

Travelling culture/traveling television

YOSEFA LOSHITZKY

The eye has to travel

Diana Vreeland

Her eye can never gaze more widely than its [the screen's] frame

Benedict Anderson

The eye is a product of history, reproduced by education

Pierre Bourdieu

Recent postcolonial criticism has consistently tried to locate traces of the 'old rhetoric of Empire' in what we call the postcolonial world of today. Inherent in this criticism is a condemnation of the body of knowledge created by the West on its non-western Other, the so-called Third World. This body of knowledge (which can be found in literature, film, anthropology, journalism and so on) is constituted – according to postcolonial critics – of Occidental constructions of Orientalist, Africanist, and primitivist discourses. Implied in this criticism is a latent mistrust of cross-cultural encounters in which relations of power manifest themselves. Despite this fact, recent developments in 'nomadic criticism' and 'travel theory',¹ both of which grew out of postcolonial criticism, have attempted to rescue the potential fertilizing effect of cross-cultural encounters by celebrating the exilic experiences of Third-World people in metropolitan centres. These experiences, according to the 'travel theorists', deconstruct the power relations between the 'periphery' and the 'metropolitan centre' by creating a 'deterritorialization' of culture. Edward Said occupies a central position in this debate. On the one hand, Said enthusiastically

The breadth of the literature on this topic is beyond the scope of this article. Suffice it to mention the major works in this field: James Clifford, 'Traveling cultures', in Larry Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treicher (eds), *Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 95–116; Edward Said, 'Travelling theory', in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 225–47; Edward Said 'Movements and migrations', in *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), pp. 326–36; Janet Wolff, 'On the road again: metaphors of travel in cultural criticism', *Cultural Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2 (1993), pp. 224–39.

embraces the notion of a Palestinian homeland and Palestinian nationalism. On the other, he advocates the de-essentialization of home and a celebration of exilic experiences. Said's growing ambivalence about nation and nationalism, and his celebration of metropolitan locations as the only sites where authentic contemporary documents of resistance can be created by self-exiles of Third-World origin, has recently been criticized by Aijaz Ahmad.² Ahmad claims that Said's celebration of the exilic culture created in metropolitan centres brings power back to the 'Empire'. The fact that the journal *Public Culture* devoted a whole issue to a debate about Ahmad's book *In Theory* attests to the power of his arguments.³

In this paper I will problematize some of the assumptions lying behind the celebratory attitude towards travel, as well as investigating the relationship between travel and television as forms of projection and introjection, as means of display, representation and identity formation. Both the potentialities and abuses of the use of the travel metaphor in relation to the emerging global television culture will be explored. In dealing with the relationship between travel and television I will distinguish between television as a travelling culture and television as a colonial form.⁴

Globalization, television and 'the politics of location'

The debate between Ahmad and his critics is basically a debate about the space of empowerment for Third-World intellectuals ('the politics of location' according to *Public Culture's* editorial introduction).⁵ What is this ideal space? Is it the nation, the state, or perhaps the diaspora? Despite the importance of this debate, it is marginal in the face of the 'real' forces that shape postcolonial encounters. Among these forces television (and not intellectuals) is one of the most powerful. Furthermore, television, perhaps more so than the modern nation-state, or the emerging ethno-diasporas of the metropolitan centres of the West, can be seen as creating a new travelling space for cross-cultural encounters. In our 'electronified' global culture, in which the physical movement of persons and objects has been replaced with the electronic movement of symbols, television has become a sort of 'travel machine'. For the moment (before the future development and mass production of virtual reality technologies) television, more than any other technology, materializes the immemorial human fantasy of transcending the boundaries of time and space in a quest for another reality. Television is, in David Harvey's suggestive phrase, 'annihilating space by time'.⁶ The globalization of mass communication scatters 'the symbolic ingredients of "imagined lives" and modes of self-empowerment even to the remotest of peripheral hinterlands'.⁷ As a global force, television has eroded the 'boundary-setting capacities of the nation-state' and rendered

2 Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (New York and London: Verso, 1992).

3 See *Public Culture*, vol. 6, no. 1 (1993), a special issue devoted to a debate about Aijaz Ahmad's book *In Theory*. A testimony to the proliferation of nomadic vocabularies in the global public sphere is the fact that the 1993 Venice Biennale was devoted to 'cultural nomadism'.

4 I would like to thank Paul Fresh for illuminating this point for me.

5 Arjun Appadurai, Lauren Berlant, Carol A. Breckenridge and Dilip Gaonkar, 'Editorial comment', *Public Culture*, vol. 6, no. 1 (1993), p. ix.

6 Quoted in Michael Peter Smith, 'Transnational migration and the globalization of grassroots politics', *Social Text*, vol. 39 (1994), p. 23.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

8 *Ibid.*

9 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

10 *Ibid.*

11 *Ibid.*

12 The label 'foreign news' recalls the category 'foreign films', which is reserved for non-US films in the US market. This type of labelling perpetuates the global promotion of US products and is permeated with patronizing colonialist overtones defining the foreign as 'the rest of the world', that is, peripheral and Other. British and Australian films, however, are not categorized as 'foreign' in the Academy Awards. Hence this labelling has the power of US products to generate a residual nostalgia for the 'cohesion' of the white British Empire. It is similar to colonialism both in defining a subordinate Other, and in terms of expanding into the world and then dominating it.

