

UNTHINKING EUROCENTRISM

Multiculturalism and the media

First published 1994
by Routledge
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

Reprinted 1995, 1996, 1997

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Typeset in Times by Solidus (Bristol) Limited
Printed and bound in Great Britain by
Biddles Ltd, Guildford and King's Lynn

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data
Shohat, Ella
Unthinking Eurocentrism : multiculturalism and the media / Ella
Shohat and Robert Stam.
p. cm. – (Sightlines)

Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. Motion pictures–Developing countries. 2. Racism in motion
pictures. 3. Developing countries–Civilization–Western
influences. 4. Intercultural communication in motion pictures.
5. Culture diffusion. I. Stam, Robert. II. Title.
III. Series: Sightlines (London, England)

PN1993.5.D44S56 1994
302.23'43–dc20 93-41501

ISBN 0-415-06324-8 (hbk)
ISBN 0-415-06325-6 (pbk)

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London and New York

STEREOTYPE, REALISM AND THE STRUGGLE OVER REPRESENTATION

Much of the work on ethnic/racial and colonial representation in the media has been “corrective,” devoted to demonstrating that certain films, in some respect or other, “got something wrong” on historical, biographical, or other grounds of accuracy. While these “stereotypes and distortions” analyses pose legitimate questions about social plausibility and mimetic accuracy, about negative and positive images, they are often premised on an exclusive allegiance to an esthetic of verisimilitude.¹ An obsession with “realism” casts the question as simply one of “errors” and “distortions,” as if the “truth” of a community were unproblematic, transparent, and easily accessible, and “lies” about that community easily unmasked. Debates about ethnic representation often break down on precisely this question of “realism,” at times leading to an impasse in which diverse spectators or critics passionately defend their version of the “real.”

THE QUESTION OF REALISM

These debates about realism and accuracy are not trivial, not just a symptom of the “veristic idiocy,” as a certain poststructuralism would have it. Spectators (and critics) are invested in realism because they are invested in the idea of truth, and reserve the right to confront a film with their own personal and cultural knowledge. No deconstructionist fervor should induce us to surrender the right to find certain films sociologically false or ideologically pernicious, to see *Birth of a Nation* (1915), for example, as an “objectively” racist film. That films are only representations does not prevent them from having real effects in the world; racist films can mobilize for the Ku Klux Klan, or prepare the ground for retrograde social policy. Recognizing the inevitability and the inescapability of representation does not mean, as Stuart Hall has put it, that “nothing is at stake.”

The desire to reserve a right to judgment on questions of realism comes into play especially in cases where there are real-life prototypes for characters and situations, and where the film, whatever its conventional disclaimers, implicitly makes, and is received as making, historical-realist claims. (Isaac Julien’s *Looking for Langston*, 1989, dodges the problem through a generic “end run” by labeling itself as a “meditation” on Langston Hughes.) The veterans of the 1960s



Plate 33 History whitewashed in *Mississippi Burning*

civil rights struggle are surely in a position to critique *Mississippi Burning* (1988) for turning the movement’s historical enemy – the racist FBI which harassed and sabotaged the movement – into the film’s heroes, while turning the historical heroes – the thousands of African-Americans who marched and braved beatings and imprisonment and sometimes death – into the supporting cast, passive victim-observers waiting for official White rescue.² This struggle over meaning matters because *Mississippi Burning* might induce audiences unfamiliar with the facts into a fundamental misreading of American history, idealizing the FBI and regarding African-Americans as mute witnesses of history rather than its makers.³ Thus although there is no absolute truth, no truth apart from representation and dissemination, there are still contingent, qualified, perspectival truths in which communities are invested.

Poststructuralist theory reminds us that we live and dwell within language and representation, and have no direct access to the “real.” But the constructed, coded nature of artistic discourse hardly precludes all reference to a common social life. Filmic fictions inevitably bring into play real-life assumptions not only about space and time but also about social and cultural relationships. Films which represent marginalized cultures in a realistic mode, even when they do not claim to represent specific historical incidents, still implicitly make factual claims. Thus critics are right to draw attention to the complacent ignorance of Hollywood portrayals of Native Americans, to the cultural flattening which erases the geographical and cultural differences between Great Plains tribes and those from

other regions, which have Indians of the northeast wearing Plains Indians clothing and living in Hopi dwellings, all collapsed into a single stereotypical figure, the “instant Indian” with “wig, war bonnet, breechclout, moccasins, phony bead-work.”⁴

Many oppressed groups have used “progressive realism” to unmask and combat hegemonic representations, countering the objectifying discourses of patriarchy and colonialism with a vision of themselves and their reality “from within.” But this laudable intention is not always unproblematic. “Reality” is not self-evidently given and “truth” is not immediately “seizable” by the camera. We must distinguish, furthermore, between realism as a goal – Brecht’s “laying bare the causal network” – and realism as a style or constellation of strategies aimed at producing an illusionistic “reality effect.” Realism as a goal is quite compatible with a style which is reflexive and deconstructive, as is eloquently demonstrated by many of the alternative films discussed in this book.

In his work, Mikhail Bakhtin reformulates the notion of artistic representation in such a way as to avoid both a naive faith in “truth” and “reality” and the equally naive notion that the ubiquity of language and representation signifies the end of struggle and the “end of history.” Human consciousness and artistic practice, Bakhtin argues, do not come into contact with the “real” directly but rather through the medium of the surrounding ideological world. Literature, and by extension cinema, do not so much refer to or call up the world as represent its languages and discourses. Rather than directly reflecting the real, or even refracting the real, artistic discourse constitutes a refraction of a refraction; that is, a mediated version of an already textualized and “discursivized” socioideological world. This formulation transcends a naive referential verism without falling into a “hermeneutic nihilism” whereby all texts become nothing more than a meaningless play of signification. Bakhtin rejects naive formulations of realism, in other words, without abandoning the notion that artistic representations are at the same time thoroughly and irrevocably social, precisely because the discourses that art represents are *themselves* social and historical. Indeed, for Bakhtin art is incontrovertibly social, not because it represents the real but because it constitutes a historically situated “utterance” – a complex of signs addressed by one socially constituted subject or subjects to other socially constituted subjects, all of whom are deeply immersed in historical circumstance and social contingency.

The issue, then, is less one of fidelity to a preexisting truth or reality than one of a specific orchestration of ideological discourses and communitarian perspectives. While on one level film is mimesis, representation, it is also utterance, an act of contextualized interlocution between socially situated producers and receivers. It is not enough to say that art is constructed. We have to ask: Constructed for whom? And in conjunction with which ideologies and discourses? In this sense, art is a representation not so much in a mimetic as a political sense, as a delegation of voice.⁵ Within this perspective, it makes more sense to say of *The Gods Must Be Crazy* (1984) not that it is untrue to “reality,” but that it relays the colonialist discourse of official White South Africa. The racist

discourse of the film posits a Manichean binarism contrasting happy and noble but impotent Bantustan “Bushmen,” living in splendid isolation, with dangerous but incompetent mulatto-led revolutionaries. Yet the film camouflages its racism by a superficial critique of White technological civilization. A discursive approach to *First Blood (Rambo)* (1983), similarly, would not argue that it “distorts” reality, but rather that it “really” represents a rightist and racist discourse designed to flatter and nourish the masculinist fantasies of omnipotence characteristic of an empire in crisis. By the same token, representations can be convincingly verisimilar, yet Eurocentric, or conversely, fantastically “inaccurate,” yet anti-Eurocentric. The analysis of a film like *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), sociologically flawed from a mimetic perspective – given its focus on wealthy Asians rather than more typically working-class Asians in London – alters considerably when regarded as a constellation of discursive strategies, as a provocative symbolic inversion of conventional expectations of a miserabilist account of Asian victimization.

That something vital is at stake in these debates becomes obvious in those instances when entire communities passionately protest the representations that are made of them in the name of their own experiential sense of truth. Hollywood stereotypes have not gone unremarked by the communities they portrayed. Native Americans, very early on, vocally protested misrepresentations of their culture and history.⁶ A 1911 issue of *Moving Picture World* (August 3) reports a Native American delegation to President Taft protesting erroneous representations and even asking for a Congressional investigation. In the same vein, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) protested *Birth of a Nation*, Chicanos protested the *bandido* films, Mexicans protested *Viva Villa!* (1934), Brazilians protested *Rio's Road to Hell* (1931), Cubans protested *Cuban Love Song* (1931), and Latin Americans generally protested the caricaturing of their culture. The Mexican government threatened to block distribution of Hollywood films in Mexico if the US film industry did not stop exporting films caricaturing Mexico, Mexican Americans, and the Mexican revolution. More recently, Turks protested *Midnight Express* (1978), Puerto Ricans protested *Fort Apache the Bronx* (1981), Africans protested *Out of Africa* (1985) and Asian-Americans protested *The Year of the Dragon* (1985). Native Americans so vigorously protested the TV series *Mystic Warrior*, based on Ruth Beebe Hill's Ayn Rand-inflected pseudo-Indian saga *Hanta Yo* (1979), that the film version could not be made in the US. One American Indian Movement pamphlet distributed during protests offered ironic guidelines on “How to Make an Indian Movie”:

How to make an Indian Movie. Buy 40 Indians. Totally humiliate and degrade an entire Indian nation. Make sure all Indians are savage, cruel and ignorant . . . Import a Greek to be an Indian princess. Introduce a white man to become an “Indian” hero. Make the white man compassionate, brave and understanding . . . Pocket the profits in Hollywood.

Critical spectators can thus exert pressure on distribution and exhibition, and even affect subsequent productions. While such pressure does not guarantee sympathetic representations, it does at least mean that aggressively hurtful portrayals will not go unchallenged.

Although total realism is a theoretical impossibility, then, spectators themselves come equipped with a "sense of the real" rooted in their own experience, on the basis of which they can accept, question, or even subvert a film's representations. In this sense, the cultural preparation of a particular audience can generate counter-pressure to a racist or prejudicial discourse. Latin American audiences laughed Hollywood's know-nothing portrayals of them off the screen, finding it impossible to take such misinformed images seriously. The Spanish-language version of *Dracula*, for example, made concurrently with the 1931 Bela Lugosi film, mingled Cuban, Argentine, Chilean, Mexican, and peninsular Spanish in a linguistic hodge-podge that struck Latin American audiences as ludicrous. At the same time, spectators may look beyond caricatural representations to see the oppressed performing self. African-Americans were not likely to take Step'n Fetchit as a typical, synecdochic sample of Black behavior or attitudes; Black audiences knew he was acting, and understood the circumstances that led him to play subservient roles. In the same vein, in a kind of double consciousness, spectators may enjoy what they know to be misrepresentations; Baghdadi spectators could enjoy *The Thief of Baghdad* (1940), for example, because they took it as an escapist fantasy, as a Western embroidery of an already fantastic tale from *A Thousand and One Nights*, with no relation to the "real" historical Baghdad.

THE BURDEN OF REPRESENTATION

The hair-trigger sensitivity about racial stereotypes derives partly from what has been labeled the "burden of representation." The connotations of "representation" are at once religious, esthetic, political, and semiotic. On a religious level, the Judeo-Islamic censure of "graven images" and the preference for abstract representations such as the arabesque cast theological suspicion on directly figurative representation and thus on the very ontology of the mimetic arts.⁷ Representation also has an esthetic dimension, in that art too is a form of representation, in Platonic or Aristotelian terms, a mimesis. Representation is theatrical too, and in many languages "to represent" means "to enact" or play a role. The narrative and mimetic arts, to the extent that they represent *ethos* (character) and *ethnos* (peoples) are considered representative not only of the human figure but also of anthropomorphic vision. On another level, representation is also political, in that political rule is not usually direct but representative. Marx said of the peasantry that "they do not represent themselves; they must be represented." The contemporary definition of democracy in the West, unlike the classical Athenian concept of democracy, or that of various Native American communities, rests on the notion of "representative government," as in the

rallying cry of "No taxation without representation." Many of the political debates around race and gender in the US have revolved around the question of self-representation, seen in the pressure for more "minority" representation in political and academic institutions. What all these instances share is the semiotic principle that something is "standing for" something else, or that some person or group is speaking on behalf of some other persons or groups. On the symbolic battlegrounds of the mass media, the struggle over representation in the simulacral realm homologizes that of the political sphere, where questions of imitation and representation easily slide into issues of delegation and voice. The heated debate around which celebrity photographs, whether of Italian-Americans or of African-Americans, will adorn the wall of Sal's Pizzeria in Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* (1989) vividly exemplifies this kind of struggle within representation.

Since what Memmi calls the "mark of the plural" projects colonized people as "all the same," any negative behavior by any member of the oppressed community is instantly generalized as typical, as pointing to a perpetual backsliding toward some presumed negative essence. Representations thus become allegorical; within hegemonic discourse every subaltern performer/role is seen as synecdochically summing up a vast but putatively homogenous community. Representations of dominant groups, on the other hand, are seen not as allegorical but as "naturally" diverse, examples of the ungeneralizable variety of life itself.⁸ Socially empowered groups need not be unduly concerned about "distortions and stereotypes," since even occasionally negative images form part of a wide spectrum of representations. A corrupt White politician is not seen as an "embarrassment to the race;" financial scandals are not seen as a negative reflection on White power. Yet each negative image of an underrepresented group becomes, within the hermeneutics of domination, sorely overcharged with allegorical meaning as part of what Michael Rogin calls the "surplus symbolic value" of oppressed people; the way Blacks, for example, can be made to stand for something beside themselves.⁹

This sensitivity operates on a continuum with other representations and with everyday life, where the "burden" can indeed become almost unbearable. It is this continuum that is ignored when analysts place stereotypes of so-called ethnic Americans, for example, on the same level as those of Native Americans or African-Americans. While all negative stereotypes are hurtful, they do not all exercise the same power in the world. The facile catch-all invocation of "stereotypes" elides a crucial distinction: stereotypes of some communities merely make the target group uncomfortable, but the community has the social power to combat and resist them; stereotypes of other communities participate in a continuum of prejudicial social policy and actual violence against disempowered people, placing the very body of the accused in jeopardy. Stereotypes of Polish-Americans and Italian-Americans, however regrettable, have not been shaped within the racial and imperial foundation of the US, and are not used to justify daily violence or structural oppression against these communities. The

media's tendency to present all Black males as potential delinquents, in contrast, has a searing impact on the actual lives of Black people. In the Stuart case in Boston, the police, at the instigation of the actual (White) murderer, interrogated and searched as many Black men as they could in a Black neighborhood, a measure unthinkable in White neighborhoods, which are rarely seen as representational sites of crime. In the same way, the 1988 Bush campaign's "allegorical" deployment of the "Black buck" figure of Willie Horton to trigger the sexual and racial phobias of White voters, dramatically sharpened the burden of representation carried by millions of Black men, and indirectly by Black women.

