of "shrinking" materializes the confident, scientific perspective of upper-class British men. "Nothing is impossible," says the David Niven character: "when science finally conquers the air it may be feasible to circle the globe in eighty hours." Thus he implicitly links the development of science to imperial control, an idea reinforced by the character's recurrent association with the strains of "Rule Britannia." In recent science-fiction films such as *Return of the Jedi* (1983), globality embraces spheres yet to be charted by NASA. The conquest of outer space cohabits with an underlying imperial narrative in which the visualization of another planet conforms to the representational paradigm of Third World "underdevelopment." A Manichean struggle pits the hero against the new land and its natives. The exotic, teddy-bear-like "Ewoks" - whose language, as in most colonial films, remains unintelligible - worship the high-tech Euro-American hero and defend him against repulsive, evil, irrational creatures. The hero's physical and moral triumph legitimates the enemy's destruction and the paternal transformation of the friendly "elements" into servile allies, authorizing his right to establish new outposts (and implicitly to hold on to old ones). Like early adventure films, spectacular sci-fi and star-war video-games visualize progress as a purposeful movement toward global ubiquity; if in the early films traveling the ocean entailed no boundaries, in the recent ones the sky is no longer the limit.

#### THE WESTERN AS PARADIGM

If the imperial adventure film conveyed the pleasures and benefits of empire, the western told the story of imperial-style adventures on the American frontier. Indeed, the link between the two imperial adventures, in the continental US and outside of it, has usually been obscured, the word "imperialism" usually being restricted in reference to the late nineteenth-century expansions beyond the continent into the Caribbean and the Pacific. As has often been noted, the high proportion of westerns in Hollywood's costume-film output - roughly one-fourth of all Hollywood features between 1926 through 1967 - is so striking as to betray a kind of national obsession. Although relatively few films treat the American revolution, Washington, Jefferson, and Franklin, countless films treat the conquest of the west, Kit Carson, Billy the Kid, and

General Custer. The central place of the "myth of the frontier" in the American imaginary has been eloquently discussed by Francis Jennings, Richard Slotkin, Richard Drinnon, Michael Rogin, John Cowelti, and others. Arguably the longest-lived of American myths, it traces its origins to the colonial period. The myth of the frontier has its ideological roots in some of the discourses addressed in the previous chapter: the competitive laws of Social Darwinism, the hierarchy of the races and sexes, the idea of progress. It gave exceptionalist national form to a more widespread historical process - the general thrust of European expansion into Asia, Africa, and the Americas. What Slotkin calls the "American-History-As-Indian-War" trope has consistently given a fantastical self-aggrandizing shape to "United Statesian" self-narration, with reverberations that echo through popular culture even today.

The western inherited a complex intertext embracing classical epic, chivalric romance, Indianist novel, conquest fiction, the paintings of George Catlin, and the drawings of Frederic Remington. It played a crucial pedagogical role in forming the historical sensibilities of generations of Americans. The western's macro--narrative was doubly "condensed," both temporally and spatially: of a "New World" history of almost four centuries, these films focus on the last 200 years, thus repressing situations of first contact when American land and culture were more obviously Indian, and when non-genocidal collaboration with the Indians was still possible. Films like *Drums along the Mohawk* (1939) and *Northwest Passage* (1940), set before 1800, are in this sense the exception; westerns usually place us at a historical moment when the penetration of the frontier is already well under way, when the characters' point of origin is no longer Europe but Euro--America, and when there is little likelihood that Native Americans will mount a successful resistance to European occupation. That westerns are not "easterns" is no accident, since "easterns," set on the eastern seaboard of an earlier generation's contact with Native Americans, might have stressed the "un-American" foreign-ness of White Europeans, bringing up some of the intriguing "what ifs?" of history.

Hollywood's Native America, as Ward Churchill puts it, "flourished with the arrival of whites," then "vanished somewhat mysteriously, along with the bison and the open prairie," in a story with no "before" and no "after." As a result, there is no cinematic recognition of what Churchill calls "a white-free and autonomous past," no Iroquois, Sioux, or Cherokee (not to mention Aztec or Inca) counterpart to *Cleopatra* (1934, 1963), *The Robe* (1953), or *Ben Hur* (1926, 1959). Furthermore, even within an already condensed spatiotemporality, these westerns privilege a period of roughly fifty years, and return time and again to particular sites and events. Although historical Native Americans generally avoided direct confrontation with the White military - according to the National Parks Service, there were probably only six full-scale attacks on US cavalry forts between 1850 and 1890 - the Indian raid on the fort, as the constructed bastion of settled civilization against nomadic savagery, nevertheless became a staple topos in American westerns. Turned into aggressors, Native Americans became dispensable "pop-up targets for non-Indian guns." The status of a hero, and indirectly of an actor, was defined by the number of Indians he could kill.

#### *Plate 19 Dominating vistas: John Wayne in The Searchers*

Central to the western is the land. The reverent attitude toward the landscapes themselves - Monument Valley, Yellowstone, the Colorado River - occludes those to whom the land belonged and thus naturalizes expansionism. The land is regarded as both empty and virgin, and at the same time super-inscribed with Biblical symbolism - "Promised Land," "New Canaan,"

"God's Earth." A binary division pits sinister wilderness against beautiful garden, with the former "inevitably" giving way before the latter: "The sturdy plant of the wilderness," Thomas Farnham writes, "droops under the enervating culture of the garden. The Indian is buried with his arrows and bow." The dry, desert terrain furnishes an empty stage for the play of expansionist fantasies. Nor is it usually explained that the native populations portrayed as an intrinsic part of the landscape were for the most part driven there by the White expropriation of more fertile lands farther east.