13 See, for example, Jean Baudrillard, *Selected Writings* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988) and Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991).

14 Michael M. J. Fischer, 'Ethnicity and the post-modern arts of memory', in James Clifford and George E. Marcus (eds), *Writing Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1986), p. 197.

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problematic 'the distinctions between inside and outside, citizen and alien, self and other'.⁸ The global diffusion of film, television, and video 'offers powerful images of possible future lives to once geographically isolated and socially bounded peoples'.⁹

Arjun Appadurai suggests (relying on his ethnographic accounts of remote Indian villages and the life of transnational migrants) that fantasies derived from the global media 'have become driving forces in geographical mobility' and that 'today the ordinary lives of increasing numbers of transnational migrants are powered by possibilities the globalized mass media suggest are available rather than by the traditional or material givenness of things'.¹⁰ Appadurai, as Smith suggests, 'focuses largely . . . on the more positive possibilities of human mobility becoming embodied in the acting out of these global fantasies'.¹¹ As a fantasy-generating medium television is not confined to the peripheral zones of the globe, but also produces fantasies for the prosperous West. Because First-World networks provide the filter for images of the world's Other (the so-called Third World) through the institutions of 'foreign news',¹² they are part of a global structure of postcolonial constituencies. They construct the imaginative space of the Other in the western television spectator's mind. Yet the increasing globalization of television, according to postmodern criticism, threatens this very fantasy. If global television, and especially the so-called global news networks, direct the technologized gaze on the Other, then television, like tourism, colonialism and anthropology, destroys the very authenticity it desires.

Television and postmodern critique of globalization

Since the 1980s, scholars from different disciplines have tried to theorize the role played by television in the new kind of social space which has been created in our world – through the growth of criss-crossed economies and cultures – in terms of globalization. The fundamental question which they have formulated has been: does globalization destroy national/cultural identity, or is it subverted by the indigenous cultures which heroically resist globalization's homogenizing tendencies? Two assumptions are inherent in this question: 1. That the forces of globalization/homogenization are usually American and that they subjugate weaker, usually Third-World, nations. 2. That there are indeed 'indigenous', 'pure' and 'uncontaminated' cultures which are endangered by global/US culture whose main colonizing agent is television.

Postmodernist critiques of globality¹³ centre on the birth of a new common consumerist culture. To the western observer who subscribes to these postmodern theories 'late twentieth-century society globally seems to be characterized by surface homogenization'.¹⁴ It should, however, be emphasized that similar postmodernist sentiments were

already expressed by Pier Paolo Pasolini in the 1960s. Pasolini's heretical ideas concerning the *sacralità* (reverence) of primal pre-industrial and pre-bourgeois reality (existing today, according to him, only among peasants and in the Third World) were strongly criticized at the time he expressed them. His polemics against the cultural logic of late capitalism, as Giuliana Bruno suggests, 'were generally taken as nostalgia for an archaic world'.¹⁵ Bruno, however, attempts to rethink Pasolini's theory in light of postmodernist thought. In her view, Pasolini's ideas can be seen as anticipating some aspects of postmodernism. Pasolini's hatred of the world-wide spread of what he termed *cultura homogeniata* (homogeneous culture) – characterized by consumerism and the destruction of 'authentic' cultures – moved him in 1973 to create *The Arabian Nights*, the last movie in his 'trilogy of life'. The film was shot on various 'exotic' locations in Nepal, Yemen, Iran and Ethiopia in the hope of discovering in these 'uncontaminated' regions a 'free' sexuality devoid of the repression and exploitation typical of industrialized western societies. Pasolini's assumptions recall the discourse of travel literature with its romantic vision of the uncontaminated state of non-European cultures. This discourse was common to much of mid nineteenth-century Europe's experience of the alien Other.¹⁶ Pasolini's ideas were of course influenced by Antonio Gramsci's hostility to cosmopolitanism as the 'imperial-universal' and by Gramsci's insistence that 'this is to be challenged by the national-popular in the process of struggling against colonization – a stance that has influenced Third-World cultural theorists and minority intellectuals in the metropolitan world'.¹⁷

To a large extent, the fears rendered by Pasolini, as well as by postmodern critiques of globalization, regarding the erosion of public enactments of tradition, the loss of ritual and historical rootedness, echo fears expressed by 'salvage anthropology' regarding the disappearance and commodification of 'ethnic specimens'.

Pasolini, like many other 'serious' filmmakers, was an opponent of television and video. For him television was 'the modern institution which he most loathed'.¹⁸ Pasolini's attitude derived from his Gramscian-inspired belief in the need to resurrect a 'national-popular' culture and to investigate the role of the intellectual in this process. The kind of culture which Pasolini longed for, and whose loss his semi-disciple, Bernardo Bertolucci, continues to lament, is based on a plurality of popular cultures as opposed to one dominated by a single mass culture produced by neo-capitalism. In fact, Pasolini's sentiments are shared by most Italian directors – Bertolucci, Fellini, Visconti, Tarrantore and Scola, among others. The Italian 'economic miracle' of the 1960s and the country's rapid industrialization were resented by many Italian directors, who combined their distaste for the new Italy with a strong nostalgia 'for the healthy and uncompromised values of a pre-industrial past'.¹⁹ This nostalgia reached its zenith in the 1980s with the rapid spread of television culture and the growing decline of

15 Giuliana Bruno, 'Heresies: the body of Pasolini's semiotics', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 30, no. 3 (1991), p. 39.