The sensitivity around stereotypes and distortions largely arises, then, from the powerlessness of historically marginalized groups to control their own representation. A full understanding of media representation therefore requires a comprehensive analysis of the institutions that generate and distribute mass-mediated texts as well as of the audience that receives them. Whose stories are told? By whom? How are they manufactured, disseminated, received? What are the structural mechanisms of the film and media industry? Who controls production, distribution, exhibition? In the US, in 1942, the NAACP made a compact with the Hollywood studios to integrate Blacks into the ranks of studio technicians, yet very few have become directors, scriptwriters, or cinematographers. Minority directors of *all* racial groups constitute less than 3 per cent of the membership of the almost 4,000-member Directors' Guild of America.¹⁰ An agreement between several film unions and the US Justice Department in 1970 required that minorities be integrated into the industry's general labor pools, but the agreement's good intentions were undercut by growing unemployment throughout the industry and by a seniority system that favored older (therefore White male) members. The most recent report on Hollywood employment practices released by the NAACP reveals that Blacks are underrepresented in "each and every aspect" of the entertainment industry. The 1991 study, entitled "Out of Focus – Out of Synch," claims that Blacks are unable to make final decisions in the motion picture process. Despite the success of people like Oprah Winfrey, Bill Cosby, and Arsenio Hall, only a handful of African-Americans hold executive positions within film studios and television networks. Although Blacks purchase a disproportionate share of domestic movie tickets, nepotism, cronyism, and racial discrimination combine to bar Blacks and Black-owned businesses from the industry.¹¹ Spike Lee speaks of a "glass ceiling" restricting how much money will be spent on Black-made films, based on the assumption that Blacks cannot be trusted with large sums of money.¹² And Blacks are not the only disadvantaged group in this respect. While producers assume that Italian-American directors should direct films about Italian Americans, for example, they choose Anglos to direct films about Latinos.¹³

Furthermore, in that the Hollywood system favors big-budget blockbusters, it is not only classist but also Eurocentric, in effect if not in explicit intention; to be a player in this game one needs to have economic power. Third World

filmmakers are asked, in practice, to worship an unreachable standard of cinematic "civility." Moreover, many Third World countries themselves reinforce hegemony by discriminating against their own cultural productions. (Brazilian TV, for example, systematically favors American films.) In the news and information fields, similarly, it is First World institutions (CNN, AP, and the rest) that provide the filter for the world's news. Distribution advantages too tend to lie with the First World countries. Hollywood films often arrive in the Third World "preadvertised," in that much of the media hype revolving around big-budget productions reaches the Third World through journalistic articles and TV even before these films are released locally. American popular music also buttresses the dissemination of Hollywood films, with movies such as *Saturday Night Fever* (1977), *Purple Rain* (1984), *Truth or Dare* (1991), and *The Bodyguard* (1992) all arriving preadvertised by airtime, given that their music has been played on multinational-dominated radio and TV. Even the Oscar ceremonies constitute a powerful form of advertising; the audience is global, yet the product promoted is almost always American, the "rest of the world" usually being corraled into the restricted category of "foreign film."

The "Third World," then, is doubly weakened by cinematic neocolonialism. Brazilian filmmaker/poet Arnaldo Jabor has denounced this situation in an incendiary poem entitled "Jack Valenti's Brazilian Agenda":

Jack Valenti,
with Republican grin, star-spangled tie,
diamond smile and the pale semblance of the perfect
executive
hints of Dick Tracy, George Wallace, Westmoreland, Liberace,
Billy Graham, and so many other robots of infinite guffaw,
at exactly this moment
with his portfolio of indestructible designs
and the audacity that our Foreign Debt has lately given
international executives,
Jack Valenti will descend from his astral airplane
into the land of promised and overdue payments

Jabor inventories the psychic deformations caused by Hollywood:

... under Valenti's non-Brazilian shoes
the red carpets of hospitality will roll
and no one will see the cinematic crimes in the air
nor the remains of our poor dead minds,
no one will see the wounds
since there will be no corpse
no coroner to discover the bruises in our soul
purple wounds, pink wounds, rainbow wounds
stardust in our eyes, the tattooed people we have become

of Hollywood's thousand and one adventures
invisible victims of a thousand dazzling fairy wounds
Eastmancolor burns
seven-colored napalm
kodak-yellow of our hunger

For Jabor, even dominant narrative conventions form part of an imperial mindset:

... In a few hours,
Valenti will take from his portfolio of indestructible designs
the most sacred values of the imperial Occident:
logic, symmetry, continuity,
beginning, middle, end,
the happy end, the "individual" and
the sinister American vision of goodness.¹⁴

Jabor's poem assumes a situation in which Hollywood films, with easy access to Third World distribution circuits, display tantalizingly opulent production values virtually impossible for the Third World to emulate and often inappropriate to its concerns. The astronomical budget of one First World blockbuster may be the equivalent of decades of production for a Third World country. As such films bludgeon audiences with their maximum-impact Dolby Sound thrill-a-minute style, they create what one might call a "Spielberg effect" of seduction and intimidation for Third World filmmakers and spectators. At the same time, economic neocolonialism and technological dependency raise filmmaking costs in the Third World itself, where imported film, cameras, and accessories often cost two or three times as much as in the "First World." Even well-established Third World filmmakers are likely to find their work blocked by First World-dominated channels of distribution, and when US distributors buy their films it is often at derisory prices. Major Arab filmmakers – the Egyptian Youssef Chahine, for example – have rarely enjoyed commercial openings in the US. Even radical directors remain dependent on multinational companies for their equipment and film stock. And the film stocks themselves may be said to discriminate against darker-complected people: they are sensitive to particular skin tones and must be "stopped down" or specially lit for others. In *A Diary of a Young Soul Rebel*, Isaac Julien attributes the difficulty in lighting dark and light skin in the same frame to the fact that film technology favors lighter skin tones.¹⁵ The celluloid itself is racially inscribed.

The Eurocentrism of audiences can also inflect cinematic production. Here the dominant audience, whose ideological assumptions must be respected if a film is to be successful, or even made at all, exerts a kind of indirect hegemony. "Universal" becomes a codeword for palatable to the Western spectator as the "spoiled child" of the apparatus. A number of big-budget anti-apartheid films – *Cry Freedom* (1987), *A World Apart* (1988), and *A Dry White Season* (1989) – betray traces of "representational adjustments" as the values of a radical liberation

struggle are watered down for a predominantly liberal American audience. In these films, Rob Nixon argues, the challenge of bridging cultural difference becomes "overlaid with problems of profound ideological incompatibility." As a result, the story of Steve Biko in *Cry Freedom* gives way to a story of the "friendship that rocked the world." The radical discourse of the Black Consciousness movement is replaced with a "palatable liberal discourse of moral decency and human rights." Nixon contrasts the experience of *Cry Freedom* with the more radical *Mapantsula* (1989), a film that, simply to be made, had to disguise itself as an "apolitical gangster movie." In *Mapantsula*, moralistic concerns do not shoulder aside strategic institutional questions. The film's refusal to observe the "mass market conventions of translating a radical South African narrative into a white-mediated, liberal idiom" resulted in its failure to draw a major distributor.¹⁶

The production processes of individual films, their means of production and relations of production, bring up questions concerning the filmmaking apparatus and the participation of "minorities" within that apparatus. It seems noteworthy, for example, that in multiethnic but White-dominated societies such as South Africa, Brazil, and the US, Blacks have tended to participate in the filmmaking process mainly as performers rather than as producers, directors, and script-writers. In South Africa, Whites finance, script, direct, and produce films with all-Black casts. In the US in the 1920s, all-White filmmaking crews shot all-Black musicals like *Hearts in Dixie* (1929) and *Hallelujah* (1929). Blacks appeared in these films, just as women still frequently do in Hollywood, as images in spectacles whose social thrust is primarily shaped by others: "Black souls as White man's artifact" (Fanon). And since commercial films are designed to make profits, we must also ask to whom these profits go. J. Uys, the director of *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, paid his star actor N!Xau only 2,000 Rand for *Gods I* and 5,000 Rand for *Gods II*.¹⁷ Similarly, it was not blacks who profited from the American blaxploitation films of the early 1970s; these films were financed, produced, and packaged by the same Whites who received the lion's share of the profits. The thousands of Black Brazilians who played at an out-of-season carnival, with virtually no pay, for the benefit of Marcel Camus' French cameras, never saw any of the millions of dollars that *Black Orpheus* (1959) made around the world.¹⁸

To a certain extent, a film inevitably mirrors its own processes of production as well as larger social processes. At times, minoritarian filmmakers directing films about police harassment have themselves been harassed by police. During the making of Haile Gerima's *Bush Mama* (1975), a film partly about police repression in the inner cities, the crew members themselves became police targets; Black men with cameras, the police assumed, like Black men with guns, could be up to no good.¹⁹ In other cases, we find a contradiction between a film's overt politics and its politics of production. The presumably anticolonial film *Gandhi* (1982), dedicated to the patron saint of non-violent struggle, deployed a differential pay scale that favored European technicians and performers. In

Hearts of Darkness (1989), the documentary about the production of *Apocalypse Now* (1979), Francis Ford Coppola speaks of the low cost of Filipino labor. In this sense he inherits the same privileges accorded the corporate manager who relocates to the Third World to take advantage of local cheap labor.

Victor Masayesva's *Imagining Indians* (1992) explores the commodification inflicted on Native American culture when it is filtered through a Eurocentric industry, even when those doing the filtering are "sympathetic to the Indian." More precisely, the film examines the problematic negotiations between the Hopi and the producers of *Dark Wind*, a film shot on Hopi land (not yet released at the time of writing). Combining interviews with native extras on Hollywood films, excerpts from the films discussed, sequences showing sacred sites, and a staged story of a native woman's encounter with a condescending White dentist, the film shows the tribal elders raising objections to the project but ultimately going along with it, in a process that recalls the treaty negotiations between indigenous nations and the US government. At times, native resistance has been more aggressive. When Werner Herzog tried to film *Fitzcarraldo* (1982) with Aguaruna Indians, the newly formed Aguaruna Council objected, refusing to be represented in the way Herzog planned, and even surrounded Herzog's camp and forced the crew to move downriver.²⁰

The importance of the participation of colonized or formerly colonized people in the process of production becomes obvious when we compare Gillo Pontecorvo's *La Battaglia di Algeria* (Battle of Algiers, 1966) to his later *Burn* (1970). In the former film, a relatively low-budget (\$800,000) Italian-Algerian co-production, Algerian non-professional actors represent themselves in a staged reconstruction of the Algerian war of independence. The Algerians were intimately involved in every aspect of the production, with actors often playing their own historical roles at the very sites where the events took place. They collaborated closely with screenwriter Franco Solanas, who rewrote the scenario numerous times in response to their critiques and observations. As a result, the Algerians exist as socially complex people, and as agents of national struggle. Pontecorvo's multimillion dollar *Burn*, on the other hand, involved no such collaboration. An Italo-French co-production, the film casts Marlon Brando as a British colonial agent against Evaristo Marques, a non-professional actor of peasant background. By pitting one of the First World's most charismatic actors against a completely inexperienced Third World non-professional chosen only for his physiognomy, Pontecorvo, while on one level subverting the star system, on another disastrously tips the scales of spectatorial fascination in favor of the colonizer, in a film whose didactic intention, ironically, was to support anticolonial struggle. The lack of Caribbean participation in the film's production leads to a one-dimensional portrayal of the colonized, seen as shadowy figures devoid of cultural definition.

THE RACIAL POLITICS OF CASTING

Film and theater casting, as an immediate form of representation, constitutes a kind of delegation of voice with political overtones. Here too Europeans and Euro-Americans have played the dominant role, relegating non-Europeans to supporting roles and the status of extras. Within Hollywood cinema, Euro-Americans have historically enjoyed the unilateral prerogative of acting in "blackface," "redface," "brownface," and "yellowface," while the reverse has rarely been the case. From the nineteenth-century vaudeville stage through such figures as Al Jolson in *Hi Lo Broadway* (1933), Fred Astaire in *Swing Time* (1936), Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland in *Babes in Arms* (1939), and Bing Crosby in *Dixie* (1943), the tradition of blackface recital furnished one of the most popular of American pop-cultural forms. Even Black minstrel performers like Bert Williams, as the film *Ethnic Notions* (1987) points out, were obliged to carry the mark of caricature on their own bodies; burnt cork literalized, as it were, the trope of Blackness.