A Manichean allegory also papers over two diametrically opposed views of the land and the soil: for most Native American cultures, land is not real estate for sale but it is sacred, both as historically consecrated and as the "mother" that gives (and needs) nurture. In many indigenous languages, the concept of "selling land" is literally unspeakable, because there are no words to convey it; whence the absurdity of imagining that Europeans "bought" Manhattan for \$24 and a few trinkets. For the European, on the other hand, the land was a soulless conglomeration of exploitable resources, and the Indians a wandering horde without a sense of property, law, or government. "Civilization," as one Secretary of War put it, "entails a love for exclusive property." Progress, said Senator Henry Dawes, depends on not holding land in common, since "selfishness is the basis of civilization." For Europeans, land existed to be transformed and mono-grammed, as it were, by a human, societal presence. While for the Europeans land was a commodity that had to produce quickly or else be abandoned for greener pastures (or more golden mines), for the Native Americans land was a sacred trust irreparably damaged by conquest.

#### *Plate 20 Wiping the tears of seven generations*

The very titles of westerns stress a mobile, and mobilizing, European claim on the land. A disproportionate number stress European-designed state borders - *Oklahoma Kid* (1939), *Colorado Territory* (1949), *The Texas Rangers* (1936), *California Conquest* (1952) - the irony of course being that a high proportion of American states (such as Alabama, Arizona), rivers (including the Ohio, Potomac), lakes (for example Huron, Ontario) and mountain ranges (the Adirondacks and Poconos, for instance) carry native names. The titles themselves exhibit the Adamic/Promethean power to name: *El Dorado* (1967), *Northwest Passage* (1940), *The Last Frontier* (1956). A kind of occidentotropism ("Go West Young Man!") informs the films, conveying a thrusting, trailblazing purposiveness, a divinely sanctioned crepuscular teleology: *Red Sundown* (1956), *Union Pacific* (1939), *The Last Outpost* (1935, 1951), *Heaven's Gate* (1980). Other titles resonate more blatantly with westward-driving zeal - *Westbound* (1959), *Westward the Women* (1951), *The Way West* (1967). Such titles relay the "becoming" of the American nation, which reached its telos with the complete transmogrification of nature into culture, a point fully reached only in the age of cinema. The west was thus less a place than a movement, a going west, a moving horizon, a "vaguely realizing westward" in Robert Frost's phrase, a tropism in both senses of the word - a movement toward and a figure of speech.

The western projects a vision of wide-open possibility, a sense of vistas infinitely open in both space and time. Esthetically, this vision is expressed in wide-screen perspectives and soaring crane shots accompanying stampedes and cavalcades. The title of *How the West Was Won* (1936), a spectacular epic that follows an emigrant family from the Erie Canal in the 1830s to a settled home in the west fifty years and four generations later, sums up the theme of conquest and settlement. Western films inherit the vocation of frontier painting, exemplified by

the Currier and Ives lithograph *Through to the Pacific*, where an allegorical landscape rich in symbols of material progress includes a train moving through an industrial town in the foreground toward "undeveloped" land stretching to the Pacific in the background. John Ford's *The Iron Horse* (1924), whose title itself is an anthropomorphic "Indianism," narrates a similar progression from a rustic past (before the railroad was built, when Indians attacked the wagon trains) to a dynamic adventure-filled present (during the construction of the railroad, when the Indians attack the workers), and an implied felicitous future (with the linking of the two railroads, symbolically the realization of the nation's manifest destiny, and the disappearance of Indians from the scene). A nation with continental ambitions crystallizes on the screen as diverse groups coalesce around a common project. The wild land is domesticated and envalued, with progress embodied in its metallic avatar, the locomotive, a vehicle often metonymic ally (Lumiere's train station) and metaphorically associated with the cinema itself. A differential mode of emplotment encodes Enlightenment values of progress and development, assigning a comic "happy end," under the sign of providence, for the characters representing the west, and a tragic "doomed to extinction" emplotment for the west's others. A narrative paradigm is enlisted to serve teleological notions of national progress and manifest destiny.

"Too bad," Duke Wayne says of Indian extinction in *Hondo* (1953); "it was a good way of life." The elimination of the Indian allows for elegiac nostalgia as a way to treat Indians only in the past tense and thus dismiss their claims in the present, while posthumously expressing thanatological tenderness for their memory. Here too the titles are revelatory of the idea that Indians live in historically condemned time: *The Vanishing Race* (1912), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1920, 1932, 1936, 1992), *The Last of the Redmen* (1947). An ambivalently repressive mechanism dispels the anxiety in the face of the Indian, whose very presence is a reminder of the initially precarious grounding of the American nation-state itself. For Native Americans, meanwhile, the memories were vivid and painful. In the filming of *The Indian Wars* (1914), traumatized Sioux were obliged to reenact their own historical defeat and humiliation at Wounded Knee:

The plan called for the battle to take place right over the Indian graves, which seemed to the Sioux a horrible desecration " the Indians were resentful, remembering how the white soldiers had massacred their tribesmen and the women and children ... The greatest difficulty in getting these men together was to convince them that the purpose of this mobilization was merely to reproduce the wars and not to annihilate them, for when they saw the Hotchkiss guns, the rifles, revolvers and cases of ammunition, there was a feeling of unrest, as though the time had come when they were to be gathered in by the Great Spirit through the agency of the white men.

