SIGHTLINES

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Cinema Studies has made extraordinary strides in the past two decades. Our capacity for understanding both how and what the cinema signifies has been developed through new methodologies, and hugely enriched in interaction with a wide variety of other disciplines, including literary studies, anthropology, linguistics, history, economics, and psychology. As fertile and important as these new theoretical foundations are, their very complexity has made it increasingly difficult to track the main lines of conceptualization. Furthermore, they have made Cinema Studies an ever more daunting prospect for those coming new to the field.

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The imperial imaginary

Travelers (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.2

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.2 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”25 free from charged heterosexual engagements. Adventure films, and the “adventure” of going to the cinema, provided a vicarious experience of parasitic 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 that 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.”26

The shaping of national identity

Beliefs about the origins and evolutions 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.”27 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.28 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.”29 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 Lukács), the novel inherited and transformed the vocation of the classical epic (for example The Iliad) to produce and heighten national identity, both accompanying and crystallizing the rise of nations by imposing a unitary topos on heterogenous languages and diverse deserts.

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 Lumière 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 reflexive 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 imaginaries 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 margins of its particular European empire (especially since the first movie theaters in these countries were associated with Europeans and the Europeanized local bourgeoisie). 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 imperialized notions of time, plot, and history. The cinema's institutional ritual of gathering a community—spectators who share a region, language, and culture—narrativizes, 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 communities of spectatorship can take on a national or imperial thrust. Thus the cinema can play a more assorative role in fostering group identities. Finally, unlike the novel, the cinema is not premised on literacy. As a popular entertainment it is much more accessible than literature. While there was no mass reading public for imperial literary fictions within 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. Eurocolonial 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.
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 Cawelti, 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" foreignness of White Europeans, bringing up some of the intriguing "what if's?" 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.46 Turned into aggressors, Native Americans became dispensable “pop-up targets for non-Indian guns.”47 The status of a hero, and indirectly of an actor, was defined by the number of Indians he could kill.48

Central to the western is the land. The reverent attitude toward the landscapes themselves—Monument Valley, Yellowstone, the Colorado River—concludes those to whom the land belonged and thus naturalizes expansionism. The land is regarded as both empty and virgin, and at the same time superscribed 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, “drops under the enervating culture of the gardens. The Indian is buried with his arrows and bow.”49 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 is sacred both as historically consecrated and as the “mother” that gives (and needs) nurture.47 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.”48 For Europeans, land existed to be transformed andogrammed, 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.

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)—and 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.49 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 transmogification of nature into culture, a point fully reached only in the age of
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. Ethereally, 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 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 envolved, with progress embodied in its metallic avatar, the locomotive, a vehicle often metonymically (Lumière's train station) and metaphorically associated with the cinematic itself. A differential mode of employment 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" allotment 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:

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 Aranans (1916) from "pro-Indian" westerns like Broken Arrow (1950) or Devil's Doorway (1970), and the general run of westerns from a novel 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-Vietcong 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 subgenres there were notable differences. A captivity narrative, for example, could either portray White assimilation to Indian ways or convey a racist horror of sexual assault, to be 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 unheroic, 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 threatening 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
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encirclement.” The besieged wagon train or fort forms the focus of attention and sympathy, and from this center familiar figures rally 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 enveloping providential order—cinematic shorthand for genocide. The possibility of sympatheic identifications with the Indians is simply ruled out by the point-of-view conventions; the spectator is unwittingly subsumed 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 Zulu 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 premodern “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 fenced 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.

THE IMPERIAL IMAGINARY

Another Asian war, the Vietnam war, also reverberated with echoes of the Indian wars. The same Cluster 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 Fitzerald 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”—were resonated with the memory, and the attitudes, of the American frontier history relayed in the west. Troops described Vietnam as “Indian country,” while General William 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 Blonds (1953), the French presence in Morocco in The Man Who Knew Too Much (1954), the necological backdrop of Disney films set in Latin America (The Three Caballeros, 1945), for example, or the French domination, again in North Africa, in René Clair’s Les Belles des Nuits (1952). Such attitudes show even in innocuous television entertainments such as Gilligan’s Island, seen by 25 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 Wagari), and 1985. The 1957 film features Paul Robeson as the Zulu Umbopa and has the witchdoctor Gygoul trap innocent Whites inside a volcano; as they are about to be butchered, an unfortunate solar eclipse confers their pretense of being gods. The 1959 Kurt Neumann film Wutari reuses footage from the 1950 film, and has a missionary’s daughter saved from “savages.” The 1985 King Solomon’s Mines betrays shamelessly from Raiders of the Lost Ark and recycles the most classic
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 Annuaire 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 retributing and sacrificing their race and gender others." Running like a thread through North American history as 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 Colony and Affairs" in Virginia, Edward Waterhouse wrote with relief that "our hands which before were dield 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 restored through satirical 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 phantasmatic 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 militarist purposes. But these televised 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 fragment of mass-media simulation techniques without real-world references. And on March 29, 1991, shortly after the end of hostilities, playing with the Giscard 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 cunningness 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 spectacular video-game, it also proliferated in 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 "dissimulation" of observation — both an immaterial perception and a media-nerved 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 anticergic 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 Jonathan Schell puts it, waged war in "three dimensions," the Iraq 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 telesthetic feel of First World media around the world, in turn, it has hardly deconstructed the relations of power that marginalize, devalue, and time and time again mask race otherized peoples and cultures. Baudrillard's radically ahistorical account misses the fact that time "halvespace" 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.