Political considerations in racial casting were quite overt in the silent period. In *The Birth of a Nation* subservient Negroes were played by actual Blacks, while aggressive, threatening Blacks were played largely by Whites in blackface. But after protests by the NAACP, Hollywood cautiously began to cast black actors in small roles. Nevertheless, even in the sound period, White actresses were called on to play the "tragic mulattas" of such films as *Pinky* (1949), *Imitation of Life* (1959), and even of the Cassavetes underground film *Shadows* (1959). Meanwhile, real-life "mulattas" were cast for Black female roles – for example Lena Horne in *Cabin in the Sky* (1943) – although they could easily have "passed" for White roles. In other words, it is not the literal color of the actor that mattered in casting. Given the "blood" definition of "Black" versus "White" in Euro-American racist discourse, one drop of "Black blood" was sufficient to disqualify an actress like Horne from representing White women.

African-Americans were not the only "people of color" to be played by Euro-Americans; the same law of unilateral privilege functioned in relation to other groups. Rock Hudson, Joey Bishop, Boris Karloff, Tom Mix, Elvis Presley, Anne Bancroft, Cyd Charisse, Loretta Young, Mary Pickford, Dame Judith Anderson and Douglas Fairbanks Jr are among the many Euro-American actors who have represented Native American roles, while Paul Muni, Charlton Heston, Marlon Brando, and Natalie Wood are among those who have played Latino characters. As late as *Windwalker* (1973), the most important Indian roles were not played by Native Americans. Dominant cinema is fond of turning "dark" or Third World peoples into substitutable others, interchangeable units who can "stand in" for one another. Thus the Mexican Dolores del Rio played a South Seas Samoan in *Bird of Paradise* (1932), while the Indian Sabu played a wide range of Arab-oriental roles. Lupe Velez, actually Mexican, portrayed Chinese, "Eskimos" (Inuit), Japanese, Malaysians, and American-Indian women, while Omar Sharif, an Egyptian, played Che Guevara.²¹ This asymmetry in representational power has

generated intense resentment among minoritarian communities, for whom the casting of a non-member of the "minority" group is a triple insult, implying (a) you are unworthy of self-representation; (b) no one from your community is capable of representing you; and (c) we, the producers of the film, care little about your offended sensibilities, for we have the power and there is nothing you can do about it.

These practices have implications even on the brute material level of literal self-representation, that is, the need for work. The racist idea that a film, to be economically viable, must use a "universal" (i.e. white) star, reveals the intrication of economics and racism. That people of color have historically been limited to racially designated roles, while Whites are ideologically seen as "beyond" ethnicity, has had disastrous consequences for "minority" artists. In Hollywood, this situation is only now changing, with star actors like Larry Fishburne, Wesley Snipes, and Denzel Washington winning roles originally earmarked for White actors. At the same time, even "affirmative action" casting can serve racist purposes, as when the role of the White judge in the novel *Bonfire of the Vanities* (1990) was given to Morgan Freeman in the Brian de Palma film, but only as a defense mechanism to ward off accusations of racism.

Nor does chromatically literal self-representation guarantee non-Eurocentric representation. The system can simply "use" the performer to enact the dominant set of codes; even, at times, over the performer's objection. Josephine Baker's star status did not enable her to alter the ending of *Princess Tam Tam* (1935) to have her North African (Berber) character marry the French aristocrat instead of the North African servant, or to marry the working-class Frenchman played by Jean Gabin in *Zou Zou* (1934). Instead, *Zou Zou* ends up alone, performing as a caged bird pining for the Caribbean. Despite her protests, Baker's roles were circumscribed by the codes that forbade her screen access to White men as legitimate marriage partners. Their excessive performance styles allowed actresses like Josephine Baker and Carmen Miranda to undercut and parody stereotypical roles, but could not gain them substantive power. Even the expressive performance of the politically aware Paul Robeson was enlisted, despite the actor's protests, in the encomium to European colonialism in Africa that is *Sanders of the River* (1935). In recent years Hollywood has made gestures toward "correct" casting; African-American, Native American, and Latino/a performers have been allowed to "represent" their communities. But this "realistic" casting is hardly sufficient if narrative structure and cinematic strategies remain Eurocentric. An epidermically correct face does not guarantee community self-representation, any more than Clarence Thomas's black skin guarantees his representation of African-American legal interests.

A number of film and theater directors have sought alternative approaches to literally self-representative casting. Orson Welles staged all-Black versions of Shakespeare plays, most notably his "Voodoo Macbeth" in Harlem in 1936. Peter Brook, similarly, cast a rainbow of multicultural performers in his filmic adaptation of the Hindu epic *The Mahabharata* (1990). Glauber Rocha deliber-

ately confused linguistic and thespian self-representations in his *Der Leone Have Sept Cabeças* (1970), whose very title subverts the linguistic positioning of the spectator by mingling five of the languages of Africa's colonizers. Rocha's Brechtian fable animates emblematic figures representing the diverse colonizing nations, suggesting imperial homologies among them by having an Italian-accented speaker play the role of the American, a Frenchman play the German and so forth.

Such antiliteral strategies provoke an irreverent question: what is wrong with non-originary casting? Doesn't acting always involve a ludic play with identity? Should we applaud Blacks playing Hamlet but not Laurence Olivier playing Othello? And have not Euro-American and European performers often ethnically substituted for one another (for example, Greta Garbo and Cyd Charisse as Russians in *Ninotchka*, 1939, and *Silk Stockings*, 1957)? Casting, we would argue, has to be seen in contingent terms, in relation to the role, the political and esthetic intention, and to the historical moment. We cannot equate a gigantic charade whereby a whole foreign country is represented by players not from that country and is imagined as speaking a language not its own (a frequent Hollywood practice), with cases where non-literal casting forms part of an alternative esthetic. The casting of Blacks to play Hamlet, for example, militates against a traditional discrimination that denied Blacks any role, literally and metaphorically, in both the performing arts and in politics, while the casting of Laurence Olivier as Othello prolongs a venerable history of deliberately bypassing Black talent. We see the possibilities of epidermically incorrect casting in *Seeing Double* (1989), a San Francisco Mime Troupe play about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where an ethnically diverse cast takes on shifting roles in such a way as to posit analogical links between communities. An African-American actor plays both a Palestinian-American and a Jewish-American, for example, thus hinting at a common history of exclusion binding Blacks, Jews, and Arabs.

THE LINGUISTICS OF DOMINATION

The same issues of self-representation arise in relation to language. As potent symbols of collective identity, languages are the foci of deep loyalties existing at the razor's edge of national and cultural difference. Although languages as abstract entities do not exist in hierarchies of value, languages as lived operate within hierarchies of power. Inscribed within the play of power, language becomes caught up in the cultural hierarchies typical of Eurocentrism. English, especially, has often served as the linguistic vehicle for the projection of Anglo-American power, technology, and finance. Hollywood films, for their part, betray a linguistic hubris bred of empire. Hollywood proposed to tell not only its own stories but also those of other nations, and not only to Americans but also to the other nations themselves, and always in English. In Cecil B. de Mille epics, both the ancient Egyptians and the Israelites, not to mention God, speak English. By ventriloquizing the world, Hollywood indirectly diminished the possibilities of

linguistic self-representation for other nations. Hollywood both profited from and itself promoted the world-wide dissemination of the English language, thus contributing indirectly to the subtle erosion of the linguistic autonomy of other cultures.

Since for the colonizer to be human was to speak the colonizing language, colonized people were encouraged to abandon their languages. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o tells of Kenyan children being punished for speaking their own languages, made to carry plaques saying "I am stupid,"²² a situation portrayed in the Senegalese film *Le Symbole* (1994). But the colonized are denied speech in a double sense, first in the idiomatic sense of not being allowed to speak, and second in the more radical sense of not being recognized as capable of speech.²³ It is this historical sense of tying tongues that has provoked protest against countless films, where linguistic discrimination and colonialist "tact" go hand in hand with condescending characterization and distorted social portraiture. The "Indians" of classic Hollywood westerns, denuded of their own idiom, mouth pidgin English, a mark of their inability to master the "civilized" language. In many First World films set in the Third World, the "word of the other" is elided, distorted, or caricatured. In films set in North Africa, for example, Arabic is an indecipherable murmur, while the "real" language of communication is the French of Jean Gabin in *Pépé le Moko* (1936) or the English of Bogart and Bergman in *Casablanca* (1942). In Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), which is pretentiously, even ostentatiously sympathetic to the Arabs, we hear almost no Arabic at all but rather English spoken in a motley of accents, almost all of them (Omar Sharif's being the exception) having little to do with Arabic. And, more recently, Bertolucci's *The Sheltering Sky* (1991), set in North Africa, privileges the English of its protagonists and does not bother to translate Arabic dialog. Given this film history, the relative advance of *Dances with Wolves* (1990), and *Black Robe* (1991), trigger hopes for a sea-change in linguistic representation.

Many Third World filmmakers have reacted against the hegemonic deployment of European languages in dominant cinema. Although English, for example, has become the literary *lingua franca* for postcolonials like Ben Okri, Derek Walcott, Bharati Mukherjee, Salman Rushdie, and Vikram Seth, and in this sense is no longer the possession of its original "owners," it has also been met with the anti-neocolonial demand of return to one's linguistic sources. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's challenge to African writers – that they write in African rather than European languages – has to some extent been taken up by African filmmakers, for whom the use of African languages (with subtitles) is standard procedure. Ousmane Sembene, for example, has filmed in diverse African languages, notably Diola and Wolof. Sembene has also foregrounded the issue of language and power within the colonial situation. His *Xala* (1974), for example, links issues of linguistic and social representation. The protagonist, El Hadji, a polygamous Senegalese businessman, embodies the neocolonized attitudes of the African elite so vehemently denounced by Fanon. Sembene structures the film around the opposition of Wolof and French. While the elite don African dress and make

nationalist speeches in Wolof, they speak French among themselves and reveal European suits beneath their African garb. Many of the characterizations revolve around the question of language. El Hadji's first wife, Adja, representing the precolonial African woman, speaks Wolof and wears traditional clothes. The second wife, Oumi, mimics European fashions, affects French, and wears wigs, sunglasses, and low-cut dresses. Finally, El Hadji's daughter, Rama, representing the progressive hybrid of Africa and Europe, knows French but insists on speaking Wolof to her francophile father, who prefers she seal her lips. Instead, she performs what Gloria Anzaldúa calls "linguistic code-switching" in the face of censorious forces, "transforming silence with (an)other alphabet."²⁴ Thus conflicts involving language-shifts are made to carry a strong charge of social and cultural tension.

As a social battleground, language forms the site where political struggles are engaged both collectively and intimately. People do not enter simply into language as a master code; they participate in it as socially constituted subjects whose linguistic exchange is shaped by power relations. In the case of colonialism, linguistic reciprocity is simply out of the question. In Sembene's *La Noire de ...* (Black Girl, 1966), the female protagonist Diouana stands at the convergence of multiple structures of inequality – as Black, as maid, as woman – and her oppression is conveyed specifically through language. Diouana overhears her French employer say of her: "She understands French ... by instinct ... like an animal." The colonialist here transforms a defining human characteristic – the capacity for language – into a sign of animality, even though Diouana knows French while her employers, after years in Senegal, know nothing of her language and culture. It is this regime of linguistic non-reciprocity which distinguishes colonial bilingualism from ordinary linguistic dualism. For the colonizer, the refusal of the colonized's language is linked to the denial of political self-determination, while for the colonized mastery of the colonizer's tongue testifies both to a capacity for survival and a daily drowning out of one's voice. Colonial bilingualism entails the inhabiting of conflicting psychic and cultural realms.

The neocolonial situation, in which the Hollywood language becomes the model of "real" cinema, has as its linguistic corollary the view of European languages as inherently more "cinematic" than others. The English phrase "I love you," some Brazilian critics argued without irony in the 1920s, was intrinsically more beautiful than the Portuguese *eu te amo*. The particular focus on amorous language reflects not only the lure of Hollywood's romantic model of cinema projecting glamor and popular stars, but also an intuitive sense of the erotics of linguistic neocolonialism – that is, the sense that the imperializing language exercises a kind of phallic power and attraction. Carlos Diegues' *Bye Bye Brazil* (1980), titled in English even in Brazil, looks at English, as it were, "through" Brazilian Portuguese. The name of the film's traveling entertainment troupe – Caravana Rolidei – phonetically transcribes the Brazilian pronunciation of the English "holiday," in a spirit of creative distortion. This refusal to "get it straight"

reveals a typical colonial ambivalence, melding sincere affection and resentful parody. The Chico Buarque theme song features expressions like “bye bye,” “night and day,” and “OK” as indices of the Americanization (and in this case the multinationalization) of a world where Portuguese-speaking Amazonian tribal chiefs wear designer jeans and backwoods rock groups sound like the Bee Gees, embodying a palimpsestic America. In sum, the issue of linguistic self-representation does not simply entail a return to “authentic” languages but rather the orchestration of languages for emancipatory purposes.²⁵

WRITING HOLLYWOOD AND RACE

Important work has already been done on the ethnic/racial representation of oppressed communities within Hollywood cinema. Critics such as Vine Deloria, Ralph and Natasha Friar, Ward Churchill, Annette Jaimes, and many others have discussed the binaristic splitting that has turned Native Americans into blood-thirsty beasts or noble savages. Native American critics have denounced the “redface” convention, the practice of having non-Native Americans – White (Rock Hudson), Latino (Ricardo Montalban), or Japanese (Sessue Hayakawa) – play Native American roles. They have also pointed to the innumerable representational blunders of Hollywood films, which have had Indians perform grotesque dog-eating rituals (*The Battle at Elderbush Gulch*, 1913), and wrist-cutting ceremonies (*Broken Arrow*, 1950), and have misascribed specific ceremonies to the wrong tribes (the Sioux Sun-Dance presented as the *okipa* ceremony of the Mandans). Churchill points out that even “sympathetic” films like *A Man Called Horse* (1970), hailed as an authentic, positive portrayal, depicts a people “whose language is Lakota, whose hairstyles range from Assiniboi through Nez Perce to Comache, whose tipi design is Crow, and whose Sun Dance ceremony . . . [is] typically Mandan.”²⁶ The film has the Anglo captive teach the Indians the finer points of the bow, a weapon which had been in use by Native Americans for countless generations, thus demonstrating “the presumed inherent superiority of Eurocentric minds.”²⁷