**In** a temporal paradox, living Indians were induced to "play dead," as it were, in order to perform a narrative of manifest destiny in which their role, ultimately, was to disappear.

We are not suggesting that all westerns were made in a single mold, or that there were never sympathetic portrayals of Indians, or that westerns were free of ideological tensions and contradictions. Enormous differences, obviously, separate William S. Hart's *The Aryan* (1916) from "pro-Indian" westerns like *Broken Arrow* (1950) or *Devil's Doorway* (1970), and the general run of westerns from a going-native western like *Little Big Man* (1970), a satirical western such as *Buffalo Bill and the Indians, or Sitting Bull's History Lesson* (1976), or an implicitly anti-Vietnam-war western like *Soldier Blue* (1970), which appropriates the 1864 Sand Creek massacre of Cheyenne and Arapahos to allegorize the My Lai massacre in Vietnam. Even within specific sub genres there were notable differences. A captivity narrative, for example,

could either portray White assimilation to Indian ways or convey a racist horror of a sexual assault, avenged by "savage war." The western has also evolved historically, particularly since the 1960s when pro-Indian films began to promote identification, however condescendingly, with Indian cultural values. As Thomas Schatz points out, later westerns become reflective, projecting a less flattering vision of the expansionist project; the law-and-order heroes of the classic western give way to renegade antiheroes. Post-1960s' "realistic" westerns depict the frontier as violent but un-heroic, often presenting Native Americans with considerable sympathy.

Our point, then, is not to collapse differences among westerns, but rather to point to the genre's ideological premises and its general procedures for fostering identification. Generally speaking, the Hollywood western turned history on its head by making Native Americans appear intruders on their own land, and thus provided a paradigmatic perspective, as Tom Engelhardt points out, through which to view the whole of the non-White world. Rarely do westerns show Native Americans as simply inhabiting the domestic space of their unthreatening daily lives, although it was *their* lives and habits that were brutally disrupted by western expansion. Native Americans are usually portrayed as mean-spirited enemies of the moving train of progress. The point-of-view in the western is premised on exteriority, within what Tom Engelhardt calls "an imagery of encirclement." The besieged wagon train or fort forms the focus of attention and sympathy, and from this center familiar figures sally out against unknown attackers characterized by inexplicable customs and irrational hostility: "In essence, the viewer is forced behind the barrel of a repeating rifle and it is from that position, through its gun sights, that he [sic] receives a picture history of western colonialism and imperialism." The point-of-view conventions consistently favor the Euro-American protagonists; they are centered in the frame, their desires drive the narrative; the camera pans, tracks, and cranes to accompany their regard. In films such as *Drums along the Mohawk*, the point-of-view can be said to follow a structure of concentric circles. The inner humanized circle - often including women and children - is threatened by a second circle of attackers, until a final outer circle - the cavalry -- rescues the besieged first circle by annihilating the middle circle. The outer circle, as colonial *deus ex machina*, executes an environing providential order - cinematic shorthand for genocide. The possibility of sympathetic identifications with the Indians is simply ruled out by the point-of-view conventions; the spectator is unwittingly sutured into a colonialist perspective.

Dominant narratives about colonial encounters suggest that "we," while imperfect, are at least human, while the non-European "they" are irrational and subhuman. The "colonial proportion" decrees that many of "them" must die for each one of "us," a pattern repeated in films of Zulus fighting the British, Mexicans fighting the US cavalry, American soldiers against Japanese kamikaze bombers, and, most recently, American pilots against Iraqi conscripts. But while "they" die disproportionately, "we" must believe that "they" pose an apocalyptic threat. Richard Drinnon traces the process by which White hostility toward pre-modern "savages" has been recycled throughout American history. The process began with the "proto-victims," the Pequots massacred in 1637, when the Puritans made some 400 of them "as a fiery oven" in their village near the Mystic River and later finished off 300 more in the mud of Fairfield Swamp, in an early example of the "righteous massacres" that have so marked American history. The founding arrogance of the Pequot massacre was subsequently expanded to the "Conquest of the West," after which it was extended to the Philippines during the "imperialist binge" at the end of the nineteenth century, where many of the commanding generals had fought in the Plains and Apache wars. "The pigments of Indian-hating," writes Drinnon, "shaded off into coolie-hating, the Chinese exclusion act (1882) and the 'Yellow Peril' hysteria at the turn of the century."

During the Philippine-American war, soldiers writing home stressed the comparison. An officer who served in the Philippines wrote reporter Henry Loomis Nelson:

We exterminated the American Indians, and I guess most of us are proud of it, or, at least, believe the end justified the means; and we must have no scruples about exterminating this other race standing in the way of progress and enlightenment, if it is necessary.

Another Asian war, the Vietnam war, also reverberated with echoes of the Indian wars. The same Custer story that provided John Ford with the plot for *Fort Apache* (1948) also provided Arthur Penn and Sidney Salkow with allegorical material with which to denounce the imperial folly of the Vietnam War. According to Frances Fitzgerald in *Fire in the Lake* (1973), the American elite saw the war as the:

painless conquest of an inferior race [just as to] the American settlers the defeat of the Indians had seemed not just a nationalist victory, but an achievement made in the name of humanity - the triumph of light over darkness, of good over evil, of civilization over brutish nature.