16 For a further discussion of this issue see Yosefa Loshitzky, 'The tourist/traveler gaze: Bertolucci and Bowles' *The Sheltering Sky*', *East-West Film Journal*, vol. 7, no. 2 (1993), pp. 111–37.

17 Benita Parry, 'Overlapping territories and intertwined histories: Edward Said's postcolonial cosmopolitanism', in Michael Sprinker (ed.), *Edward Said: a Critical Reader* (Oxford UK and Cambridge USA: Blackwell, 1992), p. 41.

18 Zygmunt G. Baranski, 'Pier Paolo Pasolini: cultura, Croce, Gramsci', in Zygmunt G. Baranski and Robert Lumley (eds), *Culture and Conflict in Postwar Italy: Essays on Mass and Popular Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), p. 139.

19 Stephen Gundle, 'From neo-realism to *Luci Rosse*: cinema, politics, society, 1945–85', in Baranski and Lumley (eds), *Culture and Conflict in Postwar Italy*, p. 216.

20 Giuliana Bruno, 'Review: Giampiero Brunetta, *Buio in sala: cent'anni di passioni: sullo spettatore cinematografico*', *Screen*, vol. 32, no. 7 (1991), p. 229.

21 For a further discussion of this issue see Yosefa Loshitzky, 'Conclusions: past and future utopias', in *The Radical Faces of Godard and Bertolucci* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), pp. 200–206.

22 Muhammad Ayish, 'International communication in the 1990s: implications for the Third World', *International Affairs*, vol. 68, no. 3 (1992), p. 487.

23 Sky is now perhaps Asia's biggest satellite network (owned by the media baron Rupert Murdoch).

cinema as a form of popular entertainment. Ettore Scola's *Splendor* (1988) as well as Giuseppe Tornatore's *Cinema Paradiso* (1988) and *Tuto stanno bene* (1990) portray the 'degraded' world created by television culture and compare it, nostalgically, to the paradise-lost world of cinema. In *Cinema Paradiso* the spectatorial experience is likened to a collective religious experience performed in a cathedral. The release of these films in the late 1980s, all set in movie houses and all dealing with the spectatorial experience, attests, as Giuliana Bruno suggests, to a tendency in Italian cinema towards the nostalgic mythologization 'of cinema as a final bastion of collective life and the last symbol of a dying popular culture'.²⁰ At the 1988 Mill Valley Film Festival Bertolucci discussed cinema in similar terms: 'I still believe in the movie theatres as special spaces, cathedrals for hypnosis for all of us to dream our collective dreams'.

The Italian filmmakers' hostility to television is rooted in the distinction in Italian culture between *cultura di massa* (mass culture) and *cultura popolare* (popular culture). Whereas the former refers to manipulative consumer culture, the latter refers to culture created by the people for the people. Until recently, Italian culture was grounded in the provincial rural life of small communities where the cinema house (as in *Cinema Paradiso*) was one of the popular centres for social interaction. Since the 1976 Constitutional Court ruling which abolished the state's monopoly on broadcasting, television culture has spread rapidly, leading to the loss of cinema's audience. Atomized television viewing replaced cinema's social viewing and led to a flood of cheap television game shows and the prolific importing of US programmes. It also suppressed other expressions of popular culture. The nostalgia of Bertolucci, Pasolini and other Italian directors for Italy's rural culture reflects the crisis provoked by the transition from cinema culture (associated with the meaning assigned in Italy to popular culture) to television culture (carrying the negative connotations of mass culture).²¹

Gramscian anti-cosmopolitan sentiments have been carried over to Third-World criticism of western dominance of the international economic and communication system as a source of their 'undevelopment'. 'Third world spokesmen charged that such dominance posed threats to their political independence, cultural identity and socio-economic development.'²² But beyond these charges there is a frustration on the part of the Third World regarding the way they are represented by the media, and television news in particular. They charge that the global flow of information relating to the Third World is unbalanced, distorted and focused on negative rather than developmental, news thus creating an image of the Third World as a 'primitive space' of chaos, disorder and constant violence.

'Classical' criticism levelled at western media by Third-World critics has recently gained additional significance through the emerging dominance of global news networks (CNN, BBC, Sky).²³

20 Giuliana Bruno, 'Review: Giampiero Brunetta, *Buio in sala: cent'anni di passioni dello spettatore cinematografico*', *Screen*, vol. 32, no. 2 (1991), p. 229.

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22 Muhammad Ayish, 'International communication in the 1990s: implications for the Third World', *International Affairs*, vol. 68, no. 3 (1992), p. 487.