How can one account for Hollywood films that show some sensitivity to issues of self-representation? A popular film like *Dances with Wolves* demonstrates the need for a nuanced multivalent analysis. The film did break ground by casting Native Americans to play themselves, yet it was less politically audacious in placing its story in the distant past, cordoned off from the contemporary struggles of living native people. However, a thoroughgoing analysis must see the film as contradictory, affirming at the same time that it (1) constitutes a relatively progressive step for Hollywood in its adoption of a pro-indigenous perspective, and (2) in respecting the linguistic integrity of the Native Americans; yet that (3) this progressive step is in part undermined by the traditional split portrayal of bad Pawnees/good Sioux; that (4) it is further compromised by its elegiac emphasis on the remote past and (5) by the foregrounding of a Euro-American protagonist and his (6) idyll with a non-Indian lover; yet that (7) this Euro-American

focalization, given the mass audience’s identificatory propensities, also guaranteed the film’s wide impact; and (8) that this impact indirectly helped open doors for Native American filmmakers, without (9) introducing major institutional changes within the industry, but also (10) altering the ways in which such films are likely to be made in the future, while (11) still forming part, ultimately, of a capitalist/modernist project that has fostered the destruction of Native American peoples.²⁸ A textually subtle, contextualized analysis, then, must take into account all these apparently contradictory points at the same time, without lapsing into a Manichean good film/bad film binaristic schema, the “politically correct” equivalent of “bad object” criticism.²⁹

A number of scholars, notably Donald Bogle, Daniel Leab, James Snead, Jim Pines, Jacquie Jones, Pearl Bowser, Clyde Taylor, and Thomas Cripps, have explored how preexisting stereotypes – for example the jiving sharpster and shuffling stage sambo – were transferred from antecedent media to film. In *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks*, Bogle surveys representations of Blacks in Hollywood cinema, especially foregrounding the unequal struggle between Black performers and the stereotypical roles offered them by Hollywood. Bogle’s very title announces the five major stereotypes:

1. the servile “Tom” (going back to Uncle Tom in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*);
2. the “Coon” (Step’n Fetchit is the archetypal example), a type itself subdivided into the “pickanniny” (the harmless eye-popping clown figure) and the Uncle Remus (naive, congenial folk philosopher);
3. the “Tragic Mulatto,” usually a woman, victim of a dual racial inheritance, who tries to “pass for White” in such films as *Pinky* and *Imitation of Life*; or else the demonized mulatto man, devious and ambitious, like Silas Lynch in *Birth of a Nation*;
4. the “Mammy,” the fat, cantankerous but ultimately sympathetic female servant who provides the glue that keeps households together (the Aunt Jemima “handkerchief head” is one variant), such as Hattie McDaniel in *Gone with the Wind*; and
5. the “Buck,” the brutal, hypersexualized Black man, a figure of menace inherited from the stage, whose most famous filmic incarnation is perhaps Gus in *Birth of a Nation*, and which George Bush resuscitated for electoral purposes in the figure of Willie Horton.

Bogle’s book goes beyond stereotypes to focus on the ways African-American performers have “signified” and subverted the roles forced on them. For Bogle, the history of Black performance is one of battling against confining types and categories, a battle homologous to the quotidian struggle of three-dimensional Blacks against the imprisoning conventions of an apartheid-style system. It is interesting to compare Bogle’s largely implicit theory of performance in film with James C. Scott’s anthropology of performance and resistance in everyday life. If we see performance as completely determined from above, Scott argues, we “miss the agency of the actor in appropriating the performance for his own

ends.”³⁰ Thus subaltern performance encodes, often in sanitized, ambiguous ways, what Scott calls the “hidden transcripts” of a subordinated group. A kind of “euphemization” occurs when hidden transcripts are expressed within power-laden situations by actors who prefer to avoid the sanctions that a direct statement might bring. At their best, Black performances undercut stereotypes by individualizing the type or slyly standing above it. The “flamboyant bossiness” of McDaniel’s “Mammy” in *Gone with the Wind*, her way of looking Scarlett right in the eye, within this perspective, indirectly translates hostility toward a racist system. Bogle emphasizes the resilient imagination of Black performers obliged to play against script and studio intentions, their capacity to turn demeaning roles into resistant performance. Thus “each major black actor of the day managed to reveal some unique quality of voice or personality that audiences immediately responded to. Who could forget Bojangles’ urbanity? Or Rochester’s cement-mixer voice? Or Louise Beavers’ jollity? Or Hattie McDaniel’s haughtiness?”³¹ Performance itself intimated liberatory possibilities.

Historically, Hollywood has tried to “teach” Black performers how to conform to its own stereotypes. Beavers’ voice had no trace of dialect or southern patois; she had to school herself in the southern drawl considered compulsory for Black performers. Robert Townsend’s *Hollywood Shuffle* (1987) satirizes these racial conventions by having White directors oblige Black actors to conform to White stereotypes about Blackness. The White directors give lessons in street jive, gestures and mannerisms, all of which the Black actor-protagonist finds distasteful. The protagonist’s own dream, presented in a fantasy sequence, is to play prestigious hero roles such as Superman and Rambo or tragic roles like King Lear. The desire for dignified and socially prestigious dramatic roles reflects a desire to be taken seriously, not always to be the butt of the joke, to win access to the generic prestige historically associated with tragedy and epic, even if Townsend’s film relays this desire, paradoxically, in parodic form.

Apart from studies on Native Americans and African-Americans, important work has also been done on the stereotypes of other ethnic groups. In *The Latin Image in American Film*, Allen Woll points to the substratum of male violence common to Latino male stereotypes – the bandido, the greaser, the revolutionary, the bullfighter. Latina women, meanwhile, call up the heat and passionate salsa evoked by the titles of the films of Lupe Velez: *Hot Pepper* (1933), *Strictly Dynamite* (1934), and *Mexican Spitfire* (1940). Arthur G. Pettit, in *Images of the Mexican American in Fiction and Film*, traces the intertext of such imagery to the Anglo “conquest fiction” of writers like Ned Buntline and Zane Grey. Already in conquest fiction, Pettit argues, the Mexican is defined negatively, in terms of “qualities diametrically opposed to an Anglo prototype.” Anglo conquest authors transferred to the *mestizo* Mexicans the prejudices previously directed toward the Native American and the Black. They excoriate miscegenation and repeatedly sound the theme of the inevitable decline and degeneracy of Mexicans due to race mixing: “the Spaniards and their ‘polluted’ descendants have committed racial and national self-genocide by mixing voluntarily with inferior dark-skinned races.”³²

In conquest novels, Mexicans are not called Mexicans but “greasers,” “yallers,” “mongrels,” and “niggers”. Hollywood inherited these stereotypes – the bandido, the greaser, the “half-breed” whore – along with the positively connoted elite figures of the Castillian gentleman and the high-caste Castillian woman. Morality, in such works, is color-coordinated; the darker the color, the worse the character.³³

A number of didactic documentaries address the issue of stereotypes. *The Media Show: North American Indians* (1991) critically dissects the portrayal of “Indians” in Hollywood films (including *Dances with Wolves*). Phil Lucas and Robert Hagopian’s *Images of Indians* (1979) examines Hollywood films as purveyors of Native American stereotypes. This documentary is divided into five half-hour segments: “The Great Movie Massacre” examines the warrior image of the Indian; “Heathen Injuns and the Hollywood Gospel” addresses the misrepresentation of indigenous religion; “How Hollywood Wins the West” focusses on the one-sided representations of history; “The Movie Reel Indians” speaks of industry attitudes toward Native Americans; and “Warpaint and Wigs” speaks of the constructedness and artificiality of the Hollywood Indian. *Black History: Lost, Stolen, and Strayed* (1967), narrated by Bill Cosby, criticizes the historical misrepresentations and stereotypical portrayals of Blacks. Marlon Riggs’ *Ethnic Notions* stresses the pain caused by stereotypes incarnated in racist cartoons, toys, and films, and alternates citations of racist materials with interviews with African-American performers and scholars. Gloria Ribe’s *From Here, from This Side* (1988) deploys Hollywood films and archival material to communicate a vision of cultural domination from the Mexican side. The Edward Said-narrated *In the Shadow of the West* (1984) critiques orientalist imagery in part through conversations with Palestinians, Lebanese, and Arab intellectuals living in the US. Renee Tajima and Christine Choy’s *Who Killed Vincent Chin?* (1988), a film about the murder by White autoworkers of a Chinese-American whom they took to be Japanese, uses media materials in its portrayal of anti-Asian discrimination. Valerie Soe’s *All Orientals Look the Same* (1986) undercuts the orientaling “mark of the plural” by having very diverse Asian-American faces dissolve into one another. Christine Choy’s and Renee Tajima’s *Yellow Tule Blues* (1990) juxtaposes media imagery with the actual situations of Asian-Americans. Shu Lea Cheang’s *Color Schemes* (1989) spoofs American melting-pot ideals through the metaphor of “color wash” to explore the ambiguities of racial assimilation. Twelve performers evoke four ethnic “wash cycles”: soak, wash, rinse, extract. Deborah Gee’s *Slaying the Dragon* (1987), finally, uses film clips (for example, from *The World of Suzie Wong*, 1960) and interviews to show how Asian women have been stereotyped as docile and exotic.

Riggs’ *Color Adjustment* (1991) chronicles the history of Black representation on TV, moving from the caricatural days of *Amos and Andy* through Black sitcoms like *Good Times* and through *Roots* up to the ultimate Black American family: the Huxtables of *The Cosby Show*. Throughout, *Color Adjustment* speaks less about “authentic” representation than about the fundamental paradigm lurking behind

most of the shows – the idealized suburban nuclear family. In one of the quoted programs, *All in the Family*, Edith Bunker praises Black progress: “They used to all be servants, and maids, and waiters, and now they’re lawyers and doctors. They’ve come a long way on television!” But this simulacral meliorism, *Color Adjustment* suggests, is deeply inadequate. Even if TV were peopled exclusively by African-American doctors and lawyers, the concrete situation of African-Americans would not thereby be substantially improved. *Color Adjustment* underlines this contrast between media image and social reality by suggestively juxtaposing sitcom episodes with documentary street footage, sometimes by way of contrast (*The Brady Bunch* versus police attacks on civil rights marches), sometimes by way of comparison (scenes of anti-bussing demonstrators hurling racial epithets juxtaposed with Archie Bunker’s racial inanities). *Fade to Black* (1989), finally, aggressively orchestrates very diverse materials: a capsule history of Blacks in films, Althusser-influenced theoretical interventions, clips from feature films (*Vertigo*, 1958; *Taxi Driver*, 1976), rap music and a hard-hitting voice-over commentary. The voice-overs by two Black men contrast White verbal denials of racism with everyday “proxemic” expressions of fear and hostility: the White motorist who clicks the car door lock upon seeing a Black man, the White matron who clutches her purse upon seeing a Black man approach.

THE LIMITS OF THE STEREOTYPE

We would like both to argue for the importance of the study of stereotyping in popular culture and to raise some methodological questions about the underlying premises of character- or stereotype-centered approaches. (We are not implying that the work of the writers just mentioned is reducible to “stereotype analysis.”) To begin, the stereotype-centered approach, the analysis of repeated, ultimately pernicious constellations of character traits, has made an indispensable contribution by:

1. revealing oppressive patterns of prejudice in what might at first glance have seemed random and inchoate phenomena;
2. highlighting the psychic devastation inflicted by systematically negative portrayals on those groups assaulted by them, whether through internalization of the stereotypes themselves or through the negative effects of their dissemination; and
3. signaling the social functionality of stereotypes, demonstrating that they are not an error of perception but rather a form of social control, intended as what Alice Walker calls “prisons of image.”³⁴

The call for “positive images,” in the same way, corresponds to a profound logic which only those accustomed to having their narcissism stroked can fail to understand. Given a dominant cinema that trades in heroes and heroines, “minority” communities rightly ask for their fair share of the representational pie as a simple matter of representational parity.

At the same time, the stereotype approach entails a number of theoretical-political pitfalls. First, the exclusive preoccupation with images, whether positive or negative, can lead to a kind of *essentialism*, as less subtle critics reduce a complex variety of portrayals to a limited set of reified formulae. Such criticism is procrustean; the critic forces diverse fictive characters into preestablished categories. Behind every Black child performer the critic discerns a “pickaninny”; behind every sexually attractive Black actor a “buck”; behind every corpulent or nurturing Black female a “mammy.” Such reductionist simplifications run the risk of reproducing the very racial essentialism they were designed to combat.