The very names of some of the military operations in Vietnam - "Rolling Thunder," "Sam Houston," "Hickory," and "Daniel Boone" - resonated with the memory, and the attitudes, of the American frontier history relayed in the western. Troops described Vietnam as "Indian country," while General Maxwell Taylor justified escalation as a case of moving the "Indians" away from the "fort" so that the "settlers" could "plant corn." For Lyndon Johnson, Vietnam recalled the Alamo. Even the "domino theory," according to Drinnon, "was an updated, internationalized version of the older fear of pan-Indian movements that went back beyond the Pequots and the Narragansetts." And more recently General Schwarzkopf compared Iraq to "Indian territory."

#### THE LATE IMPERIAL FILM

The colonial/imperial paradigm did not die with the formal end of colonialism, nor is the western paradigm limited to the wild west. Indeed, one could speak of a "submerged" imperial presence in many films - the South African diamond mines in the background of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953), the French presence in Morocco in *The Man Who Knew too Much* (1954), the neocolonial backdrop of Disney films set in Latin America (*The Three Caballeros*, 1945, for example), or the French domination, again in North Africa, in Rene Clair's *Les Belles des Nuits* (1952). Such attitudes seep even into innocuous television entertainments such as *Gilligan's Island*, seen by 2.5 million people per day as late as 1986, where the island, as Paul Sellors points out, is perceived as surrounded by barbarian tribes. The same Rider Haggard novels that inspired filmmakers in the silent period were adopted again throughout the sound period, sometimes more than once. *King Solomon's Mines* was filmed again, often recycling the same footage, in 1937, 1950, 1959 (under the title *Watusi*), and 1985. The 1937 film features Paul Robeson as the Zulu Umbopa and has the witchdoctor Gogoul trap innocent Whites inside a volcano; as they are about to be butchered, an opportune solar eclipse confirms their pretense of being gods. The 1959 Kurt Neumann film *Watusi* reuses footage from the 1950 film, and has a missionary's daughter saved from "savages." The 1985 *King Solomon's Mines* borrows shamelessly from *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and recycles the most classic colonialist imagery, such as hordes of spear-carriers and the venerable "Europeans-in-the-pot" cannibal motif. Made in Zimbabwe, the film, in an amalgam of Manichean narratives, suggests that the real colonial foreigners in Africa were not the British or the French but the Turks and the Arabs, along with the German Nazis.

It would be impossible, even pointless, to inventory all the films that relay a colonialist or



imperialist perspective, but we can examine a symptomatic example. Andrew McLaglen's *The Wild Geese* (1978) extends the western conventions to post-independence Africa. Based on a novel by Daniel Carney, a White man from Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and a former member of the South African police, the film glorifies the White mercenaries who once propped up White-minority rule in places like South Africa and corrupt Black rule in places like Zaire. The film, which centers on the mercenaries' armed rescue of a deposed Central African President, features highly popular actors playing the mercenaries. Richard Burton plays a tough Bogart-like commander who hides a sensitive heart beneath his cynical surface. Richard Harris is a brilliant military technician who regretfully tears himself away from his young son to join the "mission." Roger Moore is a playboy-pilot and Hardy Kruger a South African policeman. The mercenaries form the central focus of our sympathy; they win us with their flawed humanity, their quirky eccentricities, and their boisterous Hawksian camaraderie. Killing Africans en masse, the film implies, somehow brings out the mercenaries' latent humanity.

In the racist hierarchies of *The Wild Geese*, White males stand at the apex, White women are essentially dispensable, and Africans are playthings for Western plans. The film adroitly camouflages its racism, however: a token Black is included in the mercenary force - massacres seem more palatable when the perpetrators are "integrated" - and the entire operation is in any case performed on behalf of a Black leader repeatedly characterized as "the best there is." (The "best there is," unfortunately, is portrayed as sick, helpless, dying, literally carried on the backs of the Whites.) Within this White rescue fantasy, the Black leader of the 1970s speaks oddly like the Sidney Poitier of the 1950s. Pleading for love and integration, he calls on Blacks to "forgive the White past" and on Whites "to forgive the Black present," thus canceling out centuries of slavery and colonialism in the misleading symmetry of an aphorism.

Despite its flimsy integrationist facade, itself rather anachronistic in the 1970s, *The Wild Geese* conforms to the generic conventions of the western as colonialist adventure film. Even mercenaries, recruited from the flotsam and jetsam of English society, the film suggests, are suited to exercise power over African life. Whether gamblers, drunkards, or opportunists, they remain human; they are "us." African life, meanwhile, comes cheap. The film consistently obeys the "colonial proportion" in the body count; scores, even hundreds of Blacks die for each White mercenary slain. At the same time, the film exploits our instinctive sympathy for any group performing a "mission." We are induced to glory in the "surgical precision" of a task well done, whatever its political motivation. The European right to determine Africa's destiny is simply assumed. *The Wild Geese* enlists the gamut of cinematic devices in the service of the mercenary cause. The camera places us behind the barrels of mercenary guns, from which vantage point we see Africans fall by the hundreds. History is neatly inverted, so that Africans, like Native Americans in the western, come to seem invaders in their own land. The cinematography, finally, celebrates the lyricism of warfare. Explosions are made beautiful and violent death graceful. Free-falling paratroopers float earthward in choreographed aerial shots: neocolonial war as *homo ludens*.