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24 Homi Bhabha's and other critics' view of ambivalence and ambiguity as the salient features of colonial discourse is challenged by others. Thus, for example, according to Abdul JanMohamed, colonialist fiction is generated predominantly by the ideological machinery of the manichean allegory and not by 'ambivalence'. In fact, JanMohamed claims that the manichean allegory is so strong that 'even a writer who is reluctant to acknowledge it and who may indeed be highly critical of imperialist exploitation is drawn into its vortex'. See Abdul JanMohamed, 'The economy of manichean allegory: the function of racial difference in colonialist literature', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 12, no. 2 (1985), p. 63. Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge in their attempt to define 'what is post(-)colonialism?' claim: 'Those writers who use forms of appropriation' recognize that colonial discourse itself is a complex, contradictory mode of representation which implicates both the colonizer and the colonized'. See Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge, 'What is post(-)colonialism?', *Textual Practice*, vol. 5 (1991), p. 404. And nowhere, according to them, is this tendency more evident than in the works of V. S. Naipaul.

25 Arjun Appadurai, 'Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy', in Bruce Robbins (ed.), *The Phantom Public Sphere* (Minneapolis and London: Minnesota University Press, 1993), p. 274.

26 Hamid Naficy provides an interesting 'answer' in the realm of film. He proposes a genre of 'independent transnational cinema', which is 'a genre that cuts across previously defined geographic, national, cultural, cinematic, and meta-cinematic boundaries'. See Hamid Naficy, 'Phobic spaces and liminal panics: independent transnational film genre', *East/West Film Journal*, vol. 8, no. 2 (1994), p. 1. Recent developments in postcolonial film theory have

Not only have western networks flooded the 'nativist' periphery with mediatised commodities of late capitalism – in particular the super soap operas – but they have also turned this periphery itself into an ambivalent object of fascination/revulsion for the curious gaze of western media. The cases of Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia all attest to this phenomenon.²⁴

Travel and television

If the central problem of contemporary global interaction is, according to Arjun Appadurai, 'the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization',²⁵ then the mediation of television, one of the most powerful global forces, in cross-cultural encounters has to be reconceptualized. As we are living in an increasingly global media-saturated world, a new approach to these questions is demanded.²⁶ Indeed the 'travel theorists' whom I mentioned at the beginning of my article, and James Clifford in particular, suggest alternative ways to view culture. These 'other' ways deconstruct and de-essentialize the notions of 'home', 'centre', 'periphery', 'marginality' and 'authenticity' by replacing them with the notion of 'travel'. Clifford's notion of 'travelling cultures' is in my view both promising and problematic.

Clifford attempts to displace the traditional discourse of ethnography ('being there') with that of travel ('getting there'). Through this displacement he hopes to conceptualize culture as a site of travel which merges together cosmopolitan experiences with rooted, native ones. By looking at culture in terms of travel relations, and viewing it as a constructed site of displacement and interaction rather than an organic body, Clifford hopes to avoid 'the excessive localism of particularist cultural relativism, as well as the overly global vision of a capitalist or technocratic monoculture'.²⁷ The projection of a 'multicultural public sphere' – as opposed to hegemonic pluralism – is the result of Clifford's rethinking of culture as travel.

Clifford's notion of travel has many advantages for anthropology as well as for the anthropologist himself. His metaphor of travel operates 'to destabilize the fixed, and ethnocentric, categories of traditional anthropology'.²⁸ For Clifford, as Janet Wolff suggests,

the metaphor of 'travel' assists in the project of de-essentializing both researcher and the subject of research, and of beginning to transform the unacknowledged relationship of power and control which characterized postcolonial encounters. Here, the notion of 'travel' operates in two ways. It is both *literal* – the ethnographer does leave to do research – and *epistemological* – it describes knowledge in a different way, as contingent and partial.²⁹

There is another implication to Clifford's approach to the question of

focused on the notion of hybrid cinema 'in which autobiography mediates a mixture of documentary, fiction and experimental genres, characterizes the film production of people in transition and cultures in the process of creating identities'. Laura U. Marks, 'A Deleuzian politics of hybrid cinema', *Screen*, vol. 35, no. 3 (1994), p. 245.

27 Clifford, 'Travelling cultures', p. 108.

28 Wolff, 'On the road again', p. 226.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 226.

30 Arif Dirlik, 'The postcolonial aura: Third World criticism in the age of global capitalism', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 20, no. 2 (1994), p. 343.

31 Erik Cohen, 'Pilgrimage and tourism: convergence and divergence', in Alan Morinis (ed.), *Sacred Journeys: the Anthropology of Pilgrimage* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1992), p. 52.

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31 Erik Cohen, 'Pilgrimage and tourism: convergence and divergence', in Alan Morinis (ed.), *Sacred Journeys: the Anthropology of Pilgrimage*. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1992), p. 52.

ethnography and culture. His approach exceedingly emphasizes the local, and hence, as Arif Dirlik suggests,

mystifies the larger contexts that differentiate power relations and that suggest more stable and directed positions. No matter how much the ethnographer may strive to change places with the native, in the end the ethnographer returns to the First World academy and the native back to the wilds.³⁰

The notion of travel thus seems to disguise the power relations involved in it, rather than to clarify culture as a site of intersection and displacement. The idea of travel raises the questions: who is travelling and what is the destination? The conception of travel as unbounded is a mystification; there are very specific sites of interaction and destination, quite literally empowered travellers going to the 'undeveloped' Third World and disempowered immigrants to the metropolitan centres of the West. Thus, no matter how much we might like to put the centre/periphery dichotomy down to a logocentric binarism, it does not help us solve the imbalance in global power relations.