This essentialism generates in its wake a certain *ahistoricism*; the analysis tends to be static, not allowing for mutations, metamorphoses, changes of valence, altered function; it ignores the historical instability of the stereotype and even of language. Some of the basic terminology invoked by Bogle was not always anti-Black. The word “coon,” for example, originally referred to rural Whites, becoming a racial slur only around 1848. At the time of the American revolution, the term “buck” evoked a “dashing, virile young man”; and became associated with Blacks only after 1835.³⁵ Stereotype analysis also fails to register the ways that imagery might be shaped, for example, by structural changes in the economy. How does one reconcile the “lazy Mexican” from the “greaser films” with the media’s present-day “illegal alien” overly eager to work long hours at half pay? On the other hand, images may change, while their function remains the same, or vice versa. Riggs’ *Ethnic Notions* explains that the role of the Uncle Tom was not to represent Blacks but rather to reassure Whites with a comforting image of Black docility, just as the role of the Black buck, ever since Reconstruction, has been to frighten Whites in order to subordinate them to elite manipulation, a device invented by southern Dixiecrats but subsequently adopted by the Republican Party. The positive images of TV sitcoms with Black casts, such as *Different Strokes* and *The Jeffersons*, Herman Gray argues, idealize “racial harmony, affluence, and individual mobility” and thus “deflect attention from the persistence of racism, inequality, and differential power.”³⁶ The Huxtables’ success, as Jhally and Lewis put it, “implies the failure of the majority of black people.”³⁷ Contemporary stereotypes, moreover, are inseparable from the long history of colonialist discourse. The “sambo” type is on one level merely a circumscribed characterological instantiation of the infantilizing trope. The “tragic mulatto”, in the same vein, is a cautionary figure premised on the trope of purity, the loathing of mixing characteristic of a certain racist discourse. Similarly, many of the scandalously racist statements discussed in the media are less eccentric views than throwbacks to colonialist discourses. Seen in historical perspective, TV commentator Andy Rooney’s widely censured remark that Blacks had “watered down their genes” is not a maverick “opinion” but rather a return to the nostrums of “racial degeneracy” theories.

A recent *Tom Brokaw Report* (April 1993) on the subject of immigration illustrates the need to historicize the discussion of stereotyping and media racism. In the report, we accompany the efforts of the border police to catch “illegal

aliens” coming from Mexico. In the greenish light of surveillance cameras, we see the “aliens” making their way over fences, across highways, through cracks. The portrayal suggests a kind of ineradicable vermin who proliferate like mice and are just as difficult to stomp out. One of “them” appears briefly, not to explain their perspective but only to warn that nothing will stop them, that arrest and expulsion are not major obstacles. There is no historicization, nothing about the brutality of the border police, and no explanation that this entire area was once part of Mexico, that “illegal” Mexicans were there before “legal” Anglos, and that many Chicanos and Mexicans regard themselves as part of a transborder nation. We then move to New York, where a Black Dominican medic reports on the high levels of crime in the neighborhood he serves; he calls for more “selective” immigration. After hearing about the “bad” ethnics (predictably Black and Latino), we meet the “good ethnics”: this time Russian Jews who work hard, do not complain, and are deeply appreciative of America’s gifts. The same signs shift valence according to an ethnic hierarchy. Both Dominicans and Russians are shown dancing, for example, but only with the Russians does the voice-over “anchor” the dancing as a sign of “*joie de vivre*.” Then we meet another “model minority,” a Korean businessman who “teaches discipline” to young Blacks, who praise the Korean for improving their neighborhood. The Koreans, we are told, work long hours, respect their elders, and get ahead, but their success causes resentment. (Given the LA rebellions, we suspect that the “resenters” might be Blacks and Latinos.) Three White male “experts” address us: one, a liberal, argues for tolerance; the other two argue for greater restrictions. The few Black voices in the program speak up not for their community but rather for other communities (the Koreans) or for stricter immigration policy; no one speaks up for the Blacks. Not a word about racism, about widely divergent histories and relations to colonialism, slavery, or capitalism.

A moment’s reflection reveals why this scenario seems so familiar. We are hearing echoes of the nineteenth-century racial hierarchy theories developed by such thinkers as Hegel, Gobineau, and Renan, now embedded in “culture of poverty” ideology. For Gobineau, Blacks are on the lowest rung, incapable of development, while the “Yellow” race is superior to the Black, but still passive and susceptible to despotism. The White race, characterized by intelligence, orderliness, and a taste for liberty, occupies the top position. For Renan too, Blacks (along with indigenous peoples) are at the bottom, with Asians as an “intermediate race” and White Europeans positioned at the top. In the Brokaw program, the qualities posited have changed (the Asians are no longer passive but rather hardworking; European Jews, once the object of anti-Semitic hostility, have been promoted), yet the basic hierarchizing mechanism remains intact. White superiority is not so much asserted as assumed – Whites are the objective ones, the experts, the uncontroversial ones, those who cause no problems, those who judge, those “at home” in the world, whose prerogative it is to create laws in the face of alien disorder.

The focus on “good” and “bad” characters in image analysis confronts racist

discourse on that discourse’s favored ground. It easily slides into *moralism*, and thus into fruitless debates about the relative virtues of fictive characters (seen not as constructs but as if they were real flesh-and-blood people) and the correctness of their fictional actions. This kind of anthropocentric moralism, deeply rooted in Manichean schemas of good and evil, leads to the treatment of complex political issues as if they were matters of individual ethics, in a manner reminiscent of the morality plays staged by the right, in which virtuous American heroes do battle against demonized Third World villains. Thus Bush/Reagan regime portrayals of its enemies drew on the “Manichean allegories” (in the words of Abdul Jan Mohamed) of colonialism: the Sandinistas were portrayed as latter-day banditos, the *mestizo* Noriega was made to incarnate Anglo phobias about Latino men (violent, drug-dealing, voodoo-practicing), and Saddam Hussein triggered the intertextual memory of Muslim fanatics and Arab assassins.

The media discussion of racism often reflects this same personalistic bias. Mass-media debates often revolve around sensational accusations of *personal* racism; the accusation and the defense are framed in individual terms. Accused of racism for exploiting the image of Willie Horton, Bush advertised his personal animosity toward bigotry and his tenderness for his little brown grandchildren, exemplifying an ideological penchant for personalizing and moralizing essentially political issues. The usual sequence in media accusations of racism, similarly, is that the racist statement is made, offense is expressed, punishment is called for: all of which provokes a series of counter-statements – that the person in question is not racist, that some of the person’s best friends belong to the race in question, and so forth. The process has the apparently positive result of placing certain statements beyond the pale of civil speech; blatant racism is stigmatized and punished. But the more subtle, deeper forms of discursively and institutionally structured racism remain unrecognized. The discussion has revolved around the putative racism of a single individual; the problem is assumed to be personal, ethical. The result is a lost opportunity for antiracist pedagogy: racism is reduced to an individual, attitudinal problem, distracting attention from racism as a systematic self-reproducing discursive apparatus that itself shapes racist attitudes. Stereotypic analysis is likewise covertly premised on *individualism* in that the individual character, rather than larger social categories (race, class, gender, nation, sexual orientation), remains the point of reference. Individual morality receives more attention than the larger configurations of power. This apolitical approach to stereotypes allows pro-business “content analysts” to lament without irony the TV’s “stereotyping” of American businessmen, forgetting that television as an institution, at least, is permeated by the corporate ethos, that its commercials and even its shows are commercials *for* business.

The focus on individual character also misses the ways in which social institutions and cultural practices, as opposed to individuals, can be misrepresented without a single character being stereotyped. The flawed mimesis of many Hollywood films dealing with the Third World, with their innumerable ethnographic, linguistic, and even topographical blunders, has less to do with

stereotypes *per se* than with the tendentious ignorance of colonialist discourse. The social institutions and cultural practices of a people can be denigrated without individual stereotypes entering into the question. The media often reproduce Eurocentric views of African spirit religions, for example, by regarding them as superstitious cults rather than as legitimate belief-systems, prejudices enshrined in the patronizing vocabulary ("animism," "ancestor worship," "magic") used to discuss the religions.³⁸ Within Eurocentric thinking, superimposed Western hierarchies work to the detriment of African religions:

1. oral rather than written, they are seen as lacking the cultural imprimatur of the religions "of the Book" (when in fact the text simply takes distinct, oral-semiotic form, as in Yoruba praise songs);
2. they are regarded as polytheistic rather than monotheistic (a debatable hierarchy and in any case a misrepresentation of most African religions);
3. they are viewed as superstitious rather than scientific (an inheritance from the positivist view of religion as evolving from myth to theology to science), when in fact all religions involve a leap of faith;
4. they are considered disturbingly corporeal and ludic (danced) rather than abstractly and austere theological;
5. they are thought insufficiently sublimated (for example, involving actual animal sacrifice rather than symbolic or historically commemorative sacrifice); and
6. they are seen as wildly gregarious, drowning the personality in the collective transpersonal fusions of trance, rather than respecting the unitary, bounded individual consciousness. The Christian ideal of the *visio intellectualis*, which Christian theology inherited from the neo-Platonists, flees in horror from the plural trances and visions of the "trance" religions of Africa and of many indigenous peoples.³⁹ In a less Eurocentric perspective, all these "deficiencies" might become advantages: the lack of a written text precludes fundamentalist dogmatism; the multiplicity of spirits allows for historical change; bodily possession betokens an absence of puritanical asceticism; the dance and music are an aesthetic resource.

Diasporic syncretic religions of African origin are almost invariably caricatured in dominant media. The affiliation of such "voodoo" films as *Voodoo Man* (1944), *Voodoo Woman* (1957), and *Voodoo Island* (1957) with the horror genre already betrays a viscerally phobic attitude to African religion. But in recent films positivist phobias about "magical" practices, coupled with monotheist diabolization of "godless" rituals, still surface. *The Believers* (1986) presents Santeria as a cult dominated by ritual child-murderers, in a manner reminiscent of the "unspeakable rites" invoked by colonialist literature. Any number of films eroticize African religion in a way that betrays ambivalent attraction and repulsion. *Angel Heart* (1987) has Lisa Bonet, as Epiphany Proudfoot the voodoo priestess, thrash around with Mickey Rourke in a sanguinary love scene. Another Mickey Rourke vehicle, *Wild Orchid* (1989), exploits the religious atmosphere of

the Afro-Brazilian religion Candomblé as what Tomas Lopez-Pumarejo calls an "Afro-dysiac." And the Michael Caine comedy *Blame it on Rio* (1984) stages Umbanda as a frenetic orgy in which the priestess (*mãe de santo*) doles out amorous advice in English to tourists.⁴⁰ The electronic media also participate in these defamatory portrayals. Local "Eyewitness News" reports, in New York at least, present Santeria as a problem for law enforcement, or as an issue of "cruelty to animals." Habitual chicken-eaters, forgetful of the scandalous conditions of commercial poultry production, become horrified at the ritual slaughter of small numbers of chickens, while officials openly call for an "end to Santeria," a call unthinkable in the case of "respectable" religions.⁴¹ In sum, Eurocentric procedures can treat complex cultural phenomena as deviant without recourse to a character stereotype.

A moralistic and individualistic approach also ignores the contradictory nature of stereotypes. Black figures, in Toni Morrison's words, come to signify polar opposites: "On the one hand, they signify benevolence, harmless and servile guardianship and endless love," and on the other "insanity, illicit sexuality, chaos."⁴² A moralistic approach also sidesteps the issue of the relative nature of "morality," eliding the question: positive for whom? It ignores the fact that oppressed people might not only have a *different* vision of morality, but even an *opposite* vision of a hypocritical moralism which not only covers over institutional injustice but which is also oppressive in itself. Even the Decalogue becomes less sacrosanct in bitter situations of social oppression. Within slavery, for example, might it not be admirable and therefore "good" to lie to, manipulate, and even murder a slave-driver? The "positive image" approach assumes a bourgeois morality intimately linked to status quo politics. What is seen as "positive" by the dominant group, for instance the acts of those "Indians" in westerns who spy for the Whites, might be seen as treason by the dominated group. The taboo in Hollywood was not so much on "positive images" but rather on images of racial anger, revolt, and empowerment.

The privileging of character over narrative and social structure places the burden on oppressed people to be "good" rather than on the privileged to remove the knife from the back. The counterpart of the "good Black" on the other side of the racial divide is the pathologically vicious racist: Richard Widmark in *No Way Out* (1950) or Bobby Darin in *Pressure Point* (1962). Such films let "ordinary racists" off the hook, unable to recognize themselves in the raving maniacs on the screen. And in order to be equal, the oppressed are asked to be better, whence all the stoic "ebony saints" (Bogle's words) of Hollywood, from Louise Beavers in *Imitation of Life* (1934 version), through Sidney Poitier in *The Defiant Ones* (1961), to Whoopi Goldberg in *Clara's Heart* (1988). Furthermore, the saintly Black forms a Manichean pair with the demon Black, in a moralistic schema reminiscent of that structuring *Cabin in the Sky*. Saints inherit the Christian tradition of sacrifice and tend to be desexualized, deprived of normal human attributes, along the lines of the "Black eunuch," cast in decorative or subservient poses.⁴³ The privileging of positive images also elides the patent

differences, the social and moral heteroglossia (Bakhtin's term signifying "many-languagedness"), characteristic of any social group. A cinema of contrivedly positive images betrays a lack of confidence in the group portrayed, which usually itself has no illusions concerning its own perfection. A cinema in which all the Black characters resembled Sidney Poitier might be as much a cause for alarm as one in which they all resembled Step'n Fetchit. It is often assumed, furthermore, that control over representation leads automatically to the production of "positive images." But African-made films like *Laafi* (1991) and *Finzan* (1990) do not offer positive images of African society; rather, they offer critical African perspectives on African society. The demand that Third World or minoritarian filmmakers produce only "positive images," in this sense, can be a sign of anxiety. Hollywood, after all, has never worried about sending films around the world which depict the US as a violent land. Rather than deal with the contradictions of a community, "positive image" cinema prefers a mask of perfection.