In the Reagan-Bush era, dominant cinema rediscovered the charms of the imperial frontier narrative. *Red Dawn* (1984) returns to the encirclement imagery of the western, but this time it is the Cubans, the Soviets, and the (presumably Sandinista) Nicaraguans who take over the functional slot of the Indians. A literary eulogist of the Somoza regime in Nicaragua, Jack Coz, produced *The Last Plane Out* (1983), a defense of the dictator whom Roosevelt called "our son of a bitch." *Mountains of the Moon* (1989), meanwhile, recapitulates the Victorian explorer Richard Burton's search for the sources of the Nile, with weirdly colorful savages, presumably

incapable of "discovering" the sources for themselves, as his witnesses. The Michael Caine vehicle *Ashanti* (1979) resurrects the venerable scenario of the British as the passionate enemies of slavery in Africa, seen also in films such as *Killers of Kilimanjaro* (1959) and *Drums of Africa* (1963). In *Doctor No* (1962), the British exercise benevolent rule over good-natured West Indians.

The 1980s and 1990s have witnessed a wave of elegiac narratives about the closing of the imperial period. The Raj nostalgia genre, exemplified by the TV series *The Jewel in the Crown* and by such films as *Staying On* (1980), *Passage to India* (1984), *Gandhi* (1982), *Heat and Dust* (1982), and *Kim* (1984), was denounced by Salman Rushdie as a transparent Thatcherite attempt to refurbish the image of empire, forming the "artistic counterpart of the rise of conservative ideologies in modern Britain." Although Forster's novel *Passage to India* helped crystallize the beginnings of a change of attitude toward the British presence in India, David Lean's adaptation tones down the cautious anti-colonialism of the novel in the name of "balance." Richard Attenborough's *Gandhi*, as a spectacular epic about an ascetic, a *Triumph of the Will* for pacifists, pursues the "Great Man" view of history, subtly prettifying the British role. Some of the few critical colonial "nostalgia" films which, interestingly, have been made by French women (Claire Denis' *Chocolat*, Marie-France Pisier's *Bal du Gouverneur*, and Brigitte Rouan's *Outremer*, all from 1990), shift their focus from male aggressivity to female domesticity, and to the glimmerings of anti-colonialist consciousness provoked by transgression of the taboo on inter-racial desire.

*Plate 2i The imperial family: Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*

More often, colonialist imagery has been remarketed under the guise of humor and genre parody. Thus, in a moment of apparent imperial decline, Hollywood resuscitates the imperial romance, where the presumably parodic filmmaker celebrates the extinguished glories of "imperial conquest and dominion, of virtually magical mobility and power, and of exotic life at the outposts of empire." The *Indiana Jones* series recycled Rider Haggard and Kipling for the Reagan-Bush era, resurrecting the colonial adventure genre with insidious charm. Even the films' adolescent qualities recall the pubescent energies of imperial adventure tales for boys. Set in the 1930s, the very heyday of the imperial film, the series, like comic books, is premised on an imperialized globe, in which archeology professors can "rescue" artifacts from the colonized world for the greater benefit of science and civilization. "Indy" operates with ease only in colonized countries, portrayed as ontologically corrupt, awaiting Western salvation. The series assumes an uncontested empire, with no trace of any viable anti-colonial opposition. **In** the Egypt of 1936 of *Raiders*, there is no popular agitation against the British, just as in the Shanghai of 1935 there is no word of Mao's "Long March." The India of *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (1984), similarly, betrays none of the civil disobedience against the British that led to the Government of India Act of 1935. **In** the world of Indiana Jones, Third World cultures are synopsisized as theme park clichés drawn from the orientalist repertoire: India is all dreamy spirituality, as in the Hegelian account; Shanghai is all gongs and rickshaws. Third World landscapes become the stuff of dreamy adventure. **In** a classic splitting operation, the Third World is both demonized and infantilized: non-Western adult characters are evil (Mola Ram, Chattrar Lal, Lao Che); children (Short Round and Little Maharajah) are eager, innocent, and pro-Western. **In** this imperial family order, the modernity embodied by the younger, pro-American children, will replace the hidebound tradition of the older, nationalist fathers. Indeed,

the series shows most of the unwashed masses of the Third World passively waiting for Indy to save them from ambitious nationalists like Mola Ram, who constructs his own (religious) domino theory: "The British in India will be slaughtered. Then we will overrun the Moslems. Then the Hebrew God will fall. Then the Christian God will be cast down and forgotten." The blame-the-victim paradigm inherited from the western is globalized: the civilized West is threatened by the savage East, but the imperial family ultimately triumphs.

#### POSTMODERN WAR

That the imperial and Indian war conventions traced here, together with the Eurocentric tendencies of the media apparatus, have not reached an end became strikingly evident during the Persian Gulf War. The ground for the "popularity" of the war was prepared by a long inter-textual chain: crusading anti-Islamic tales, captivity narratives, the imperial adventure novel, the "manifest destiny" western, and more recent militaristic films like *Star Wars* (1977), the *Rambo* series (1982, 1985, 1988) and *Top Gun* (1988). An orientalist and imperialist imaginary was reactivated for the ideological purposes of the warrior state. The Gulf war was presented as a macro-entertainment, one with a beginning (Desert Shield), a middle (Desert Sword), and an end (Desert Storm), all undergirded by a fictive telos: the "New World Order." The futuristic overtones of the phrase meshed anachronistically with the medievalist connotations of "shield" and "sword," evocative of a religious substratum of Crusades against Muslim infidels. Network logos - "Countdown to War," "Deadline in the Desert," "America at the Brink" - communicated a throbbing sense of inevitability, of an inexorable slouching toward war; provoking, even, a kind of spectatorial *desire* for war. Talk of peace, following administration cues, was treated not as a hope but as a "nightmare scenario," a kind of "coitus interruptus" within an irresistible orgasmic march.