Taken from this point of view, the travel metaphor, when applied to television as one of the global forces (along with tourism, western commodities, fashion, music, radio and so on) which traverse culture, may generate a doubling effect. According to a Clifford-like conceptualization, television can act as a site of travel, an intersection of cross-cultural interactions. Inherent in this conceptualization is the view of television as a potentially liberating force which equalizes global power relations. More than implicitly, it suggests that the notion of cultural imperialism is no longer tenable in regard to television. By contrast, implicit in the opposite view which is critical of Clifford's idealization of travel is the idea that the travel metaphor, if applied to television, only reinforces the asymmetry of global power relations. Television as a form of fantasy is influential in attracting disempowered travellers (immigrants who are usually involuntary travellers) to the metropolitan centres of the First World, yet its ambivalent 'gaze' on the Other perpetuates the Third World's status as undeveloped, and primitive space whose alluring power is seductive only for powerful voluntary western travellers in quest of exoticism and leisure. Hence television's globalism, like tourism, becomes 'an invasion outward from the highly developed and metropolitan centres into the uncivilized peripheries'.³¹

Television and global nomadism

When Diana Vreeland, a fashion editor and a special consultant to The Costume Institute at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, said that 'the eye has to travel' she was endorsing a 'global nomadism' in search of

'beauty'. Her pilgrim routes in quest of this beauty took her to India, China, North Africa and the Middle East. In these 'corners' of the world she found foreign and glorious objects to adorn the bodies and costumes of her models who appeared on the glossy fashion magazines of the metropolitan centres. Exotica, after all, has always been a marketable commodity in the metropolitan centres of the West, and the commoditization of 'ethnicity' is part and parcel of western modernity. Much like fashion, television – one of the major, if not *the* major force of globalization – depends on visuality, on the stimulation of the sense of sight. Sight, we should remember, also plays a major role in anthropology where the ethnographer's gaze constitutes the ground for authoritative knowledge. The traditional anthropologist's claim for knowledge on which he based his authority rested on an experiential 'I was there'. The same claim for authority and truth is still at the heart of news journalism and, in particular, television journalism. Television news authority is based on the privileging of seeing as the main mode of evidence and witness. The ideology of liveness is at the core of television authority. If, however, television (like the new anthropology as it developed in postcolonial criticism) is viewed as travel – emphasizing the experience of 'getting there' rather than 'being there' – and the television news journalist is viewed (like the 'new anthropologist') as a traveller rather than an objective observer, then we can revert to Appadurai's suggestion that 'the globalization of culture is not the same as its homogenization'.³²

Viewing television as travel deconstructs the two major assumptions inherent in the questions posed by globalization studies. First, it questions the positioning and agency of centre and margins and therefore makes obsolete the question of cultural hegemony. Second, it challenges the essentialist notion regarding 'cultural purity' and the 'fragility' of indigenous cultures by viewing cultural encounters not according to the paradigm of a weaker static culture invaded by foreign forces, but as shifting and everchanging relationships between cultures. As George Van Den Abeele claims, the very activity of travelling may also 'displace the home or prevent any return to it, thus undermining the institution of that economy and allowing for an infinite or unbounded travel'.³³

Clifford criticized the traditional anthropological point of departure which sees only the integral uniqueness of culture rather than its travel dimensions. The point of departure for the critics of television as a globalization agent is that it destroys cultural identity through a creation of homogeneous global culture. But if we accept Clifford's suggestion that we think of culture in terms of travel, then we might view television as a kind of travelling culture, rather than as an agent of 'national culture'. The rapid growth of 'liminal political spaces'³⁴ in a postcolonial world which has become a site for voluntary travel (tourists, travellers, pilgrims, immigrants) as well as involuntary travel (refugees, displaced populations, transferred populations resulting from

32 Appadurai, 'Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy', p. 287.

33 George Van Den Abeele, *Travel as Metaphor: from Montaigne to Rousseau* (Minneapolis and Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), p. xxv.

34 Lisa Malkki, 'Citizens of humanity: internationalism and the imagined communities of nations', *Diaspora*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1994), p. 44.

35 Dirlik, 'The postcolonial aura', p. 255.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 330.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 336.

38 Benedict Anderson, 'Exodus', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 20, no. 2 (1994), pp. 314–27.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 322.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 325.