**NOTES**

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5 See John McClure, Late Imperial Romance: Literature and Globalization from Conrad to Pynchon (London: Verso, 1994).
7 Etienne Balibar writes: "The histories of nations are presented to us in the form of a narrative which attributes to these entities the continuity of a subject." See Etienne Balibar and Emmanuel Wallerstein, Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities (London: Verso, 1991), p. 86.
10 Movie theaters in the colonized world were at first built only in urban centers such as Cairo, Baghdad, Bombay. For early responses to the cinema in Baghdad, Ella Shokat has conducted a series of interviews with old Baghdadis from her own community, now dispersed in Israel/Palestine, England, and the US.
12 For more on the "mobilized gaze" of the cinema, see Anne Friedberg's discussion in Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
15 Jean Rouch in his critique of ethnographic filmmaking suggested that anthropologists should not observe their subject as if it were an insect but rather as if it were a "stimulant for mutual understanding." See "Camera and Man" in Mick Eato, ed., Anthropology-Reality-Cinema, (London: BFI, 1979), p. 62. Oussama Sembene, ironically, accused Rouch himself of filming Africans "comme des insectes." See special issue on Rouch, Cinemaction, No. 17 (1982).
16 For more on the question of science and spectacle, see Ella Shokat, "Imaging Theorize: The Disciplinary Gaze of Empire," Public Culture, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Spring 1991), pp. 41-70.
17 Bieame-Jules Marey, a French physicist interested in animal locomotion and in wildlife photography, called his 1882 camera a " Fusil cinématographique," because of its gunlike apparatus, which made twelve rapid exposures on a circular glass plate that revolved like a bullet cylinder. The same notion was later taken against the colonial powers themselves in the Third Cinema notion of the "camera gun" and "guerrilla cinema."
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35 Memo to United Artists, March 8, 1928, from the MPPDA (Motion Picture Producers and Directors of America, Inc.) Archive, quoted in Vasey, "Foreign Parts."

36 A 1928 Resumé from the MPPDA Archive, cited by Vasey, "Foreign Parts."


38 See Abel, French Cinema, p. 151.


40 ABC's A Line in the Sand was broadcast on January 14, 1991, a day before the US "deadline" for Israeli withdrawal from Kuwait.

41 The statistical figure is from Edward Burcombe, ed., The BFI Companion to the Western (New York: DaCapo, 1988), p. 35.


47 In a public-access documentary entitled To Protect Mother Earth (1987), Native American women repeatedly lament what they call "the rape of Mother Earth."


50 Passage from Henry Blackman Soll and Victor Weybright's Buffalo Bill and the Wild West, cited in Fiar and Fiar, The Only Good Indian, p. 74.


53 Ibid.


56 Drinnon, Facing West, p. 221.

57 Cited in ibid., p. 314.


59 See Slotkin, Gunfighter Nation, p. 3.

60 Drinnon, Facing West, p. 404.

61 On imperialism in Disney, see Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart, How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic (New York: International General, 1975); Suzanne Burton, Don (Jiminy) Cricket and the Imperial-Patriarchal The Imperial Imaginary


63 Paul Selkow, Selling Paramus: Gilligan's Island and the Television Medium, unpublished paper.


66 The words are from John McClure's, from Late Imperial Romance (London: Verso, 1994).


68 The recurrent tropes of the war being "on schedule" was as much narratological as military. January 15 was set as the date for war, as the sequel to The Only Good Indian was to begin shooting on January 15.


70 We focus here on the mechanisms of promoting identification; we do not suggest that these mechanisms were experienced in identical ways by, for example, Baghdaidis or New Yorkers, Kuwaitis or Israelis, Christians or Muslims, leftists or rightists. Although the experience of war is mediated, there are differences within spectatorship. These spectatorial differences will be the subject of our last chapter.


73 For more on "secondary identification," see The Imaginary Signifier.

74 Slotkin, Gunfighter Nation, p. 12.

75 Ibid.

76 The media also painted Hussein in the colors of orientalist fantasies of sexual perversion and excess. Entertainment magazines and television shows illustrated these projections about Hussein's putative sexual perversions, including still photos of his bunkroom, his harem, and stories about his presumed penchant for killing his lovers, especially those who could testify to his failures in bed. The cover of a National Examiner (March 12, 1991) carried the headline "Saddam Hussein's Bizarre Sex Life: A Recent CIA Report Reveals," with a photograph of Hussein as a crossdresser in a mini skirt. Geraldo's talk show (March 4, 1991) featured a series of so-called experts' titillating descriptions of torture, all delivered up to an inanitably repelled audience. Close-ups emphasized the responses of good