Multi-generic, the Gulf war mini-series drew on the codes of the war film (soldiers silhouetted against the sky, thrilling martial music, *Top Gun* visuals); of the PBS educational show (military pedagogs with pointers, maps, and video blackboards); of sports programming (instant replay, expert-running commentary); and of the western (lines drawn in the sand, the implacable logic of the showdown). The Gulf war scenario had the elemental, childlike charm of the fable, the awesome pyrotechnics of apocalypse, and the didactic impulses of allegory. With this war, an already powerful media apparatus became "wedded" to another apparatus of the gaze - that of military simulation and surveillance. As a consequence, telespectators were encouraged to "enjoy" a quantum leap in prosthetic audio-visual power. Television news offered its spectator what Donna Haraway, in another context, calls the "conquering gaze from nowhere," a gaze that claims "the power to see and not be seen, to represent while escaping representation." While TV coverage in general allows spectators to imagine themselves at the center of the globe's "hot spots," during the Gulf war the media coaxed spectators to spy, thanks to an almost pornographic kind of surveillance, on a whole geographical region, whose nooks and crannies lay open to the military's panoptic view.

The fact that the military view literally *became* the spectator's view goes a long way toward explaining the massive public adherence in the US to the war. For quite apart from the pleasures of identification with a powerful military apparatus, the Gulf war coverage hyperbolized the normal pleasures of the televisual "apparatus" itself. While the semiotic theory of the cinematic apparatus requires "scanning" for television, since many of the factors that foster the realer-than-real subject effects in the cinema do not apply here, nevertheless TV does have its own pleasuring capacities and its own ways of encouraging spectatorial regression and narcissism. Indeed, TV affords pleasures even more multiform than those afforded by the

cinema, for the televiewer identifies with an even wider array of viewpoints: notably those provided by film cameras, video-cameras, and their magnetic residue of images and sounds on tape, along with those provided by tape less video-cameras directly transmitting images and sounds, all then relayed around the world through satellite transmission. TV thus confers perceptual powers in some ways superior to those of the relatively sluggish cinema, a medium that TV both includes and surpasses in its ability to "cover the world." The smaller screen, while preventing immersion in a deep, enveloping space, encourages in other ways a kind of narcissistic voyeurism. Larger than the figures on the screen, we quite literally oversee the world from a sheltered position - all the human shapes parading before us in TV's insubstantial pageant are scaled down to Lilliputian insignificance, two-dimensional dolls, their height rarely exceeding a foot.

The Gulf war mobilized atavistic passions, as televisual spectatorship became deeply implicated in an attempt to corral multiethnic spectators into a jingoistic communalism. A "feel-good" war became an (ultimately ineffective) electoral ploy, as global and domestic politics became linked to the Nielsen ratings. Much as the encirclement imagery model in the western engages literal point of view - the looking through the sights of a rifle, or through the windows of a fort - Gulf war "spectators" were made to see through the point of view of American pilots, and even through that of "smart bombs." Media coverage endowed the spectatorial eye with what Paul Virilio calls the "symbolic function of a weapon." The Gulf war telespectator, vicariously equipped with night-vision technology, infra-red vision, capable of zapping "enemy" tanks, planes, buildings, and heads of state, was prodded into feeling infinitely powerful. In a war where the same pilot's hand that released the missile simultaneously tripped the camera shutter, spectators were tele-guided to see from the bomber's perspective, incorporated into the surveillance equipment, sutured into the sights of high-tech weaponry.

Gulf war media coverage paraded before the viewers innumerable candidates for what Metz calls "secondary identification," that is, identification with the human figures on the screen: the anchors, the correspondents, the generals, the experts, and the people interviewed on the street. As "pivots" of identification, the anchors and correspondents played an especially crucial role. The latter-day descendants of the traveler and scientist heroes of the imperial adventure films, news anchors constitute authentic contemporary heroes. Their words have godlike efficacy; their mere designation of an event calls forth instant illustration in the form of animated miniatures, colorful maps, and live-action footage. As charismatic figures, comparable in power to the great stars of the cinema, the anchors facilitated a massive transfer of allegiance to the war, particularly in contexts where viewers lacked alternative sources of information and analysis.

*Plate 22 Peter Jennings "Striding the world like a Colossus"*

During the Gulf war, the newscasters dropped their usual mask of objectivity and metamorphosed into partisan cheerleaders. The historical inertia of their reputation for "objectivity" functioned in favor of the war. The newscasters' pro-war stance took many forms: adjectival qualifications of the bombing as "beautiful" or "precise," facile references to soldier "heroes," the tendentious use of the word "patriotism" to refer only to pro-war actions and attitudes. Newscasters spoke of Iraq as the "enemy," as if they had personally joined the armed forces. Dan Rather "enlisted" by saluting the troops, Forest Sawyer by donning military fatigues, Howard Threlkel by frisking surrendering Iraqi prisoners. Throughout, the newscasters channeled empathy according to clear hierarchies of human value: at the apex stood Americans and Europeans, then came Israelis, then Arab allies, and lowest on the ladder were Arab enemies.