41 Philip Schlesinger, 'Europeanness' – a new cultural battlefield?', *Innovation*, vol. 5, no. 1 (1992), p. 13.

42 Anderson, 'Exodus', p. 326.

43 Dirlik, 'The postcolonial aura', p. 347.

'ethnic cleansing', foreign workers, homeless, undocumented immigrants) makes the global atmosphere more receptive to the application of the metaphor of travel to television. The recent emergence of new diasporic polities in the global space previously occupied by exile and ethnic communities, immigrants, expatriates, refugees and guest workers makes the reworking of the notion of television as travel all the more 'seductive'. Various and growing forms of transnationalism constitute receptive 'sites of travel' which challenge the hegemony and homogeneity claimed by nation-states and consequently of mass media attempting to promote boundaries rather than traverse them.

The context for the rapid emergence of diasporas derives from a global situation in which the relationship between the local and the global and the place of borders is in constant flux. The status of structures 'in a world where capital, production, and peoples are in constant motion' and 'interpretations and reversals between the different worlds'³⁵ result in hybridity, is all the more conducive for the use of travel as a new metaphor for globalization. As 'the nation-state is no longer taken for granted as the global unit of political organization'³⁶ the postcolonial subject 'is comprehended in terms of hybridness or "in-betweenness", he is not contained any more within fixed categories or binary oppositions'³⁷ what Benedict Anderson calls 'the postmodern exodus'³⁸ or 'post-1930s nomadism'³⁹ – namely the massive migration to the metropolitan cores – creates two types of political consequence in our rapidly changing world. The first consequence is 'the recent emergence in the United States and other older nation-states of an ethnicity . . .' out of which the 'ideological program of multiculturalism'⁴⁰ has emerged. In Europe this tendency is manifested through an 'ethnicization' process – or 'neo-tribalism' to use Philip Schlesinger's derogatory language⁴¹ – in which racism is a very strong element (The National Front, Le Pen's movement in France and the rise of right-wing extremism in Germany). The second consequence is the emergence of what Anderson calls 'long-distance nationalism'⁴² in which migrants in the prosperous West support extremist nationalism back home.

With the mass movement of populations across national and regional boundaries 'fragmentation of the global into the local has emerged into the foreground of historical and political consciousness'.⁴³ The situation created by global capitalism helps explain certain phenomena that have become apparent over the last two or three decades, but especially since the 1980s:

global motions of peoples (and therefore, cultures), the weakening of boundaries (among societies, as well as among social categories), the replications in societies internally of inequalities and discrepancies once associated with colonial differences, simultaneous homogenization of the global and the local, and the

35 Dirlik, 'The postcolonial aura', p. 355.

36 Ibid., p. 330.

37 Ibid., p. 336.

38 Benedict Anderson, 'Exodus', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 20, no. 2 (1994), pp. 314–27.

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43 Dirlik, 'The postcolonial aura', p. 347.

44 Ibid., p. 350.

45 Smith, 'Transnational migration and the globalization of grassroots politics', pp. 15–16.

46 Appadurai, 'Disjunction and difference', p. 275.

47 Hamid Naficy, *The Making of Exile Cultures: Iranian Television in Los Angeles* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 2.

48 Leonard Quart, 'Bhaji on the Beach', *Cineaste*, vol. XX, no. 4 (1994), p. 48.

49 Djuna Barnes, 'Greenwich Village as it is', in Liz Heron (ed.), *City Women: Stories of the World's Great Cities* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), p. 30.

disorganization of a world conceived in terms of three worlds or nation-states.⁴⁴

Global space, as Michael Peter Smith claims, is 'a space of flows'. The boundaries of the nation-state

no longer correspond to the social spaces . . . borderless people inhabit. The blurring of once taken-for-granted boundaries differentiating states, ethnicities, and civil societies is producing new spaces of daily life, new sources of cultural meaning, and new forms of social and political agency that flow across national borders.⁴⁵

This new social space of deterritorialized people produced by transnational migration, this 'global ethnoscape'⁴⁶ to use Appadurai's suggestive term, is both conducive and receptive to the notion of television as travel. The deterritorialization of our postmodern era has created, as Hamid Naficy observes, people who are not, or do not want to become, fixed in any identity. 'By their status as liminal hybrids and syncretic multiples, they form a global class that transcends their original or current social and cultural locations.'⁴⁷

'Fusion is confusion': globalism and hybridity

In Gurinder Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* (1994), a feminist film which celebrates the growing multicultural diaspora community in the city of Birmingham, there is 'little use for characters like Oliver's black friend who closes off identity by seeing the world in purely racial terms'.⁴⁸ In reaction to Oliver's (played by Mo'Nique, a black West Indian) confession that his Asian (Indian) girlfriend Hashida (Sarita Khajuria) is pregnant by him, he suggests that Oliver leave her. 'Fusion is confusion' Oliver's friend claims, thus propagating a politics of difference which advocates racial separatism.

In 1915 Djuna Barnes's satirical sketch of Greenwich Village [entitled 'Greenwich Village, as it is'] appeared in *Pearson's Magazine*. Barnes was at the time a prolific and widely published journalist, an observer of New York life which she described as follows:

On every corner you can see a new type; but strange to say, no Americans are to be discovered anywhere. New York is the meeting place of the peoples, the only city where you can hardly find a typical American.⁴⁹

What was true for 1916 is even more appropriate to the contemporary urban landscape of the metropolitan centres in the West. Indeed, contemporary western metropolitan centres have become hybrid spaces

50 Saskia Sassen, 'Rebuilding the global city: economy, ethnicity and space', *Social Justice* vol. 20, nos. 3–4 (1993), p. 32.