Image analysis, furthermore, often ignores the issue of function. Tonto's "positive" image, in the *Lone Ranger* series, is less important than his structural subordination to the White hero and to expansionist ideology. Similarly, a certain cynical integrationism simply inserts new heroes and heroines, this time drawn from the ranks of the oppressed, into the old functional roles that were themselves oppressive, much as colonialism invited a few assimilated "natives" to join the club of the "elite." *Shaft* (1971) simply inserts Black heroes into the actantial slot formerly filled by White ones to flatter the fantasies of a certain sector (largely male) of the Black audience. Even the South African film industry under apartheid could entertain with Black Rambos and Superspades.⁴⁴ Other films, such as *In the Heat of the Night* (1967), *Pressure Point*, the *Beverly Hills Cop* series with Eddie Murphy (1984, 1987), and, more complexly, *Deep Cover* (1992), place Black characters in highly ambiguous roles as law-enforcers. The television series *Roots*, finally, used positive images as part of a cooptive version of Afro-American history. The series' subtitle – "The Saga of an American Family" – signals an emphasis on the European-style nuclear family (retrospectively projected on to Kunta's life in Africa) in a film which casts Blacks as just another immigrant group making its way toward freedom and prosperity in democratic America. As Riggs' *Color Adjustment* points out, *Roots* paved the way for *The Cosby Show* by placing an upscale Black family in the preexisting "slot" of the idealized white family sitcom, with Cliff Huxtable as benevolent *paterfamilias*; a liberal move in some respects but one still tied to a conservative valorization of family. John Downing, in contrast, finds *The Cosby Show* more ideologically ambiguous, on the one hand offering an easy pride in African-American culture, and on the other celebrating the virtues of middle class existence in order to obscure structural injustice and racial discrimination.⁴⁵

PERSPECTIVE, ADDRESS, FOCALIZATION

A "positive image" approach also ignores the question of perspective and the social positioning both of the filmmakers and the audience. We cannot equate the stereotyping performed "from above" with stereotyping "from below," where the stereotype is used as it were "in quotes," recognized as a stereotype and used to new ends. The theater group Culture Clash, for example, invokes stereotypes about Chicanos, but always within a sympathetic Chicano perspective. The notion of positive images disallows this kind of "insider satire," the affectionate self-mockery by which an ethnic group makes fun of itself. Spike Lee's *School Daze* (1988) also applies stereotypes for its own purposes, subverting the segregationist connotations of the all-Black musical in order to explore intraracial tensions within the African-American community. *School Daze* comically stages the ideological and class tensions between White-identified and Black-identified African-Americans. Instead of resorting to the usual community-delegate status of African-Americans, the film liberates narrative space to play out the contradictions of a heterogenous community, demonstrating the confidence of a director who, whatever his notorious blindspots (especially in terms of gender and sexuality), is ready to give voice to a polyphony of conflicting voices. Indeed, questions of address are as crucial as questions of representation. Who is speaking through a film? Who is imagined as listening? Who is actually listening? Who is looking? And what social desires are mobilized by the film?

A "positive image" approach also elides issues of point-of-view and what Gerard Genette calls "focalization." Genette's reformulation of the classic literary question of "point-of-view" reaches beyond character perspective to the structuring of information within the story world through the cognitive-perceptual grid of its "inhabitants."⁴⁶ The concept is illuminating when applied to liberal films which furnish the "other" with a "positive" image, appealing dialog, and sporadic point-of-view shots, yet in which European or Euro-American characters remain radiating "centers of consciousness" and "filters" for information, the vehicles for dominant racial/ethnic discourses. Many liberal Hollywood films about the Third World or about minoritarian cultures in the First World deploy a European or Euro-American character as a mediating "bridge" to other cultures portrayed more or less sympathetically. The First World journalists in *Under Fire* (1983), *Salvador* (1986), *Missing* (1982), *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1983), and *Circles of Deceit* (1982) inherit the "in-between" role traditionally assigned to the colonial traveler and later to the anthropologist: the role of the one who "reports back." The mediating character initiates the spectator into otherized communities; Third World and minoritarian people, it is implied, are incapable of speaking for themselves. Unworthy of stardom either in the movies or in political life, they need a go-between in the struggle for emancipation.

The character whose point-of-view predominates need not be the "carrier" of the "norms of the text." Oswaldo Censoni's *João Negrinho* (1954), for example, is entirely structured around the perspective of its focal character, an elderly

Brazilian ex-slave. But while the film seems to present all its events from João's point of view, apparently to elicit total sympathy with him, what it in fact elicits sympathy for is a paternalistic vision of "good" Blacks leaving their destiny in the hands of well-intentioned White abolitionists. One finds a related ambiguity in liberal films that privilege European mediators over their Third World object of sympathy – the Palestinians in *Hanna K.* (1983), the Indians in *Passage to India* (1984), the African-Americans in *Mississippi Burning*, the Nicaraguans in *Under Fire*, the Indians in *City of Joy* (1990). A recent episode of the TV show *Travel* (April 26, 1992), similarly, glorifies an elderly British woman who helps children in Peru. The *mise-en-scène* foregrounds her as she leads the group singing of "My Bonnie Lies over the Ocean." Throughout she is focalized as a kind of haloed White savior of the oppressed, within an ideology that posits individual altruism as the sole legitimate force for social change. The Third World characters have a subsidiary function in such films and reports, even though their plight is the thematic focus. Media liberalism, in sum, does not allow subaltern communities to play prominent self-determining roles, a refusal homologous to liberal distaste for non-mediated self-assertion in the political realm. In *City of Joy*, what is portrayed as the unrelieved misery of Calcutta – "an inexhaustible object of Christian charity" in the words of Chidananda das Gupta – becomes the scene of Patrick Swayze's *bildungsroman*.⁴⁷ The "other" becomes a trampolin for personal sacrifice and redemption.

To make its didactic thrust palatable to a Western audience, *Hanna K.*, like other recent Middle East thrillers such as *Circles of Deceit* and *The Little Drummer Girl* (1984), has its First World protagonist (Jill Clayburgh) explain Third World oppression. Particularly in the courtroom sequences, Hanna not only speaks for the Palestinian Selim but is positioned by the *mise-en-scène* as physically (and ideologically) closer to the spectator. Dialog and *mise-en-scène* construct her narrative dominance, aligning the spectator with her apolitical humanism. At the same time, the narrative structure allows the spectator to know only as much as she knows, an equation of knowledge between spectator and protagonist that makes possible the film's pedagogical strategy. In the *Bildungsroman* chronicling Hanna's journey from ignorance to awareness of political and sexual inequalities, the spectator's consciousness gradually becomes inseparable from hers.⁴⁸ In films like this, all the ideological points-of-view are integrated into the authoritative liberal perspective of the narrator-focalizer, who, godlike, oversees and evaluates all the positions.

Some liberal films practice a slightly more critical twist on this *bildungsroman* technique. The Dutch film *Max Havelaar* (1978), directed by Fons Rademakers, adapts a popular Dutch novel by Eduard Douwes Dekker (pen name Multatuli), an exposé of colonialism by a civil servant who experienced it first hand. Although the film simplifies the novel's complex system of multiple narrations, it does retain two central elements: the story of Havelaar, a well-intentioned colonial administrator, and the story of the novelist's search for a publisher. After some success as a minor government official on the island of Celebes in

Indonesia, Havelaar is given an Assistant Residency in Lebak, a remote outpost on Java. There he sails into what turns out to be a nest of vipers: his predecessor, we learn, has been poisoned and the murder has been covered up by a falsified medical report. Havelaar confronts the native Regent, a man of duplicitous charm whose enigmatic smile masks despotic greed and who treats the people of Lebak as virtual slaves. Hoping to persuade the Regent to mend his ways, Havelaar offers him money from his own pocket to pay the natives for their work. The Regent smiles benignly, accepts the money, and goes on exploiting. Enraged, and naively assuming that the colonial administration shares his revulsion at the Regent's misdeeds, Havelaar brings his campaign to the Dutch bureaucracy, where he discovers that Dutch colonial officials are accomplices in the Regent's crimes. The corruption stretches all the way from his colonial outpost to the Dutch King. Shorn of both his position and his illusions, Havelaar returns to Holland. His heroic reformism is portrayed as a kind of quixotic madness. About to dive into shark-infested waters, he speaks grandly of his "mission." "Yes," someone replies, "but do the sharks know about that?" Humanitarian do-gooders, the film implies, are apt to be devoured by colonialist sharks. While Havelaar irritates the sharks, he is also unable to join the colonized fishes. His predicament is that of the "colonialist who refuses" (in Memmi's words); social contradiction permeates his every word and gesture. The film's innovation, however, lies in having a bridge character mediate not so much between audience and subject as between the contradictions of colonialism itself.

Thunderheart (1991), a fictionalized version of the struggle of the Oglala-



Plate 34 Compromise focalization: Val Kilmer in *Thunderheart*

Sioux against FBI repression in the 1970s, meanwhile, is focalized through a hybrid character whose sense of identity is radically transformed during the course of the film. The FBI agent (Val Kilmer), on the reservation to investigate a murder, at first denies the Native American side of his identity – he has a Sioux grandfather – then evolves into a fighter on behalf of Native Americans. Parallel to his discovery of the identity of the murderers goes a discovery of his own suppressed identity. The spectator accustomed to liberal point-of-view conventions is surprised to find that the “norms of the text” evolve dramatically during the course of the film. Whereas Hanna in *Hanna K.* merely learns more about the world, without fundamentally altering her structure of thought, the FBI agent in *Thunderheart* presumably undergoes a fundamental change in orientation. Affected by what he learns on the reservation, illuminated by visions, he switches cultural/political allegiance, bringing the spectator with him.⁴⁹

CINEMATIC AND CULTURAL MEDIATIONS

A privileging of social portrayal, plot and character often leads to a slighting of the specifically cinematic dimensions of the films; often the analyses might as easily have been of novels or plays. A throughgoing analysis has to pay attention to “mediations”: narrative structure, genre conventions, cinematic style. Eurocentric discourse in film may be relayed not by characters or plot but by lighting, framing, *mise-en-scène*, music. Some basic issues of mediation have to do with the *rappports de force*, the balance of power as it were, between foreground and background. In the visual arts, space has traditionally been deployed to express the dynamics of authority and prestige. In pre-perspectival medieval painting, for example, size was correlated with social status: nobles were large, peasants small. The cinema translates such correlations of social power into registers of foreground and background, on screen and off screen, speech and silence. To speak of the “image” of a social group, we have to ask precise questions about images. How much space do they occupy in the shot? Are they seen in close-ups or only in distant long shots? How often do they appear compared with the Euro-American characters and for how long? Are they active, desiring characters or decorative props? Do the eyeline matches identify us with one gaze rather than another? Whose looks are reciprocated, whose ignored? How do character positionings communicate social distance or differences in status? Who is front and center? How do body language, posture, and facial expression communicate social hierarchies, arrogance, servility, resentment, pride? Which community is sentimentalized? Is there an esthetic segregation whereby one group is haloed and the other villainized? Are subtle hierarchies conveyed by temporality and subjectivization? What homologies inform artistic and ethnic/political representation?

A critical analysis must also be alive to the contradictions between different registers. For Ed Guerrero, Spike Lee’s *Jungle Fever* (1991) rhetorically condemns interracial love, yet “spreads the fever” by making it cinematically

appealing in terms of lighting and *mise-en-scène*.⁵⁰ Ethnic/ethnic perspectives are transmitted not only through character and plot but also through sound and music. As a multitrack audio-visual medium, the cinema manipulates not only point-of-view but also what Michel Chion calls “point-of-hearing” (*point-d’écoute*).⁵¹ In colonial adventure films, the environment and the “natives” are heard as if through the ears of the colonizers. When we as spectators accompany the settlers’ gaze over landscapes from which emerge the sounds of native drums, the drum sounds are usually presented as libidinous or threatening. In many Hollywood films, African polyrhythms become aural signifiers of encircling savagery, acoustic shorthand for the racial paranoia implicit in the phrase “the natives are restless.” What is seen within Native American, African, or Arab cultures as spiritual and musical expression becomes in the western or adventure film a stenographic index of danger, a motive for fear and loathing. In *Drums along the Mohawk* (1939), the “bad” Indian drums are foiled by the “good” martial Euro-American drums which evoke the beneficent law and order of White Christian patriarchy. Colonialist films associate the colonized with hysterical screams, non-articulate cries, the yelping of animal-like creatures; the sounds themselves place beast and native on the same level, not just neighbors but species-equals.

Music, both diegetic and non-diegetic, is crucial for spectatorial identification. Lubricating the spectatorial psyche and oiling the wheels of narrative continuity, music “conducts” our emotional responses, regulates our sympathies, extracts our tears, excites our glands, relaxes our pulses, and triggers our fears, in conjunction with the image and in the service of the larger purposes of the film. In whose favor do these processes operate? What is the emotional tonality of the music, and with what character or group does it lead us to identify? Is the music that of the people portrayed? In films set in Africa, such as *Out of Africa* (1985) and *Ashanti* (1979), the choice of European symphonic music tells us that their emotional “heart” is in the West. In *The Wild Geese* (1978), classicizing music consistently lends dignity to the White mercenary side. The Roy Budd score waxes martial and heroic when we are meant to identify with the Whites’ aggressivity, and sentimental when we are meant to sympathize with their more tender side. The Borodin air commonly called “This Is My Beloved,” associated in the film with the mercenary played by Richard Harris, musically “blesses” his demise with a tragic eulogy.

Alternative films deploy sound and music quite differently. A number of African and Afro-diasporic films, such as *Faces of Women* (1985), *Barravento* (1962), and *Pagador de Promessas* (The Given Word, 1962), deploy drum ouvertures in ways that affirm African cultural values. The French film *Noir et Blanc en Couleur* (Black and White in Color, 1976) employs music satirically by having the African colonized carry their colonial masters on their backs, but satirize them through the songs they sing: “My master is so fat, how can I carry him? . . . Yes, and mine has stinky feet . . .” Films by African and Afro-diasporic directors like Sembene, Cisse, and Faye not only use African music but celebrate it. Julie Dash’s *Daughters of the Dust* (1990) deploys an African “talking drum”

to drive home, if only subliminally, the Afrocentric thrust of a film dedicated to the diasporic culture of the Gullah people.