Even the oil-suffocated cormorants in the Persian Gulf and the animals in the Kuwait City Zoo garnered more sympathy than the Iraqi soldiers. The zealous citizens who sported "Nuke Iraq" T-shirts, or who patriotically roughed up people they took to be Arab-Americans (even those from countries allied to the US), intuitively understood the subliminal message sent out by the media: Third World life has no value a European (including an honorary European) need respect.

Although the Gulf war took place in the revised political context of the post cold war period, many of the tropes, imagery, and narratives deployed were drawn from colonial/imperial discourse. Demonizing Saddam Hussein, the administration not only resuscitated the "just war" paradigm of World War II (thus making the war more amenable to Manichean dualisms of good versus evil than the "messy" Vietnam War), it also invoked the familiar paradigm of the "savage war" and of extermination as morality play. The premise of "savage war," according to Richard Slotkin, is the idea "that ineluctable political and social differences -rooted in some combination of "blood" and culture - make coexistence between primitive natives and Europeans impossible on any basis other than subjugation." The psychological basis of public acceptance of massive force, in a situation of "savage war," is the expectation that a people (or leader) defined as savage will commit unimaginable atrocities, such as rape, massacre, or torture:

once such a *threatened* or rumored atrocity has been avenged with an actual atrocity, the mechanisms of projection become more (rather than less) powerful. Although we hopefully assert that our vengeance has had a chastening effect on the enemy, our belief that the enemy is "savage" suggests that we may merely have given him an additional motive for vengeance.

The melodramatic formula that cast Hussein as villain (a "Geronimo with Hitler's ambitions," as Slotkin puts it), Bush as hero, and Kuwait as the damsel in distress was a replay of countless colonial-western narratives. Basic to such narratives is the rescue of a White woman (and at times a dark one) from a dark rapist, and a happy conclusion entailing the restoration of a patriarchal-imperial world order and the punishment of the dark disobedient rapist, who must be humiliated in the name of the dishonored female. The Gulf war was fought in a gendered language, where the "rape of Kuwait" - the sexual violation of an innocent, passive, symbolically feminine persona - became the pretext for a manly penetration of Iraq. The metaphor of the rape of Kuwait, the circulating rumors about Iraqi rapes of Kuwaiti women, and the insinuation of possible rapes of American female soldiers by Iraqi captors became part of an imperial rescue fantasy eerily reminiscent of the medieval Crusades, when non-Christian enemies were also portrayed as licentious beasts. At the same time, through a show of phallic vigor in the Gulf war, a senescent America imagined itself cured of the traumatic "impotence" it suffered in another war, in another Third World country - Vietnam.

Permeated by skull-and-crossbones-style male bonding, the Gulf war was machismo-driven from the start. But in their mobilization of a national imaginary, the administration and the media were careful not to make jingoistic militarism the spectator's sole locus of identification. They also provided more warm, more stereo typically "feminine" and "progressive" points of identification. Along with the smart bombs came yellow ribbons, along with the martial fifes and drums came the strains of violins. For those disinclined to identify with military puissance *per se*, less masculinist entries for identification were available - with the "multicultural" army on the ground, with women taking military roles, with the advance for Blacks represented by the leadership of Colin Powell, with the home-side families concerned about their loved ones.

In the Gulf War as western, Iraqi conscripts played the role of the Indians. The western's

imagery of encirclement entails not only a particular perspective of siege but also the inflation of the external threat. Thus the Iraqi army, a largely conscript force with mediocre weaponry, unable to conquer Iran much less the assembled might of the world's most powerful armies, was promoted to the "fourth army in the world." When diverse pragmatic rationales for the war (oil, jobs, the American way of life) failed to catch fire with the electorate, the administration tapped into two interrelated cultural strains - idealistic exception-alism and puritanical vindictiveness. On the one hand, the administration sounded lofty goals of regional peace and the New World Order; on the other, it demonized Hussein as "a man of evil standing against human life itself." Here Bush stood well within the tradition of what Michael Rogin calls "political demonology" -the creation of monsters through the "inflation, stigmatization, and dehumaniza-tion of political foes." The "moderate" and "pragmatic" Hussein of earlier political rhetoric, ally of American policy and the darling of American, British, and German corporations, was transformed into a reincarnation of Hitler with the rapidity with which enemies for "Hate Week" were fabricated in Orwell's 1984. It was also within the logic of the Manichean allegory that Bush, invoking the venerable tradition of the righteous massacre, would ask for divine blessing for American armed forces in a National Day of Prayer, just as he thanked the pilots in the January 1992 bombings for "doing the Lord's work." And since the Manichean allegory does not allow for two competing evils, or for lesser and greater evils, or for minor and major thugs, but only for good against evil, it also allows for only one legitimate outcome: the annihilation of evil in a ritual sacrifice or exorcism that "cleanses" the accumulated iniquity. "Allah creates," said one Gulf war ditty, "but we cremate."