51 Dirlik, 'The postcolonial aura', pp. 352–3.

52 For a further discussion of this issue see Chantal Mouffe, 'For a politics of nomadic identity', in George Robertson et al. (eds), *Travellers' Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 105–13.

of class, ethnicity, nationality and internationality. As Saskia Sassen suggests:

A walk through almost any of today's large modern cities in Western Europe or the U.S. leaves one with the impression that each contains many cities: the corporate city of high-rise office buildings, the old, dying industrial city and the immigrant city. It is a space of power, a space of labour and machines, and a Third World space. Are they indeed three separate cities, each belonging to a different historico/geographic phase? Or do they presuppose each other – the existence of one, a condition for the other? If so, what is the nature of the dynamic that connects them?⁵⁰

50 Saskia Sassen, 'Rebuilding the global city: economy, ethnicity and space', *Social Justice* vol. 20, nos. 3-4 (1993), p. 32.

Arif Dirlik notes that:

Third Worlds have appeared in the First World and First Worlds in the Third. New diasporas have relocated the Self there and the Other here, and consequently borders and boundaries have been confounded. And the flow of culture has been at once homogenizing and heterogenizing; some groups share in common global culture regardless of location even as they are alienated from the culture of their hinterlands while others are driven back into cultural legacies long thought to be residual to take refuge in cultural havens that are as far apart from one another as they were at the origins of modernity – even though they may be watching the same TV shows.⁵¹

51 Dirlik, 'The postcolonial aura', pp. 352-3.

One of the responses to massive postmodern deterritorialization is exemplified, according to Appadarai, in the cultural and sociospatial transformation of Latino and Asian sections of various large US cities into ethnic neighbourhoods such as 'Little Havana' and 'Koreatown'. World cities have thus become hybrid sites of real and imaginary travel. The growth of post World War II world cities, those megacities which attract global migration that both 'internationalize' and 'ethnicize' them, is part of a larger process. Currently the world scene is dominated by two simultaneous but contradictory processes: the rise of particularisms on one hand and universalism in the form of growing globalization on the other.⁵²

52 For a further discussion of this issue see Chantal Mouffe, 'For a politics of nomadic identity', in George Robertson et al. (eds), *Travellers' Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 105-13.

The Other side of travel and television

Viewing television in terms of travel insists that liminality and hybridity cannot be ignored, but must be taken for what they are: a new political and cultural reality which demands new ways of conceptualizing postmodern society's institutions of representation and mediation. This new conceptualization seems to suggest the redemption of the emerging global public sphere from cultural essentialism, not to mention cultural imperialism.

Yet neither is using the travel metaphor to conceptualize the newly emergent global television culture free of ideological bias. Indeed, many of the problems associated with tourism (as a form of voluntary travel) can effectively be applied to the travelling culture produced by global television. In tourism research, 'a further stimulant to research has been the negative reactions to tourism on the part of the Third-World host peoples themselves'.⁵³ These reactions have been echoed at all levels of the multi-disciplinary spectrum of tourism research. In anthropology, for example, anthropologists began to see the tourist, like the conqueror, the governor or missionary, 'as the agent of contact between cultures and, directly or indirectly, the cause of change particularly in the less developed regions of the world'.⁵⁴ As the initial anthropological interest in tourism was closely linked to a more general interest in culture contact and its influences, tourism came to be seen as 'involving transactions between hosts and guests with consequences particularly for hosts in the Third World'.⁵⁵ This emerging awareness in anthropology emphasized the problem of ethnocentrism and its western-oriented bias and created the 'new ethnography'. The reflexivity of the 'new ethnography' is a reaction to the question: 'How have anthropological writings constructed or perpetuated myths about the non-Western Other?'⁵⁶ The fundamental goal of the new ethnography is 'to apprehend and inscribe "others" in such a way as not to deny or diffuse their claims to subjecthood'.⁵⁷ Issues of tourism and colonialism have been articulated, even more critically, within the framework of political science:

Groups who have questioned the value of tourism to developing countries have raised the central question of politics as posed by Lasswell (1936): '... Who Gets What, When, How?' ... Is international mass tourism to the Third World just another version of the plantation system under colonialism, with benefits accruing primarily to metropolitan parties? It is precisely this question and related ones that have led some individuals and radical organizations to view *tourism as whorism*.⁵⁸

In the framework of sociology, tourism became identified as a form of imperialism or metropolitan dominance in a neo-colonial setting, 'in which the natives, particularly of Third World countries, are systematically exploited'.⁵⁹

The problematics associated with the application of the travel metaphor to television is even more serious from a feminist point of view. Any attempt to 'romanticize' travel should take into account the historically and culturally differential rates of geographical mobility between men and women in space, as well as the right – or lack of right – of women to leave their traditional place in the patriarchal domestic sphere to enter the public sphere. The economy of travel is embedded with the gender paradigms of the journey in the western male consciousness.⁶⁰ In the global culture of tourism, as Lisa Malkki

⁵³ Nelson H. H. Graburn and Jafar Jafari, 'Introduction: tourism social science', *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 18, no. 1 (1991), p. 5.