Another key mediation has to do with genre. A film like Preston Sturges' *Sullivan's Travels* (1942) raises the question of what one might call the "generic coefficient" of racism. In this summa of cinematic genres, Blacks play very distinct roles, each correlated with a specific generic discourse. In the slapstick land-yacht sequences, the Black waiter conforms to the prototype of the happy-go-lucky servant/buffoon; he is sadistically "painted" with whiteface pancake batter, and excluded from the charmed circle of White sociality. In the documentary-inflected sequences showing masses of unemployed, meanwhile, Blacks are present but voiceless, very much in the left-communist tradition of class reductionism; they appear as anonymous victims of economic hard times, with no racial specificity to their oppression. The most remarkable sequence, a homage to the "all-Black musical" tradition, has a Black preacher and his congregation welcome the largely White prison-inmates to the screening of an animated cartoon. Here, in the tradition of films like *Hallelujah* (1929), the Black community is portrayed as the vibrant scene of expressive religiosity. But the film complicates conventional representation: first, by desegregating the genre; second, by having Blacks exercise charity toward Whites, characterized by the preacher as "neighbors less fortunate than ourselves." The preacher exhorts the congregation not to act "high-toned," for "we is all equal in the sight of God." When congregation and prisoners sing "Let My People Go," the music, the images, and the editing forge a triadic link between three oppressed groups: Blacks, the prisoners, and the Biblical Israelites in the times of the Pharaoh, here assimilated to the cruel warden. The Sturges who directs the "Black musical" sequence radically complicates the Sturges who directs the slapstick sequence; racial attitudes are generically mediated.

The critique-of-stereotypes approach is implicitly premised on the desirability of "rounded" three-dimensional characters within a realist-dramatic esthetic. Given the cinema's history of one-dimensional portrayals, the hope for more complex and "realistic" representations is completely understandable, but should not preclude more experimental, anti-illusionistic alternatives. Realistic "positive" portrayals are not the only way to fight racism or to advance a liberatory perspective. Within a Brechtian esthetic, for example, (non-racial) stereotypes can serve to generalize meaning and demystify established power, at the same time that the characters are never purely positive or negative but rather are the sites of contradiction. Parody of the kind theorized by Bakhtin, similarly, favors decidedly negative, even grotesque images to convey a deep critique of societal structures. At times, critics have mistakenly applied the criteria appropriate to one genre or esthetic to another. A search for positive images in shows like *In Living Color*, for example, would be misguided, for that show belongs to a carnivalesque genre favoring anarchic bad taste and calculated exaggeration, as in the parody of *West Side Story* where the Black woman sings to her Jewish orthodox lover: "Menahem, Menahem, I just met

a man named Menahem." (The show is of course open to other forms of critique.) Satirical or parodic films may be less concerned with constructing positive images than with challenging the stereotypical expectations an audience may bring to them. The performance piece in which Coco Fusco/Guillermo Gomez Peña exhibit themselves as "authentic aborigines" to mock the Western penchant for exhibiting non-Europeans in zoos, museums, and freak shows, prods the art world audience into awareness of its own complicity. The question, in such cases, lies not in the valence of the image but rather in the drift of the satire.

What one might call the generic defense against accusations of racism – "It's only a comedy!," "Whites are equally lampooned!," "All the characters are caricatures!," "But it's a parody!" – is highly ambiguous, since it all depends on the modalities and the objects of the lampoon, parody, and so forth. The classic Euro-Israeli film on Asian and African Jews, *Sallah Shabbati* (1964), for example, portrays a Sephardi protagonist, but from a decidedly unSephardi perspective. As a naif, Sallah on one level exemplifies the perennial tradition of the uninitiated outsider figure deployed as an instrument of social and cultural critique or distanciation. But in contrast with other naif figures such as Candide, Schweik, or Said Abi al Nakhs al Mutasha'il (in Emil Habibi's *Pesoptimist*), who are used as narrative devices to strip bare the received wisdom and introduce a fresh perspective, Sallah's naiveté functions less to attack Euro-Israeli stereotypes about Sephardi Jews than to mock Sallah himself and what he supposedly represents – the "oriental," or "black," qualities of Sephardim. In other words, unlike Jaroslav Hašek, who exploits the constructed naiveté of his character to attack European militarism rather than using it as a satire of Schweik's backwardness, the director, Kishon, molds Sallah in conformity with socially derived stereotypes in a mockery of the Sephardi "minority" (in fact the majority) itself. The grotesque character of Sallah was not designed, and was not received by Euro-Israeli critics, as a satire of an individual but rather as a summation of the Sephardi "essence." And within the Manichean splitting of affectivity typical of colonialist discourse, we find the positive – Sephardim are warm, sincere, direct, shrewd – and negative poles – they are lazy, irrational, unpredictable, primitive, illiterate, sexist. Accordingly, Sallah (and the film) speaks in the first-person plural "we," while the Ashkenazi characters address him in the second-person plural, "you all." Kishon's anti-Establishment satire places on the same level the members of the Establishment and those outside it and distant from real power. Social satire is not, then, an immediate guarantor of multiculturalism. It can be retrograde, perpetuating racist views, rather than deploying satire as a community-based critique of Eurocentric representations.⁵²

The analysis-of-stereotypes approach, in its eagerness to apply an *a priori* grid, often ignores issues of cultural specificity. The stereotypes of North American Blacks, for example, are only partly congruent with those of other multiracial New World societies like Brazil. Both countries offer the figure of the noble, devoted slave: in the US the Uncle Tom, in Brazil the *Pai João* (Father John). Both also offer the female counterpart, the devoted woman slave or servant: in the US the "mammy," in Brazil the *mãe preta* (Black mother), both products of a

plantation slavery where the children of the master were nursed at the Black mammy's breast. With other stereotypes, however, the cross-cultural analogies become more complicated. Certain characters in Brazilian films (Tonio in *Bahia de Todos os Santos*, 1960; Jorge in *Compasso de Espera*, Making Time, 1973) at first glance recall the tragic mulatto figure common in North American cinema and literature, yet the context is radically different. First, the Brazilian racial spectrum is not binary (Black or White) but nuances its shades across a wide variety of racial descriptive terms. Although color varies widely in both countries, the social construction of race and color is distinct, despite the fact that the current "Latinization" of American culture hints at a kind of convergence. Second, Brazil, while in many ways oppressive to Blacks, has never been a rigidly segregated society; thus no figure exactly corresponds to the North American "tragic mulatto," schizophrenically torn between two radically separate social worlds. The "passing" notion so crucial to American films such as *Pinky* and *Imitation of Life* had little resonance in Brazil, where it is often said that all Brazilians have a "foot in the kitchen"; in other words, that they all have a Black ancestor somewhere in the family. This point is comically demonstrated in the film *Tenda dos Milagres* (Tent of Miracles, 1977), when Pedro Arcaño reveals his racist adversary Nilo Argilo, the rabid critic of "mongrelization," to be himself part Black. The mulatto figure can be seen as dangerous only in an apartheid system and not in a system dominated by an official, albeit hypocritical, integrationist ideology like Brazil's. In Brazil, the figure of the mulatto became surrounded with a different set of prejudicial connotations, such as that of the mulatto as "uppity" or pretentious. On the other hand, this constellation of associations is not entirely foreign to the US; Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*, for example, repeatedly pinpoints mixed-race mulattos as ambitious and dangerous to the system.

The Brazilian film *Macunaíma* (1969), by Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, illustrates some of the pitfalls both of a misdirected search for "positive images" and of a culturally misinformed reading. An adaptation and updating of the modernist novel of the same name by Mario de Andrade (1928), *Macunaíma* transforms the ultimate negative stereotype – cannibalism – into a positive artistic resource. Fusing the discourse of fellow modernist Oswald de Andrade's anthropophagical movement with the theme of cannibalism that runs through the novel, the director turns cannibalism into the springboard for a critique of both repressive military rule and the predatory capitalist model of Brazil's shortlived "economic miracle." The cannibalist theme is treated in all its variations: people so hungry they eat themselves; an ogre who offers Macunaíma a piece of his leg; the urban guerilla who devours him sexually; the cannibal-giant-capitalist Pietro Pietra with his anthropophagous soup; the capitalist's wife who wants to eat him alive; and finally the man-eating siren who lures him to his death. We see the rich devouring the poor, and the poor devouring each other. The left, meanwhile, while being devoured by the right, purifies itself by eating itself, a practice which the director calls the "cannibalism of the weak."⁵³

Given *Macunaíma*'s raucously Rabelaisian esthetic, it would be misguided to

look for "positive images," or even for conventional realism. Virtually all the film's characters are two-dimensional grotesques rather than rounded three-dimensional characters, and the grotesquerie is democratically distributed among all the races, while the most archly grotesque characters are the Italian-Brazilian industrialist cannibal and his ghoulish spouse. The case of *Macunaíma* provides an object lesson in the cultural differentiation of spectatorship. In Brazil, a number of factors militate against a reading of the film as racist. First, Brazilians of all races tend to see Macunaíma as representing a spoof on their "national personality" rather than on some racial "other," seeing both the Black and White Macunaímas as a national rather than as a racial archetype. Second, Brazilians would likely be aware of the novel's status as a national classic (never accused of being racist) by a Brazilian of mixed race. Third, Brazilians are less prone to allegorize their own films racially. Since the whole issue of racial portrayal is somewhat less "touchy" in Brazil – an ambiguous fact in itself – the films are not made to bear such a strong "burden of representation." Fourth, North American viewers are less likely to be aware of the associations surrounding the figure of Grande Otelo for Brazilians, who will probably see his role in the film as just one more role in a variegated career, not as emblematic of Blackness. (At the same time, the tendency in the 1940s and 1950s to cast Grande Otelo in comically desexualized roles did reflect a flight from portrayals of mature Black characters.) Fifth, the misunderstanding also derives from a difference between filmic and literary cinematic representation, between verbal suggestiveness and iconic specificity. In the novel, Macunaíma is transformed into a *príncipe lindo* (a comely prince); there is no racial specification. The film, in contrast, must choose actors to play roles, and actors come with racial characteristics. Thus the fable-like evocativeness of "comely prince" gives way to the physical presence of the Euro-Brazilian actor Paulo José, chosen more for his thespian talents than for his Whiteness, but leading in other contexts to racialized misreadings. The director might be accused, then, not so much of racism as of insensitivity; first, for appearing to posit a link between Blackness/ugliness (a link with very painful historical/intertextual resonances), and second, for failing to imagine the ways that his film might be read in non-Brazilian contexts. At the same time the metaphor of the multiracial Brazilian "family," common to both novel and film, should not be seen as entirely innocent; first because the national ideology of mixed race glossed over racial hierarchies, and second because that metaphor has historically relegated Black Brazilians to the status of "poor cousins" or "adopted children." But such a critique should begin only *after* the film has been understood within Brazilian cultural norms, and not as the application of an *a priori* schema.

THE ORCHESTRATION OF DISCOURSES

One methodological alternative to the mimetic “stereotypes-and-distortions” approach, we would argue, is to speak less of “images” than of “voices” and “discourses.” The very term “image studies” symptomatically elides the oral and the “voiced.” A predilection for aural and musical metaphors – voices, intonation, accent, polyphony – reflects a shift in attention, as George Yudice suggests, from the predominantly visual logical space of modernity (perspective, empirical evidence, domination of the gaze) to a “postmodern” space of the vocal (oral ethnography, a people’s history, slave narratives), as a way of restoring voice to the voiceless.⁵⁴ The concept of voice suggests a metaphor of seepage across boundaries that, like sound in the cinema, remodels spatiality itself, while the visual organization of space, with its limits and boundaries and border police, forms a metaphor of exclusions and hierarchical arrangements. It is not our purpose merely to reverse existing hierarchies – to replace the demogoguery of the visual with a new demogoguery of the auditory – but to suggest that voice (and sound) and image be considered together, dialectically and diacritically. A more nuanced discussion of race and ethnicity in the cinema would emphasize less a one-to-one mimetic adequacy to sociological or historical truth than the interplay of voices, discourses, perspectives, including those operative within the image itself. The task of the critic would be to call attention to the cultural voices at play, not only those heard in aural “close-up” but also those distorted or drowned out by the text. The analytic work would be analogous to that of a “mixer” in a sound studio, whose responsibility it is to perform a series of compensatory operations, to heighten the treble, deepen the bass, amplify the instrumentation, to “bring out” the voices that remain latent or displaced.

Formulating the issue as one of voices and discourses helps us get past the “lure” of the visual, to look beyond the epidermic surface of the text. The question, quite literally, is less of the color of the face in the image than of the actual or figurative social voice or discourse speaking “through” the image.⁵⁵ Less important than a film’s “accuracy” is that it relays the voices and the perspectives – we emphasize the plural – of the community or communities in question. While the word “image” evokes the issue of mimetic realism, “voice” evokes a realism of delegation and interlocution, a situated utterance of “speaking from” and “speaking to.” If an identification with a community voice/discourse occurs, the question of “positive” images falls back into its rightful place as a subordinate issue. We might look at Spike Lee’s films, for example, not in terms of mimetic “accuracy” – such as the lament that *Do the Right Thing* portrays an inner city untouched by drugs – but rather in terms of voices/discourses. We can regret the absence of a feminist voice in the film, but we can also note its repeated stagings of wars of community rhetorics. The symbolic battle of the boomboxes featuring African-American and Latino music, for example, evokes larger tensions between cultural and musical voices. And the final quotations from Martin Luther King and Malcolm X leave it to the spectator to synthesize two complementary

modalities of resistance, one saying: “Freedom, as you promised,” the other saying: “Freedom, by any means necessary!”