While the media on the one hand forced a "dirty-handed" complicity with the war by positioning viewers among the soldiers - Ted Koppel placing us in the cockpit of a Saudi fighter, Diane Sawyer putting us inside a tank - they also symbolically cleansed those very same hands. The spectator was prompted to indulge infantile dreams of omnipotence, made to feel allied to immense destructive forces, but also to feel fundamentally pure and innocent. Any word or image implying that the American spectators or their tax dollars were somehow responsible for mass suffering would have destroyed the shaky edifice of non--culpability, an unflattering implication that might have hurt ratings. Despite its lethal violence (estimates of over 150,000 dead, with an equal number dying later due to disease and malnutrition), the Gulf war was fought in the name of American victimization, in the tradition of the many wars in which reiterated claims of self-defense have masked overwhelming, disproportionate power.

In "'Make My Day': Spectacle as Amnesia in Imperial Politics," Michael Rogin anatomizes the role of real and imaginary massacres in justifying military interventions. Citing Reagan's role-playing as Dirty Harry, Rogin recalls the context in which Clint Eastwood uses the phrase "make my day" in *Sudden Impact* (1983). In the scene, Eastwood is "daring a black man to murder a woman ... so that Dirty Harry can kill the black." In other words, "white men show how tough they are by re-subordinating and sacrificing their race and gender others." Running like a thread through North American history is the similar notion, recycled by countless westerns, that Indian "outrages" justified Euro-American massacres and appropriations. In 1622, in "A Declaration of the State of the Colonie and Affaires" in Virginia, Edward Waterhouse wrote with relief that "our hands which before were tied with gentleness and faire usage, are now set at liberty by the treacherous violence of the Savages [so that we may] invade the Country, and destroy them who sought to destroy US." Waterhouse's declaration anticipates what one might call the "make my day" syndrome, a desire for an outrage to justify even greater violence. The Gulf war reiterated the trope of "regeneration through violence" (in Slotkin's words), the

process whereby the fictive "we" of national unity is reforged through salutary massacres. That President Bush had been figuratively in bed with the dictator Hussein merely betrays the binaristic splitting off of one's own impulses on to a phantasmic other that is so typical of colonialist thinking.

Our point is not that some national essence induces the American public into war - obviously antiwar protest and antimilitarism are equally part of American history - nor to suggest that Hussein is an innocent Third World victim, but rather to map the ways point-of-view conventions and a powerful media apparatus can be mobilized to shape public opinion for militaristic purposes. But these televisual tactics would not have "worked" so effectively had spectators not already been thoroughly "primed" by innumerable westerns, adventure films, and imperial epics.

The Gulf war revealed not only the continued reign of the imperial imaginary, but also the limitations of certain variants of postmodernism. Jean Baudrillard's account of the implosive collapse of boundaries in a mass-mediated global society, for example, is exhilaratingly apt in its rendering of the "feel" of life in the simulacral world of the postmodern, but his conceptions are ultimately inadequate for a phenomenon such as the Gulf war. In an article in the *Guardian* a few days before the outbreak of the war, Baudrillard treated the impending conflict as an impossibility, a figment of mass-media simulation techniques without real-world referents. And on March 29, 1991, shortly after the end of hostilities, playing with the Giraudoux title *La Guerre de Troie n' aura pas lieu* (The Trojan War Will Not Take Place, 1934), Baudrillard declared in *Liberation* that "The Gulf War Has Not Taken Place." On one level, there is no denying the descriptive canniness of Baudrillard's account. The representation of the most media-covered war in history did indeed seem to shift from classical realist representation to the brave new public-relations world of hyperreality. Not only was the war packaged as a spectatorial video-game, it also proliferated simulacral strategies - computer simulations, fake bomb damage, fake missile silos, fake attacks, even fake heat to attract heat-seeking missiles. War on the electronic battlefield became a media experience *par excellence* even for its participants, demanding what Paul Virilio calls a "*dedoublement*" of observation - both an immediate perception and a media-inflected perception through video, radar, and computer simulation.

But if the Gulf war revealed the descriptive aptness of the Baudrillardian account of postmodernism, it also signaled that paradigm's political vacuousness, its disempowering combination of extreme cognitive skepticism and political quietism. For what the Gulf war revealed were fundamental asymmetries in how the depthless surfaces of postmodernity are lived; asymmetries not only between the experience of television and the experience of war, but also between the experiences of the combatants and the spectators engaged on different sides of the war. Some groups watched the war from an anti-sceptic distance, while others lived it in the company of death, dismemberment, disease, and famine. Technology facilitated seeing and hearing on the one side, and obliterated it on the other. While Americans, as Jonathon Schell puts it, waged war in "three dimensions," the foe was trapped, "like the creatures in certain geometrical games, in two dimensions ... we kill and they die, as if a race of gods were making war against a race of human beings."

If postmodernism has spread the telematic feel of First World media around the world, in sum, it has hardly deconstructed the relations of power that marginalize, devalue, and time and time again massacre otherized peoples and cultures. Baudrillard's radically ahistorical account misses the fact that time is palimpsestic; we live in many times, not just in the "new" time of

advertising and the media. In the case of the Gulf war, the most sophisticated technology was used in the service of ideas drawn from millennial sources, from Christian Crusades against Muslims to "savage wars" against Indians. With the Gulf war, the fact of mass death itself, the radical discontinuity between the living and the dead, reveals the limitations of a world seen only through the prism of the simulacrum.

from: Stam, Robert and Ella Shohat. "The Imperial Imaginary." *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*. New York: Routledge, 1994. 100-36.