⁵⁴ Dennison Nash and Valene L. Smith 'Anthropology and tourism', *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 18, no. 1 (1991), p. 13.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁵⁶ Frances E. Mascia-Lees, Patricia Sharpe and Coven Ballerino Cohen, 'The postmodernist turn in anthropology: cautions from a feminist perspective', *Signs*, vol. 15, no. 1 (1989), p. 9.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁵⁸ Harry G. Matthews and Linda K. Richter, 'Political science and tourism', *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 18, no. 1 (1991), p. 131.

⁵⁹ Graham Dann and Erik Cohen, 'Sociology and tourism', *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 18, no. 1 (1991), pp. 162-3.

⁶⁰ For an excellent feminist critique of this issue, see Wolff, 'On the road again'.

⁶¹ Malkki, 'Citizens of humanity', p. 51.

⁶² John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage Publications, 1990), p. 141. 'Mervyn Morris says that: "While there were such intrepid "lady travellers" of the Victorian era as Isabella Bird, Freya Stark, and Mary Kingsley, they were considered eccentric, though the best of them were gifted, acclaimed writers (still underrated today)". She adds that: "Historically, the popular impression was that to journey meant to put oneself at risk not only physically but morally. The language of sexual initiation is oddly similar to that of travel. We speak of sexual "exploits" or "adventures". Both body and globe are objects for exploration, and the great "explorers", whether Marco Polo or Don Juan, have been men.' Mervyn Morris, 'Women and travel', *Ms.* (May-June 1992), p. 88. See also Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992) and the book review by James Clifford in *JLS*, 11 September 1992, pp. 3-4.

⁶³ Van Den Abeele, *Travel as Metaphor*, p. xxv.

⁶⁴ Clifford, 'Traveling cultures', p. 103.

Malkki, 'Citizens of humanity', p. 51

62 John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage Publications, 1990), p. 141. Mary Morris says that: "While there were such intrepid "lady travellers" of the Victorian era as Isabella Bird, Freya Stark, and Mary Kingsley, they were considered eccentric, though the best of them were gifted, acclaimed writers (still underrated today)". She adds that: "Historically, the popular impression was that to journey meant to put oneself at risk not only physically but morally. The language of sexual initiation is oddly similar to that of travel. We speak of sexual "exploits" or "adventures". Both body and globe are objects for exploration, and the great "explorers", whether Marco Polo or Don Juan, have been men." Mary Morris, 'Women and travel', *Ms.* (May-June 1992), p. 68. See also Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992) and the book review by James Clifford in *TLS*, 11 September 1992, pp. 3-4.

63 Van Den Abeele, *Travel as Metaphor*, p. xxv.

64 Clifford, 'Traveling cultures', p. 103.

observes, 'the hierarchical metaphors are often more sexual than generational. There are, for instance, strong tendencies to see the tourist as male and the destination as female.'⁶¹ Moreover, as John Urry points out, until the nineteenth century access to travel was largely the preserve of men. But this changed with the development of Victorian lady travellers, some of whom visited countries considered at the time to be uncivilized and uncharted.⁶²

While there is nothing inherently or essentially masculine about travel, the economy of travel is dominated by the phallogocentric 'law of the home' (*oikonomia*) which 'organizes a set of gender determinations'. George Van Den Abeele observes that one need go no further than the 'prototypical travel narrative that is the *Odyssey* to find a modelling of the sexual division of labour: the domestic(ated) woman, Penelope, maintains the property of the home against would-be usurpers while her husband wanders about'.⁶³

Yet, it can be argued that television, the new public sphere of electronic globalism, has the emancipatory potential to symbolically liberate women from their 'real' confining domestic sphere by displacing it with the 'symbolic/imaginary' sphere of televisual globalism. James Clifford brings Victor Turner's ethnographic work among female Japanese factory women as an example of ethnographic informants who can be considered as travellers although they 'have not travelled, by any standard definition'. These women do watch television, they do have a local/global sense and 'they don't simply enact a culture'.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, it can still be claimed that this sense of globalism generated by television only promotes the illusion of travel. Television, in this respect, functions like the Hollywood melodrama (and in particular the woman's film): it gives women the illusion of escaping from an imaginary home while confining them to the real one.

The centrality of images in postmodern society, and their significant role in the cultural production and construction of difference, is part of the legacy embedded in western tradition since the early encounters of the West with others. The increasing global preoccupation with issues of 'particularism' and diversity related to multiculturalism and national/ethnic/racial and cultural identity is both reflected in, and projected by, television as one of the major global forces projecting postcolonial attitudes. The more positive view of globalization might see our period as a postmodern variation on the Hellenistic period (323-31 BC), which, we recall, was an international, cosmopolitan age. Commercial contacts were widespread and peoples of many ethnic and religious backgrounds merged in populous urban centres. In this milieu, advances were made in various fields of scientific inquiry, including engineering, physics, astronomy and mathematics. The more critical view of globalization will remind us that much of the Hellenistic period's material prosperity and cultural achievements were based on colonization and a slave economy.