It might be objected that an analysis of textual “voices” would ultimately run into the same theoretical problems as an analysis centered on “images.” Why should it be any easier to determine an “authentic voice” than to determine an “authentic image?” The point, we would argue, is to abandon the language of “authenticity” with its implicit standard of appeal to verisimilitude as a kind of “gold standard,” in favor of a language of “discourses” with its implicit reference to community affiliation and to intertextuality. Reformulating the question as one of “voices” and “discourses” disputes the hegemony of the visual and of the image-track by calling attention to its complication with sound, voice, dialog, language. A voice, we might add, is not exactly congruent with a discourse, for while discourse is institutional, transpersonal, unauthored, voice is personalized, having authorial accent and intonation, and constitutes a specific interplay of discourses (whether individual or communal). The notion of voice is open to plurality; a voice is never merely a voice; it also relays a discourse, since even an individual voice is itself a discursive sum, a polyphony of voices. What Bakhtin calls “heteroglossia,” after all, is just another name for the socially generated contradictions that constitute the subject, like the media, as the site of conflicting discourses and competing voices. A discursive approach also avoids the moralistic and essentialist traps embedded in a “negative-stereotypes” and “positive-images” analysis. Characters are not seen as unitary essences, as actor-character amalgams too easily fantasized as flesh-and-blood entities existing somewhere “behind” the diegesis, but rather as fictive-discursive constructs. Thus the whole issue is placed on a socioideological rather than on an individual-moralistic plane. Finally, the privileging of the discursive allows us to compare a film’s discourses not with an inaccessible “real” but with other socially circulated cognate discourses forming part of a continuum – journalism, novels, network news, television shows, political speeches, scholarly essays, and popular songs.⁵⁶

A discursive analysis would also alert us to the dangers of the “pseudo-polyphonic” discourse that marginalizes and disempowers certain voices, then pretends to dialog with a puppet-like entity already maneuvered into crucial compromises. The film or TV commercial in which every eighth face is Black, for example, has more to do with the demographics of market research and the bad conscience of liberalism than with substantive polyphony, since the Black voice, in such instances, is usually shorn of its soul, deprived of its color and intonation. Polyphony does not consist in the mere appearance of a representative of a given group but rather in the fostering of a textual setting where that group’s voice can be heard with its full force and resonance. The question is not of pluralism but of multivocality, an approach that would strive to cultivate and even heighten cultural difference while abolishing socially-generated inequalities.

NOTES

- 1 Steve Neale points out that stereotypes are judged simultaneously in relation to an empirical "real" (accuracy) and an ideological "ideal" (positive image). See Neale, "The Same Old Story: Stereotypes and Difference," *Screen Education*, Nos 32-3 (Autumn/Winter 1979-80).
- 2 For more on FBI harassment of civil rights activists, see Kenneth O'Reilly, "Racial Matters": *The FBI's Secret File on Black America, 1960-1972* (New York: Free Press, 1989).
- 3 Pam Sporn, a New York City educator, had her high-school students go to the south and video-interview civil rights veterans about their memories of the civil rights struggle and their reactions to *Mississippi Burning*.
- 4 See Gretchen Bataille and Charles Silet, "The Entertaining Anachronism: Indians in American Film," in Randall M. Miller, ed., *The Kaleidoscopic Lens: How Hollywood Views Ethnic Groups* (Englewood, NJ: Jerome S. Ozer, 1980).
- 5 Kobena Mercer and Isaac Julien, in a similar spirit, distinguish between "representation as a practice of depicting" and "representation as a practice of delegation." See Kobena Mercer and Isaac Julien, "Introduction: De Margin and De Centre," *Screen*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (1988), pp. 2-10.
- 6 An article in *Moving Picture World* (July 10, 1911), entitled "Indians Grieve over Picture Shows," reports on protests by Native Americans from southern California concerning Hollywood's portrayal of them as warriors when in fact they were peaceful farmers.
- 7 Religious tensions sometimes inflect cinematic representation. A German film company plan in 1925 to produce *The Prophet*, with Muhammad as the main character, shocked the Islamic University Al Azhar, since Islam prohibits representation of the Prophet. Protests prevented the film from being made. Moustapha Aaqad's *The Message* (Kuwait, Morocco, Libya, 1976), in contrast, tells the story within Islamic norms, respecting the prohibition of graven images of the Prophet, representation of God and holy figures. The film traces the life of the Prophet from his first revelations in AD 610 to his death in 632, in a style which rivals Hollywood Biblical epics. Yet the Prophet is never seen on the screen; when other characters speak to him they address the camera. The script was approved by scholars from the Al Azhar University in Cairo.
- 8 Judith Williamson makes a similar point in her essay in *Screen*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (1988), pp. 106-12.
- 9 See Michael Rogin, "Blackface, White Noise: The Jewish Jazz Singer Finds his Voice," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (1992), pp. 417-44.
- 10 Michael Dempsey and Udayan Gupta, "Hollywood's Color Problem," *American Film* (April 1982).
- 11 See *New York Times* (Sept. 24, 1991).
- 12 See interview with Spike Lee, "Our Film Is Only a Starting Point," *Cineaste*, Vol. XIX, No. 4 (March 1993).
- 13 See Gary M. Stern, "Why the Dearth of Latino Directors?," *Cineaste*, Vol. XIX, Nos 2-3 (1992).
- 14 Translation by Robert Stam and Randal Johnson. A full English version of the poem can be found in Randal Johnson and Robert Stam, *Brazilian Cinema* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1982; republished Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987; rev. edn, New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).
- 15 See Isaac Julien and Colin MacCabe, *A Diary of a Young Soul Rebel* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).
- 16 See Rob Nixon, "Cry White Season: Apartheid, Liberalism, and the American Screen," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, No. 90, Vol. 3 (Summer 1991).

- 17 Reported in *Vrye Weekblad* (Nov. 17, 1989), cited in Keyan Tomaselli, "Myths, Racism and Opportunism: Film and TV Representations of the San," in Peter Ian Crawford and David Turton, eds, *Film as Ethnography* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1992), p. 213.
- 18 The White Brazilian musicians who worked on *Black Orpheus* were also exploited. The French producer Sacha Gordine refused songs already written for the source play in order to be able to copyright the songs in French, with a contract that gave him 50 per cent of the profits on highly popular songs, while the composer and lyricist (Tom Jobim and Vinicius de Moraes) got only 10 per cent. See Rui Castro, *Chega de Saudade* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1992).
- 19 See Clyde Taylor, "Decolonizing the Image," in Peter Steven, ed., *Jump Cut: Hollywood, Politics and Counter Cinema* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1985), p. 168.
- 20 See Jean Franco, "High-Tech Primitivism: the Representation of Tribal Societies in Feature Films," in John King, Ana Lopez, and Manuel Alvarado, eds, *Mediating Two Worlds* (London: BFI, 1993).
- 21 Clear social hierarchies also inform the practice of substitutional casting. The evolution of casting in Israeli cinema, for example, reflects changing strategies of representation. The heroic-nationalist films of the 1950s and 1960s, which focussed on the Israeli-Arab conflict, typically featured heroic Euro-Israeli Sabras, played by European Jews (Ashkenazis), fighting villainous Arabs, while Sephardi Arab-Jewish actors and characters were limited to the "degraded" roles of Muslim Arabs. In most recent political films, in contrast, Israeli-Palestinian actors and non-professionals play the Palestinian roles. Such casting allows for a modicum of "self-representation." And at times the Palestinian actors have actually forced radicalization of certain scenes. In some films Palestinian actors have even been cast as Israeli military officers (for example, Makram Hourri in *The Smile of the Lamb* (1986) and in the Palestinian-Belgium film *Wedding in Galilee*, 1987). For more on the ideology of casting in Israeli cinema, see Ella Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989).
- 22 See Ngūgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Moving the Center: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms* (London: James Currey, 1993), p. 33.
- 23 See David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 104.
- 24 Gloria Anzaldúa, ed., *Making Face, Making Soul: Hacienda Caras* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1990), pp. xxii, 177.
- 25 For more on language and power, see Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, "Cinema after Babel: Language, Difference, Power," *Screen*, Vol. 26, Nos 3-4 (May-August 1985).
- 26 See Ward Churchill, *Fantasies of the Master Race: Literature, Cinema and the Colonization of American Indians* (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1992), p. 237.
- 27 Ibid., p. 238.
- 28 For a thorough discussion of *Dances with Wolves* from a Native American point of view, see Edward Castillo's essay in *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (Summer 1991).
- 29 See Christian Metz, "The Imaginary Signifier," in *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982).
- 30 James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 34.
- 31 Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks* (New York: Continuum, 1989), p. 36.
- 32 See Arthur G. Pettit, *Images of the Mexican American in Fiction and Film* (College Station: Texas A and M University Press, 1980), p. 24.

- 33 Critics have also performed extended analyses of specific films from within this perspective. Charles Ramirez Berg analyzes *Bordertown* (1935), the first Hollywood sound film to deal with Mexican-American assimilation and the film which laid down the pattern for the Chicano social problem film. Among the narrative and ideological features Berg isolates are:
 1. stereotypical inversion (that is, upgrading of Chicanos coupled with the denigration of the Anglos, portrayed as oversexed blondes (Marie), materialistic socialites (Dale), and inflexible authority figures (the judge));
 2. undiminished stereotyping of other marginalized groups (for example Chinese-Americans);
 3. the assimilationist idealization of the Chicana mama as the "font of genuine ethnic values";
 4. the absent father (Anglo families are complete and ideal; Chicano families are fragmented and dysfunctional); and
 5. the absent non-material Chicana (implying the inferiority of Chicanas to Anglo women).
- See Charles Ramirez Berg, "Bordertown, the Assimilation Narrative and the Chicano Social Problem Film," in Chon Noriega, ed., *Chicanos and Film* (New York: Garland, 1991).
- 34 Quoted in *Prisoners of Image: Ethnic and Gender Stereotypes*, (New York: Alternative Museum, 1989).
- 35 See David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 88–9.
- 36 Herman Gray, "Television and the New Black Man: Black Male Images in Prime-Time Situation Comedy," *Media, Culture and Society*, No. 8 (1986), p. 239.
- 37 See Sut Jhally and Justin Lewis, *Enlightened Racism: The Cosby Show, Audiences and the Myth of the American Dream* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1992), p. 137.
- 38 For a critique of Eurocentric language concerning African religions, see John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1969).
- 39 See also Alfredo Bosi's brilliant analysis of the confrontation between Catholicism and the Tupi-Guarani religion in his *Dialetica da Colonização* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1992).
- 40 For positive portrayals of African religions, we must look to African (*A Deusa Negra*, 1979), Brazilian (*A Força de Xango: The Force of Xango*, 1977) and Cuban (*Patakin*, 1980) features, and to documentaries such as Angela Fontanez's *The Orixá Tradition*, Lil Fenn's *Honoring the Ancestors*, Maya Deren's *The Divine Horsemen*, and Gloria Rolando's *Oggun* (1991).
- 41 The 1993 Supreme Court decision allowing the animal sacrifices associated with Santería was in this sense a landmark affirmation of religious rights.
- 42 Toni Morrison, ed., *Race-ing Justice, En-gendering Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Construction of Social Reality* (New York: Pantheon, 1992), p. xv.
- 43 See Jan Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 207.
- 44 Ibid., p. 106.
- 45 On *The Cosby Show*, see John D.H. Downing, "The Cosby Show and American Racial Discourse," in Geneva Smitherman-Donaldson and Teun A. van Dijk, eds, *Discourse and Discrimination* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988); Gray, "Television and the New Black Man," in Todd Gitlin, ed., *Watching Television* (New York: Pantheon, 1987), pp. 223–42; Mark Crispin Miller, "Deride and Conquer," in Gitlin, ed., *Watching Television*; and Mike Budd and Clay Steinman, "White Racism and the

- Cosby Show," *Jump Cut*, No. 37 (July 1992).
- 46 See Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980).
- 47 See Chidananda das Gupta, "The Politics of Portrayal," *Cinemaya*, Nos 17–18 (Autumn–Winter 1992–3).
- 48 For more on liberalism in *Hanna K.*, see Richard Porton and Ella Shohat, "The Trouble with Hanna," *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (Winter 1984–5).
- 49 Antonio Prieto-Stanbaugh points out a kind of homology between the protagonist, who sympathizes with the Sioux but ultimately leaves the reservation, and the filmmaker Michael Apted and screenwriter John Fusco, who sympathized with the Sioux and, in the case of Fusco, even lived on the reservation, but who ultimately returned to fame and fortune in the White world (unpublished student paper for a course at New York University).
- 50 See Ed Guerrero, "Fever in the Racial Jungle," in Jim Collins, Hilary Radner, and Ava Preacher Collins, eds, *Film Theory Goes to the Movies* (London: Routledge, 1993).
- 51 Michel Chion, *Le Son au Cinéma* (Paris: Cahiers, 1985).
- 52 For more on the fissures between the ethnic-racial and the national in Israeli cultural practices, see Shohat, *Israeli Cinema*.
- 53 See Johnson and Stam, *Brazilian Cinema*, pp. 82–3.
- 54 See George Yudice, "Bakhtin and the Subject of Postmodernism," unpublished paper.
- 55 Two of Clyde Taylor's defining traits of New Black Cinema – the link to the Afro-American oral tradition, and the strong articulation of Black musicality – are aural in nature, and both are indispensable in Black Cinema's search for what Taylor himself calls "its voice." See Clyde Taylor, "Les Grands Axes et les Sources Africaines du Nouveau Cinema Noir," *CinemAction*, No. 46 (1988).
- 56 James Naremore's analysis of *Cabin in the Sky* deploys this kind of discursive analysis with great precision and subtlety. Naremore sees the film as situated uneasily among "four conflicting discourses about blackness and entertainment in America": a vestigial "folkloric" discourse about rural Blacks; NAACP critique of Hollywood imagery; the collaboration between mass entertainment and government; and the "posh Africanism of high-toned Broadway musicals." See James Naremore, *The Films of Vincent Minnelli* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).